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### DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION, COOPERATION AND GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN THE NEW NORMAL

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## TABLE OF CONTENT

### APPLICATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND BIG DATA IN THE FIELDS OF FINANCE, ACCOUNTING AND AUDITING IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

BANK RUN AND SILICON VALLEY BANK .....	1
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa, Ho Minh Khoa, Huynh Vo Nhat Linh .....	1
BIG DATA AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS.....	14
Le Thi Minh, Vo Trung Hau .....	14
THE EFFICIENCY OF THE INTERNAL CONTROL SYSTEM IN RISK MANAGEMENT AT THE NAM A COMMERCIAL JOINT STOCK BANK .....	23
Truong Thanh Loc, Tran Ngoc Thanh.....	23
VIETNAM - AUSTRALIA ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION IN THE NEW NORMAL: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAMESE INVESTORS.....	30
Nhu Nguyen Phuc Quynh*, Anh Nguyen Thi Nguyet, Duy Nguyen Anh .....	30
IMPACTS OF CREDIT GROWTH AND CREDIT RISK ON THE PROFIT OF VIETNAM JOINT STOCK COMMERCIAL BANKS .....	43
Dao Le Kieu Oanh*, Tran Thi Huong Ngan .....	43
FACTORS AFFECTING CUSTOMERS' DECISIONS TO USE E-BANKING AT JOINT STOCK COMMERCIAL BANKS IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	57
Nguyen Duy Khanh <sup>1</sup> , Pham Quoc Tham <sup>2</sup> .....	57
HOW CHINA_USA POLITICAL TENSIONS AFFECT STOCK MARKET RETURN OF CHINA AND THE USA? A QUANTILE VAR CONNECTEDNESS APPROACH .....	70
Hao Wen Chang <sup>1</sup> , Tsangyao Chang <sup>2</sup> and Mei-Chih Wang <sup>3</sup> .....	70
BANKING HUMAN RESOURCES BEFORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AI .....	92
Nguyen Huynh Chi.....	92
IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TRAINING THROUGH IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT TESTING AND ASSESSMENT – CASE IN ACCOUNTING BRANCH, UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS AND FINANCE .....	102
Thuy Thi Ha .....	102
ACTIVITIES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN VIETNAMESE COMMERCIAL BANKS: AN OVERVIEW DURING THE COVID-19 RECOVERY PERIOD.....	109
Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Châu, Đào Lê Kiều Oanh .....	109
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR VIETNAM IN ATTRACTIVE FDI IN GLOBAL MINIMUM CORPORATE TAX IMPLEMENTATION .....	117
Ngo Hoang Thong .....	117

IMPACTS OF STATE OWNERSHIP AND BUSINESS CHARACTERISTICS ON TAX AVOIDANCE: EVIDENCE IN VIETNAM.....	128
Huyen Ngoc Nguyen, Thanh Dan Bui .....	128
RUSSIA'S IMPACTS AND SCENES ON BEING BANNED FROM SWIFT .....	143
Lam Dang Xuan Hoa <sup>1</sup> , Phan Ngoc Anh <sup>2</sup> .....	143
THE ROLE OF ACCESS TO FINANCE AND THE ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION OF YOUNGERS IN THE SOUTHWESTERN PROVINCE, VIETNAM.....	151
Vu Truc Phuc*, Nguyen Dang Hat, Nguyen An Phu, Dao Le Kieu Oanh .....	151

## **DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAM, TRENDS AND POTENTIABILITY**

DEVELOPING SMART HOME MODEL FOR APARTMENTS IN HO CHI MINH CITY BASED ON INTERNET OF THINGS (IoT) TECHNOLOGY .....	182
Dang Thanh Thuy <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Thanh Dien <sup>2</sup> .....	182
TRANSPARENCY OF ACCOUNTING INFORMATION OF CONSTRUCTION ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY – CASE STUDY OF APPLICATION OF ACCRUAL ACCOUNTING .....	193
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>1*</sup> , Pham Thi Yen Nhi <sup>2</sup> .....	193
FACTORS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS OF MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	207
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>*</sup> , Dang Nguyen Tuong Han, Nguyen Ngoc Mai Phuong, Nguyen Thi Quynh Huong .....	207
THE CRITICAL FACTORS OF COLLEGE STUDENTS' INTENTION TO USE METAVERSE TECHNOLOGY FOR SUBJECTS RELATED TO IMPORT-EXPORT LEARNING .....	221
Van Thuy Nguyen Ho, Chau The Huu, Luan Thanh Nguyen <sup>*</sup> .....	221
CONSUMER PERCEPTION ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY COMMITMENT OF LUXURY BRANDS IN VIETNAM AND CHINA MARKETS.....	233
Tran Minh Tu <sup>1</sup> .....	233
INFLUENCE OF WOM AND EWOM IN MAKING DECISION BUYING GOODS .....	247
Doan Anh Tu <sup>1</sup> , Kim Phi Rum <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Pham Hai Ha <sup>3</sup> .....	247
DIGITAL ECONOMY AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL IN VIETNAM.....	257
Hoang Thi Chinh, Nguyen Hoang Phan .....	257
BLOCKCHAIN APPLICATION IN MODERN LOGISTICS: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM .....	266
Nguyen Nu Tuong Vi.....	266
FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIGITAL ECONOMY IN VIETNAM .....	272
Vo Tien Si .....	272
LEGAL FRAME FOR THE OPERATION OF THE REAL ESTATE BUSINESS UTILIZING THE BLOCKCHAIN PLATFORM IN VIETNAM.....	284
Le Thi Khanh Linh.....	284

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION – COOPERATION – GLOBAL INTEGRATION IN BUSINESS**

FACTORS INFLUENCING BUSINESS ACCEPTANCE OF INDUSTRY 4.0 TECHNOLOGY APPLICATIONS IN DONG NAI PROVINCE.....	291
Thanh-Thu Vo*, Minh-Huong Tang.....	291
DIGITAL ORIENTATION, INNOVATION CAPABILITY AND FIRM PERFORMANCE: A PROPOSAL RESEARCH MODEL .....	298
Nguyen Van Hau .....	298
PREDICTION OF STUDENT'S BEHAVIORAL INTENTION TO USE SMART LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: A COMBINED MODEL OF SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY AND TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE .....	309
Nguyen Thi Hai Binh <sup>1</sup> , Dao Y Nhi <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Thanh Luan <sup>3</sup> , Dang Quan Tri <sup>4</sup> .....	309
THE PEDAGOGICAL IMPACT OF GRAMMARLY ON EFL WRITING COMPETENCY: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT. ....	323
Nguyen Thi Hong Lien <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Truong Gia Minh <sup>2</sup> , Nguyen Ngoc Vu <sup>3*</sup> .....	323
FACTORS AFFECTING PURCHASING DECISION OF THE YOUTH ON TIKTOK .....	336
Ngoc Pham <sup>1</sup> , Thanh Cong Tran*.....	336
FACTORS AFFECTING OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY BEHAVIORS OF WORKERS DIRECT PRODUCTION AT CU CHI POWER COMPANY.....	345
Minh Luan Le, Thi Trang Tran.....	345
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR.....	355
Nguyen Xuan Hung <sup>1</sup> , Ha Le Thu Hoai <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Huu My Truc <sup>2&amp;3</sup> , Pham Tan Nhat <sup>2&amp;3</sup> .....	355
THE INNOVATION CAPACITY - THE ROLE OF LEADERS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY, VIETNAM.....	365
Huynh Nhut Nghia .....	365
PEOPLE'S THOUGHTS ON THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON BUSINESS .....	376
Ton Nguyen Trong Hien, Bui Tuyet Anh .....	376
FACTORS AFFECTING BRAND SWITCHING INTENTION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIETNAM .....	382
Ly Dan Thanh, Nguyen Phu Quoi, Tran Hoang Nam, Vo Hong Son, Nguyen Ngoc Thuy Tien .....	382
ENHANCE THE DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS .....	398
Tran Quang Canh, Hoang Thi Chinh.....	398

ASSESSING PATIENT SATISFACTION (BRAND) AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AT THU DUC CITY HOSPITAL.....	408
Nguyen Hoang Dung <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Huynh Bao An <sup>2</sup> , Van Phuong Trang <sup>2</sup> .....	408
INDUSTRIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES FORM THE FOUNDATION FOR BINH DUONG'S SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....	408
Hoang-An Nguyen .....	417
IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL FAIRNESS ON THE EMPLOYEES' KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM ENTERPRISES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	426
Le Thi Nhu Quynh <sup>1,2</sup> , Le Thi Giang <sup>2</sup> , Truong Quang Dung <sup>1</sup> .....	426
THE EFFECT OF PERSONAL MOTIVATION ON THE TACIT KNOWLEDGE SHARING BEHAVIOR OF 5-STAR HOTELS' EMPLOYEES IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	440
Le Thi Giang, Nguyen Bach Hoang Phung.....	440
DIGITAL COMPETITIVENESS AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY OF ENTERPRISES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE CASE OF VIETNAMESE ENTERPRISES .....	453
Diep Nguyen Thi Ngoc <sup>1*</sup> , Canh Quang Tran <sup>2</sup> , Anh Bach Hoang Ngoc <sup>1</sup> .....	453
FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' SELECTION OF PRIVATE PRESCHOOLS IN THU DUC CITY .....	466
Thi-Trang Tran <sup>1</sup> , Thi-My-Dung Pham <sup>2</sup> , Thi-Bich-Diep Le <sup>1*</sup> .....	466

## **RECOVERY COMMUNICATIONS IN THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

DEVELOPING A SPIRITUAL TOURISM DESTINATION IMAGE MEASUREMENT SCALE OF AN GIANG .....	474
Nguyen Vuong Hoai Thao <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Quyet Thang <sup>2</sup> .....	474
PROSPECTS OF VIRTUAL REALITY TOURISM APPLICATION IN VIETNAM TOURISM PROMOTION .....	487
Nguyen Thi Hong Ha, Pham Thi Huong Giang.....	487
PERSONALIZATION TRAVEL TRENDING IN HO CHI MINH CITY IN THE CONTEXT OF POST COVID-19 .....	497
Duong Bao Trung.....	497
IMPACTS OF MEDIA ON CUSTOMERS' DECISION TO CHOOSE FOOD AND BEVERAGE SERVICES POST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC .....	511
Nguyen Thi Bich Van .....	511
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION APPLICATION TO PROMOTE THE RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF INBOUND TOURISM IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	521
Tran Trong Thanh .....	521
VIETNAM TOURISM AFTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC .....	527
Nguyen Hoang Phan <sup>1</sup> , Hoang Thi Chinh <sup>2</sup> .....	527
NAVIGATING THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DATA MINING AND PRIVACY .....	537
Pham Thai Hien .....	537
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-REPORTED GENERAL WELL-BEING AND PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, TEACHERS, AND UNIVERSITY .....	545
Virginia Kelsey <sup>1</sup> , Đặng Thị Mai Ly <sup>2*</sup> , Nguyễn Anh Khoa <sup>2</sup> , Nguyễn Văn Tường <sup>2</sup> .....	545

## **DIGITAL VERSUS NON- DIGITAL**

PROVIDING CONVENIENCE TO CUSTOMERS IN THE DIGITAL MARKETING ERA: OBSERVATIONS FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS IN HO CHI MINH CITY .....	556
Nguyen Quang Trung .....	556
VIRTUAL REALITY: AN INNOVATIVE TOOL IN TOURISM EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING .....	564
Thanh Nguyen Ngoc Le <sup>1</sup> , Khuong Thanh Nguyen <sup>2</sup> .....	564
THEORETICAL CONCEPTS OF STRATEGIC POSITIONING FOR PLACE BRANDING: A CASE STUDY OF DONG THAP PROVINCE .....	580
Phan Bao Giang.....	580
LITERATURE REVIEW ON THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING ON VIETNAM'S SMALL AND THE MEDIUM BUSINESS ENTERPRISES (SMEs) .....	587
Lê Kim Nguyên * .....	587



## **CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION**

PROPOSE AN ONLINE TEACHING COMPETENCE SCALE FOR UNIVERSITY LECTURERS .....	596
Duong Thi Kim Oanh*, Dang Thi Dieu Hien .....	596
EXAMINE USAGE OF LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSS) BY FACULTY STAFF AT UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS (UEF) AND FINANCE WITH EXPANDED TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM).....	608
Ha Truong Minh Hieu, Ngo Minh Hai*, Mach Tran Huy.....	608

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION  
AN INDISPENSABLE EVOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATES**

FACTORS AFFECTING THE APPLICATION OF STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING AT MANUFACTURING ENTERPRISES IN BINH DUONG PROVINCE .....	618
Truong Thanh Loc <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Thi Thanh Truc <sup>2</sup> .....	618
HRM DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: TAKING A ROAD OF SUCCESSION PLANNING ..	629
Trương Phan Hoàng Anh, Giang Ngọc Anh.....	629
THE IMPLICATION OF CONTACTLESS SERVICE AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER REVISIT INTENTION .....	640
Linh, Nguyen Duy Yen* .....	640
TOURISM BRAND LOVE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE ROLE OF ONLINE TOURIST EXPERIENCES, TOURIST-BRAND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY .....	651
Thanh Nguyen Ngoc Le .....	651
CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS IN CROSS-CULTURAL SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING (SoTL): A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY .....	662
Punithan Moganathas <sup>1</sup> , Jenny Hill <sup>2</sup> , Andy V.-M. Kok <sup>2</sup> , Matt Barr <sup>2</sup> , Ruffin Relja <sup>2*</sup> , Philippa Ward <sup>2</sup> , Duong Tran Quang Hoang <sup>3</sup> , Quynh Phuong Tran <sup>3</sup> .....	662
LEVERAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE EVOLUTION IN VIETNAM .....	677
Nguyen, Tan Dat <sup>1</sup> , Le, Dinh Thang <sup>2</sup> .....	677

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND APPLICATIONS

FB-PROPHET MODEL FOR TIME SERIES FORECASTING IN SALES .....	691
Thanh Cong Tran .....	691
USING AI CODE IN C# PROGRAMMING .....	698
Nguyen Ha Giang.....	698
DETERMINANTS OF CONTINUANCE USAGE INTENTION OF MOBILE FOOD ORDERING APPLICATIONS (MFOAS) AMONG VIETNAMESE USERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF E- SATISFACTION .....	705
Lam Hoang Phuong <sup>1*</sup> , Nguyen Thi Kim Lien <sup>2</sup> , Tien Hung Nguyen <sup>3</sup> , Vinh Long Nguyen <sup>4</sup> .....	705
DECODING MARKETING INSIGHT: INSIGHT FROM OUTSIDE.....	718
Hoàng Thị Hằng, Trần Thành Công* .....	718
DIGITAL DISRUPTION AND DATA SECURITY: HOW FINTECH IS RESHAPING BANKING ...	724
Hoàng Văn Hiếu, Trần Ngọc Thiên Ngân.....	724

## **TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**

EFL LEARNERS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING ENGAGEMENT IN COMMUNICATIVE GAME-BASED GRAMMAR TEACHING .....	736
Nguyen Thi Thanh Huyen <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	736
APPROACHES TO TEACHING L2 LISTENING:.....	749
CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN REAL-LIFE AND CLASSROOM-BASED LISTENING .....	749
Luu Thi Mai Vy .....	749
DEFINING ROLES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY LANGUAGE CLASSROOM .....	755
Ho Xuan Tien, Duong My Tham.....	755
EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND LEARNING INVESTMENT IN PORTFOLIO - BASED ENGLISH WRITING LEARNING: A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	763
Ly Gia Huy <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	763
EXPLORING EFL LEARNER IDENTITIES IN PROJECT-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING AT A HIGH SCHOOL IN AN GIANG PROVINCE .....	774
Nguyen Hong Thien <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	774
THE VALUES OF SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING: A LITERATURE REVIEW .....	791
THE ISSUE OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.....	801
Nguyen Dinh Tuan .....	801
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL EFL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING .....	812
Huynh Thanh Nhon <sup>1</sup> , Tran Quoc Thao <sup>2</sup> .....	812
EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF WRITING ANXIETY ON VIETNAMESE ESL UNDERGRADUATES' WRITING PERFORMANCE: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY.....	821
Nguyen Ngoc Nguyen, Nguyen Hoang Phan.....	821
THE APPLICATION OF THE “FLIPPED CLASSROOM” MODEL IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT .....	838
THE USE OF RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN EFLFLIPPED CLASSROOMS .....	847
Nguyen Quynh Thao Vy <sup>1,*</sup> , Duong My Tham <sup>2</sup> .....	847
INSIGHTS INTO ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS' USE OF PHRASAL VERBS IN ACADEMIC WRITING.....	860
Do Thi Thanh Thuy, Tran Quoc Thao .....	860

## **LAW IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION**

LEGALISING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY INFRINGEMENTS IN RUSSIA – A WAR TACTIC IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA’S INVASION OF UKRAINE.....	869
Bui Thi Hong Ninh* .....	869
MODEL OF ASSET REGISTRATION WORLDWIDE AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM IN IMPROVING ASSET REGISTRATION LAWS.....	880
Vu Anh Sao <sup>1,2</sup> , Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai <sup>2</sup> .....	880
LEGAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) - INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS FOR VIETNAM .....	887
Le Hoang Minh Huy*, Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Dao Trong Duc, Ky Dieu Linh, Bui Thi Thuy Linh, Nguyen Nam Trung.....	887
SOUTH KOREA’S EXPERIENCES ON PROPERTY REGISTRATION LAW - LESSONS FOR VIETNAM .....	896
Vu Anh Sao, Pham Huynh Bao Oanh.....	896
THE RISE OF REMOTE WORK: LEGAL CHALLENGES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYMENT LAW IN VIETNAM .....	903
Nguyen Thi Xuan Mai <sup>1</sup> , Nguyen Thi Ngoc Loan <sup>2</sup> .....	903
CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN THE EMERGING AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.....	910
Nguyen Thi Thu Trang .....	910
THE IMPACTS OF GLOBAL MINIMUM TAX ON FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI) CORPORATIONS IN VIETNAM.....	921
Trần Ngọc Thanh <sup>1</sup> .....	921
CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES AND TAX MANAGEMENT ISSUES .....	933
Le Huynh Phuong Chinh, Ngo Thi Khanh Linh, Pham Ngoc Lan Anh.....	933
EXPERIENCE IN KOREA AND CHINA ON TAX MANAGEMENT FOR CROSS-BORDER E-COMMERCE ACTIVITIES .....	941
Duong Anh Son <sup>1</sup> , Tran Vang Phu <sup>2</sup> .....	941
LEGAL PERSPECTIVE ON REGULATIONS RALATED TO PERSONAL INCOME TAX WHEN EARNING INCOME THROUGH E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS IN VIETNAM, TAKING THE CASE OF INDIVIDUALS DOING BUSINESS THROUGH TIKTOK APPLICATION.....	946
Nguyen Duc Tri <sup>1</sup> , Hoang Minh Châu <sup>2</sup> .....	946
THE COMPATIBILITY ON THE SCOPE OF MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE (MLA) IN CRIMINAL MATTERS AND THE CONDITIONS OF REFUSAL MLA IN CRIMINAL MATTERS BETWEEN VIETNAMESE LAW AND INTERNATIONAL TREATIES WHICH VIETNAM HAS SIGNED. ....	956

Pham Huynh Bao Oanh.....	956
TAX POLICY FOR E-COMMERCE OF COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO VIETNAM.....	967
Nguyen Thanh Minh Chanh, Ha Thi Van Anh, Pham Lam Tam Nhu .....	967
LEGAL REGULATIONS FOR ENTERPRISE OBLIGATIONS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON E-COMMERCE PLATFORM .....	974
Truong Kim Phung*, Nguyen Hoang Chuong .....	974
“ROBOT TAX” – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIETNAM.....	981
Gian Thi Le Na, Pham Phuong Doanh.....	981
WTO APPELLATE BODY REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF ESCALATING GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS.....	988
Nguyen Nam Trung.....	988

## THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT SELF-REPORTED GENERAL WELL-BEING AND PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS, TEACHERS, AND UNIVERSITY

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### **Abstract**

*The well-being of students is a growing concern worldwide, and social support networks play a crucial role in shaping their overall well-being. This article examines the associations between student well-being and support from friends, teachers, and universities. A quantitative approach was used. The self-reporting measures were validated to assess these relationships' strengths, nature, and influence. This study found significant correlations between friends, teachers, and university support and students' general well-being. These findings contribute to the existing literature by emphasizing the significance of social support in promoting student well-being. The research indicates the need for educational institutions to prioritize and cultivate supportive environments that foster positive social connections and enhance students' mental health. The article also provides recommendations for future research, including exploring objective measures of well-being, longitudinal studies, and considering cultural and contextual factors. Overall, this research highlights the importance of social support in enhancing student growth and success, informing evidence-based interventions and applications to promote student well-being.*

**Key Words:** *correlations, educator support, friend support, institutional support, mental health, quantitative approach, self-reporting measures, social support, student well-being*

### **1. Introduction**

Globally, discussions and concerns about student well-being have growing momentum among educators, researchers, institutions, and policymakers. Student well-being involves several dimensions of physical, mental, and social health. Recognizing this, researchers have been investigating the factors that may contribute to positive and negative student experiences and, thus, their overall well-being. One crucial factor that has emerged as having an overwhelming influence is a student's social support network. Social support influences students' abilities to effectively steer through the challenges they face during their time in academics. In particular, the support an individual receives from their friends, teachers, and the university they attend plays a crucial role in shaping their general well-being.

Social support groups are fundamental in the lives of students. As critical social companions and confidants, friends are vital for emotional, informational, and influential support that can combat the stressors often experienced by students during their academic journeys. Teachers can help foster positive academic environments with encouragement and ensure students know they have a safe learning space.

Teachers also help with the facilitation of developing essential skills and knowledge. Lastly, as educational institutions, universities are responsible for constructing a supportive campus climate that contributes positively to students' well-being. Additionally, educational institutions should offer resources and services to meet their students' diverse needs.

Previous research has offered valuable insights into the dynamic between social support and student well-being; more is needed to understand better the unique contributions that different sources and groups of support may provide. Examining the uniquely perceptible roles of friends, teachers, and universities as social supports can shed light on the specific mechanisms influencing student well-being. Understanding and exploring how these three sources of support interact and influence each other can provide a further comprehensive idea of the social support networks available for students and their implications on student well-being.

The research presented in this paper aims to investigate the association between students' general well-being and the perceived support they receive from friends, teachers, and their university. With a quantitative approach, we utilize validated self-reporting measures to determine the strength, nature, and influence of these relationships and the correlations between these variables. This research hopes to contribute to the current information on student well-being by highlighting the importance of friends, teachers, and university support. These findings will inform educational institutions, educators, policymakers, and practitioners in creating evidence-based interventions and applications to promote student well-being and foster positive, supportive, and inclusive learning environments. Recognition of social support's vital role in students' lives can help us foster a more nurturing educational environment that optimizes student growth and success.

## 2. Literature Review

Individuals' general well-being and positive affect can impact their health and life trajectory. Well-being correlates with health, work, family, peer, and economic benefits (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). Positive affect, an essential catalyst for well-being, can also cause many traits and situations that improve happiness. An individual with better well-being also has decreased risks of diseases, illness, and injury and, in turn, better immune functioning, faster recovery, and increased longevity (Diener et al., 2009; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). However, subjective well-being comes from various factors, some more related than others.

Several studies have explored the relationships and influence of social support and student well-being. This literature review synthesizes existing research to examine the unique contributions of three sources of support - the vital role played by friends, teachers, and universities - and their impact on student well-being.

Friendships, and the companionship they offer, have long been acknowledged as a significant source of social support. This support is vital as students go through their academic journey, as peer support influences student well-being, especially within an educational institution (Edward et al., 2021). Peer support encompassing academic and social aspects has positively influenced students' subjective well-being reports (Edward et al., 2021). In a qualitative analysis, Alsarrani et al. (2022) found that good friendship quality and peer connections are positively associated with life satisfaction, positive self-esteem, and happiness. Additionally, substandard peer relationships are associated with loneliness (Alsarrani et al., 2022). Most importantly, they found that friendship quality is positively associated with an individual's subjective well-being (Alsarrani et al., 2022).

Similarly, in a more recent study, Pezirkianidis et al. (2023) also found that friendships, the quality of the friendship, and the socialization and support with friends predict well-being. Furthermore, an



individual and the number of friends they have, the support of and for autonomy, capitalization of positive events, and friendship maintenance are all correlated with well-being (Pezirkianidis et al., 2023).

Teachers also play a critical role. Beyond educating students, teachers can create positive academic environments by fostering a supportive, welcoming, and caring classroom atmosphere. Research has found that teachers' emotional support is crucial for student development (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). Teacher support increases student motivation, engagement, and positive emotions within and outside academics (Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021).

Teachers significantly influence student development, and their well-being is linked with their students (Bilz et al., 2022). However, teachers dealing with stress and exhaustion may withdraw from their students, thus decreasing their support and responsiveness to their students' needs (Burke et al., 1996; Pas et al., 2010). Students can see these lower levels of support from emotionally distressed teachers, which may worsen student well-being (Arens & Morin, 2016; Harding et al., 2019). Students' perceptions of their teacher's support significantly predict students' general life satisfaction, satisfaction with school, and subjective health, and the students who feel more supported by their teachers gave higher levels of satisfaction, school experience, and fewer health issues (Bilz et al., 2022).

As educational institutions, universities are responsible for establishing a supportive campus environment that promotes their students' well-being. Universities that support student engagement may also be influencing student well-being. School support networks are critical for promoting student well-being, and students who engage in school are more likely to have positive health outcomes and general well-being (Carter et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2020). Student engagement has been negatively correlated with health-compromising behaviors that decrease students' general well-being while positively correlated with health-promoting and increased well-being behaviors (Nelson et al., 2020).

Research by Baik et al. (2019) emphasizes the significance of university support in enhancing student mental well-being. They found that universities can support their students with various services, such as counseling centers, health services, academic support programs, fostering a positive environment, and providing student society activities (Baik et al., 2019).

Overall, there is evidence of the need for more research on particular correlations between support from friends and particular well-being components; the literature findings remain nonexistent, contradictory, scattered, or conducted on particular populations (Pezirkianidis et al., 2023). Primarily, studies focus on the child, adolescent, and elderly populations when discussing the influence of friendship, teacher, and institutional support. There has also been plenty of research on the influence of well-being and worker productivity. The well-being of healthcare workers, teachers, and company employees, has been examined to discuss how improved well-being can positively affect employers and institutions (Bilz et al., 2022; Sears et al., 2013). For example, Sears et al.'s research on employees at a large company found that an individual's well-being predicts health care, productivity, and retention outcomes (2013). They suggest that well-being improvement solutions in the workforce could potentially have significant bottom and top-line impacts on business performance (Sears et al., 2013). Findings such as Sears et al. (2013) may have some generalizability to student engagement and well-being in school, impacting their productivity and performance.

However, more must be done on the influence of friends, teachers, and school support on undergraduate student well-being. Additionally, schools have an essential role in health promotion among young people, and further exploration of the mechanisms underlying school engagement is necessary (Carter et al., 2007). This study's research intends to fill the gaps in the literature by explicitly analyzing the relationship between the variables in a population often overlooked.

### **3. Methods**

#### **3.1 Recruitment and Critical**

During the conduction of this study, all participants were required to be actively enrolled as undergraduate students attending the University of Economics and Finance (UEF) in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. All participants were contacted and recruited by email by the university's Faculty of Public Relations and Communication. Before taking the survey, it was disclosed that the purpose of the study was to identify the perceived happiness and well-being of students at UEF. Participants were informed that participation in the study would only be used for academic purposes, analysis, and publication in domestic and foreign scientific journals and that all provided personal information would be kept strictly confidential.

#### **3.2 Participants**

All survey participants met the criteria of being currently enrolled undergraduate students at UEF and were included in the study results. More females, 76.8% of those who responded, participated in the study than males ( $n=401$ ) (Table 1). Of the 401 participants, 18% were first-year students, 60.8% were second-year students, 18% were third-year students, and 3.2% were in their fourth year (See Table 2). The demographic questions also revealed that most (68.8%) participants had two or more friends in their grade (21.9% reported only having one friend, and 9.2% stated they had none) (See Table 3); Additionally, the majority (77.6%) of students also had two or more teachers they could rely on and have established relationships with (15.7% reported only having one teacher, and 6.7% stated they had none) (See Table 4).

#### **3.3 Design**

The data in this report is part of a correlational study that used self-reported data from the participants. The collected data will determine if there is a correlation between support from friends, teachers, and the school (independent variables) and general student well-being (dependent variable). The support the students receive on these three variables will be measured to see if there is a relationship to their overall general well-being.

### **4. Materials**

The survey consists of 5 sections (See Appendix A) in total: 1) Demographic questions, 2) General Well-being, 3) School Well-being, 4) A stress, depression, and anxiety assessment, and 5) Factors affecting well-being in school (include School Supports). Each section varies in the number of questions asked.

#### **4.1 Demographic Questions**

There are five demographic questions in total. The purpose of questions about personal information was to describe the sample better. All questions were forced choice, with multiple-choice options for the participant.

#### **4.2 General Well-being**

With 14 questions, the Mental Health Continuum Scale (MHC-SF) by Keyes et al. (2008) was used to ask the participants about their overall feelings about the past semester. The MHC-SF is a shortened version of the original long-form (MHC-LF). The 14 items in the MHC-SF were picked from the MHC-LF for being the most prototypical items characterizing the constructed definitions for each facet of an individual's well-being; psychological (3 questions), emotional (6 questions), and social (5 questions) (Keyes, 2018). Psychological and social well-being are aspects of an individual's positive functioning (Keyes, 2018). Each question from the survey asks the individual to self-reflect and answer based on how they felt in the past month. An example from this survey is "[How often during the past month did you feel...] that you had warm and trusting relationships with others?". Participants were asked to answer the

questions by rating themselves on each item using a scale with the following options: never, once or twice, about once a week, about 2-3 times a week, almost every day, and every day. Completing this survey led to three diagnosis results: flourishing, languishing, and moderate mental health (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2018). For a 'flourishing' diagnosis, the participant would have to have rated themselves as having experienced a response of "almost every day" or "every day" for one or more of the emotional well-being questions and at least six or more for the positive functioning (social and psychological well-being) questions (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2018). A response of "once or twice" or "never" to one or more emotional well-being questions and six or more of the positive functioning questions would result in a 'languishing' mental health diagnosis (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2018). Individuals who do not fit in the flourishing nor the languishing criterion would be considered to have 'moderate mental health' (Keyes et al., 2008; Keyes, 2018). The Cronbach alphas ( $\alpha$ ) for Keyes et al.'s published MHC-SF scale (2008) for this study is .87 for psychological well-being, .91 for emotional well-being, and .89 for social well-being. The scores indicated if participants were relatively flourishing, languishing, or having moderate mental health.

#### 4.3 School Well-being

The scale is used to assess students' well-being at school, including 12 items with 5 levels:

(1) Never appeared; (2) Appears 1 or 2 times a month; (3) Appear once a week; (4) Appear 2 or 3 times a week; (5) Appears almost every day. There are a number of items formed from a combination of scales: Humboldt Happiness Scale – Adolescent Version (HHS-AV) (Reynolds, 2005), including items: "*I like to laugh*" (C1); "*I get bored*" (C6); "*I find every day at school a happy day*" (C3); and an item from the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHS) (Hills, 2002): "*I am satisfied with what I have in life*" (C4). Of the 12 items of the scale, there are 6 items that reflect positive well-being at school (C1, C3, C4, C9, C10, C12) and the remaining 6 items have inverse significance (C2, C5, C6, C7, C8, C11).

#### 4.4 Stress, Depression, and Anxiety Assessment

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) is a shortened self-report questionnaire with 21 questions from the original DASS questionnaire, with 42 questions developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). The 21 questions in this portion of the survey contain three subscales measuring depression, anxiety, and stress. Each subscale has seven questions. Participants are asked to read each statement and select a number between 0-4, indicating how much the statement applied to them within the last week. The rating scale consisted of 0-Did not apply to me at all, 1-Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time, 2-Applied to me to a considerable degree or a good part of the time, and 3-Applied to me very much or most of the time (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). An example from this survey portion asks the participant to rate how much the statement "I found it difficult to relax" applies to their life in the past week. For this study, the Cronbach alphas ( $\alpha$ ) for Lovibond and Lovibond's published DASS-21 scale (1995), with seven items per subscale, has .88 for Stress, .91 for Anxiety, and .92 for Depression. The scores the participants received are summed for calculation between each relevant item and multiplied by two to receive the final score. There are recommended cut-off scores for labeling the severity of the participant's subscale scores. A "Normal" range for depression is a score between 0-9, 0-7 for anxiety, and 0-14 for stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). A 'Mild' range is between 10-13 for depression, 8-9 for anxiety, and 15-18 for stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). "Moderate" range is scored between 14-20 for depression, 10-14 for anxiety, and 19-25 for stress, while a "Severe" score is between 21-27 for depression, 15-19 for anxiety, and 26-33 for stress (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). An individual who receives a score of 28+ higher for depression, 20+ for anxiety, and 34+ for stress would receive an "Extremely Severe" label (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

#### 4.5 Factors affecting well-being in school

The scale evaluates 3 factors that affect students' school well-being (Nguyen Thi Thuy Anh, 2017) including: (1) Friend supports-12 items; (2) Teacher supports-15 items and (3) School supports-7 items. Each item is rated corresponding to 4 levels: 1-not true, 2-slightly correct, 3-mostly correct and 4-completely correct.

#### 5. Procedure

Participants took the survey entirely online. Individuals who completed the survey consented to have their answers used for research, as the consent statement in the recruitment email from UEF's Faculty of Public Relations and Communication email disclosed to read and agree before taking the survey. The survey began with general demographic questions, followed by questions about their overall feelings about the past semester, then a section about their feelings towards attending school over the past semester, then a stress, depression, and anxiety assessment, and lastly, ended with questions about individual personal attitudes, perceived pressures, and social supports (see Appendix A).

#### 6. Results and Discussion

A Pearson's correlation analysis was performed, and the findings indicate several significant correlations between students' general well-being and different sources of social support (See Table 5). Notably, there was a strong positive correlation between general well-being and support from friends ( $r = .50$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This finding suggests that students who perceive greater support from their friends are more likely to report higher levels of general well-being. The large sample size strengthens the reliability of this finding.

A moderate positive correlation between general well-being and teacher support ( $r = .37$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) is also observed. This implies that individuals who perceive higher levels of support from their teachers experience better general well-being. Although the strength of this correlation is slightly lower than the correlation with support from friends, it is still statistically significant and suggests a meaningful relationship between the two variables.

Additionally, general well-being and support from the university were found to have a small positive correlation ( $r = .30$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that individuals who perceive greater support from their university tend to have slightly higher levels of general well-being.

We also saw moderate positive correlations between support from friends and teachers ( $r = .43$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), support from friends and school ( $r = .40$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), and support from teachers and school ( $r = .50$ ,  $n = 401$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These correlations indicate that students who perceive greater support from one of the three social groupings also tend to perceive greater support from the other two social groups.

These results highlight the importance of social support concerning a student's general well-being. The significant correlations with support from friends, teachers, and the university suggest that fostering and maintaining supportive relationships within educational institutions can positively affect an individual's overall well-being. However, further research is warranted to explore these variables' underlying mechanisms and potential causal relationships.

Evidently, the correlational nature of this study prevents us from making causal inferences. Self-report measures for both general well-being and perceived support from friends, teachers, and university also create the potential for common method bias. However, the robust sample size and statistical significance of the correlations between the variables support the validity and transferability of the research findings.

#### 7. Conclusions

This research provides valuable insights into the influence between social support and students' general well-being. The results of this study clearly show that support from friends, teachers, and the university plays a critical role in influencing an individual's overall well-being. The positive correlation between support from friends and general well-being highlights the importance of peer relationships in increasing positive mental health among students. The moderate positive correlation between support from teachers and general well-being indicates that the supportive role of educators can significantly contribute to students' overall well-being. And last but not least, the small positive correlation between support from the university and general well-being emphasizes the significance of institutional support in fostering student well-being.

These research findings emphasize the need for educational institutions to prioritize and cultivate supportive environments that lead to positive social connections. By creating solid friendships, promoting positive teacher-student relationships, and creating institutional support systems, universities can, in turn, increase student well-being. Implementing strategies enhancing social support within educational contexts can improve students' mental health and well-being.

Overall, this study's results highlight the significance of social support in promoting student well-being. The significant findings emphasize the need for universities and other educational institutions to foster and maintain supportive relationships with different social support groups to enhance their student's general well-being.

## **8. Recommendations**

Based on this study's findings, there are a few recommendations for future research that can continue advancing our understanding of the relationship between friends, teachers, and university support and students' general well-being.

As this study relied on self-reporting measures, future research could include objective measures of general well-being. Incorporating physiological or behavioral indicators as objective measurements could provide a more comprehensive assessment, in addition to helping validate self-reported data. It may also provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between social support and an individual's general well-being.

Conducting longitudinal studies may also provide insights into the temporal nature of the relationship between these variables. Researchers could follow students over a long period and examine how the changes in the individual's social support networks may influence and impact their general well-being outcomes and recognize any potential reciprocal effects.

Intervention studies and research can assess how effective a targeted intervention aiming to promote social support is. The development and evaluation of these interventions could focus on strengthening peer relationships, teacher-student connections, and educational institution practices.

Understanding and recognizing cultural and contextual factors that influence the generalizability of research findings across different populations is important. The impact of social support on general student well-being may vary across cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, the scope of social support could be expanded to include emotional support, instrumental support, etc., to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how specific types of support may relate to student well-being.

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**Table 1. Sex of Participants**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	93	23.2	23.2	23.2
Female	308	76.8	76.8	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2. Year at University**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1st-year	72	18.0	18.0	18.0
2nd-year	244	60.8	60.8	78.8
3rd-year	72	18.0	18.0	96.8
4th-year	13	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3. Number of Friends in Grade**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	37	9.2	9.2	9.2
One	88	21.9	21.9	31.2
Two or More	276	68.8	68.8	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	

**Table 4. Number of Reliable Teachers with an Established Relationship**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	27	6.7	6.7	6.7
One	63	15.7	15.7	22.4
Two or More	311	77.6	77.6	100.0
Total	401	100.0	100.0	



**Table 5.** Correlation between influencing factors and perceived happiness and well-being of UEF students

		Feeling the general happiness	Support from friends	Teacher's support	School support
Feeling the general happiness	Pearson Correlation	1	,505**	,376**	,307**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000	,000
	N	401	401	401	401
Support from Friends	Pearson Correlation	,505**	1	,0435**	,402**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000	,000
	N	401	401	401	401
Support from Teachers	Pearson Correlation	,376**	,0435**	1	,506**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000		,000
	N	401	401	401	401
Support from School	Pearson Correlation	,307**	,402**	,506**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	
	N	401	401	401	401

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

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