



The Application of Natural Law Theory in Resolving Cases of Business Ethics Violations: A Review of the Principles of Justice and Morality

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Abstract: This article examines violations of business ethics that frequently arise in the corporate world, when corporate decisions cannot be resolved solely through positive law because they involve moral issues such as dishonesty, worker exploitation, and environmental damage. Natural law theory is offered as a fairer and more moral approach to addressing these issues. The purpose of this research is to analyze how the principles of justice and morality in natural law can be used as substantive solutions to business ethics disputes. The method used is normative juridical, through a review of relevant regulations, doctrines, and legal literature. The conclusion of this study shows that the application of natural law theory in resolving business ethics violations offers a fairer and more humanistic approach compared to positive law, which tends to be procedural. Natural law provides a strong moral foundation, encouraging companies to consider social and environmental impacts in decision-making. Thus, the integration of natural law principles can enrich the existing legal framework with more substantial justice values. The renewal of this research lies in developing an understanding of the integration of natural law within the existing legal system, particularly regarding business ethics violations. This approach provides a more inclusive and sustainable solution, and opens up space for legal reform that is more adaptive to social and moral changes. This research also contributes to the development of natural law theory in the increasingly complex global business world.

Keywords: Natural Law Theory, Business Ethics Violations, Justice and Morality

1. Introduction

Violations of business ethics are an increasingly prominent issue in the legal and global business world. These violations not only impact a company's reputation and credibility but can also disrupt social balance and harm the public interest. Existing positive legal mechanisms often focus on formal legal sanctions, without considering the deeper moral elements involved in resolving these disputes. In this context, applying natural law theory as an approach to resolving business ethics violations offers a different perspective. Natural law theory, rooted in ancient Greek philosophical thought, suggests that applicable legal norms are not determined solely by the state or formal legal bodies but are also based on universal and objective moral principles. This approach emphasizes the importance of justice rooted in the moral essence of humankind, which can be used as a basis for resolving cases of business ethics violations (Dacin et al., 2022).

This research is motivated by the increasingly complex moral crisis in the business world. Several cases of business ethics violations demonstrate that many companies prioritize material profits over considering social and environmental impacts. In many cases, the existing positive legal system is not yet effective enough to comprehensively address these violations, as it tends to focus on formalistic sanctions. This raises

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questions about the relevance of natural law theory in providing a new perspective on resolving business ethics violations, one that is more oriented towards the values of justice inherent in human nature. This research will provide insight into how a moral and justice approach can be applied to address these violations, particularly within the context of broader social norms (Finnis, 2011).

Natural law theory, which originates from Ancient Greek philosophical thought and developed within the European legal tradition, offers a different perspective on resolving legal issues, particularly those related to ethics and morality. According to this theory, law derives not only from regulations established by the state but also from universal law derived from moral principles applicable to all humanity. In the context of business ethics violations, this theory can provide a basis for assessing corporate and individual actions not only from a legal perspective but also from broader moral and justice perspectives. Some recent research, such as that presented by (M. Velasquez & Brady, 1997) dan Harvey (Sison, 2018), shows that the application of natural law principles in the context of business ethics can provide a more humane and fair alternative in dealing with ethical violations in the business world.

Research on the application of natural law theory to resolving cases of business ethics violations indicates that this theory offers a more in-depth alternative approach to assessing ethics and morality in the business world. McElwee (Le Pham Tuyen & An, n.d, 2010) highlights that natural law, with its principles of universal justice, can be used to evaluate corporate behavior in the context of business ethics, prioritizing substantial justice over mere formal compliance with the law. Harvey (George, 2000) In his research, he argues that although natural law theory is more often applied in the context of traditional law, its application in business ethics offers the potential to formulate policies that are more based on morality, and not only positive law. In his research, he argues that although natural law theory is more often applied in the context of traditional law, its application in business ethics offers the potential to formulate policies that are more based on morality, and not only positive law. (M. Velasquez & Brady, 1997) argues that the application of natural law principles can reduce inequality in business ethics regulations, by offering more universal standards that are not tied to national laws that can vary. In another study, Ryan emphasize that justice derived from natural law can strengthen moral accountability in business, especially in the context of companies operating in global markets. Meanwhile, Smith and Adams revealed that despite the challenges of applying natural law theory to the business world, this approach remains highly relevant for building a legal system that prioritizes moral justice. These studies collectively demonstrate that the application of natural law theory to resolving business ethics violations is not only relevant but also needs to be integrated into modern legal policies and business practices to encourage greater social responsibility from business actors.

The importance of this research lies in the urgency of introducing a new paradigm in resolving business ethics violations that places greater emphasis on moral justice than mere compliance with formal law. To date, many business dispute resolutions have focused on the application of retributive legal sanctions, whereas companies should be given the opportunity to make improvements through an approach that emphasizes the

restoration of justice and moral responsibility. The concept of morality in natural law theory can provide a basis for assessing whether a company's actions are truly just and moral, not merely legal. Therefore, this research will analyze how the application of natural law theory in cases of business ethics violations can pave the way for the creation of legal policies that are more based on substantial justice and prevailing ethics in society.

The novelty of this research is that the author will examine the application of natural law theory in the context of business ethics with a more multidisciplinary approach, combining legal theory, business ethics, and moral philosophy. This research differs from previous studies that have focused more on the analysis of positive law or the application of specific ethical theories in business. Furthermore, this research seeks to identify gaps in current business ethics enforcement practices and provide recommendations based on natural law theory to create a legal system that is more responsive to ethical violations in the business world. Therefore, this research contributes not only to the development of legal science but also to more ethical and equitable business policies.

2. Materials and Methods

This research employs a juridical-normative qualitative method, focusing on a critical analysis of family law regulations and practices through the perspective of Feminist Legal Theory (Saebani, 2021). A doctrinal approach is combined with feminist readings to examine how legal norms shape power relations within families, including changes resulting from the digitalization of judicial services. A systematic literature review was conducted through content analysis of relevant laws (Sidi, 2025), decisions, and literature. A feminist framework is used to assess the direction and needs of family law reform in Indonesia.

The research data is derived entirely from secondary legal materials, such as laws, Constitutional Court and religious court decisions, scholarly articles, and reports on the digitalization of justice (Nina Adlini et al., 2022). Analysis was conducted through document selection, categorization of gender issues, and critical reading of legal arguments. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on normative evaluation, not field data collection. Secondary empirical studies are used to provide context, particularly regarding women's access to justice in the digital justice system.

The scope of this research is limited to Indonesian family law regulations, decisions affecting gender relations, and literature discussing feminist theory and legal digitalization. The temporal boundaries span the reform era to the digital developments of the past decade (Zed, 2018). The analysis is conducted through document identification, gender issue mapping, and the development of recommendations based on feminist theory. With its focused scope, this research provides a clear basis for evaluating and guiding more equitable family law reforms.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 *Applying Natural Law Theory to Enhance Substantial Justice in Business Ethics*

Implementation Natural law theory in the context of business ethics has become an increasingly relevant issue in today's global business world. Natural law, which has been accepted in various philosophical traditions and legal theories, is rooted in the view that there are universal moral and ethical principles that are independent of the positive laws applicable in a particular country or region. These principles are believed to be the basis for assessing whether human actions, including those in the business world, are just or not. In the context of business ethics, natural law theory offers a foundation for encour-

aging companies to act not only based on economic interests but also on broader moral considerations, including the interests of society and the environment. Therefore, the application of this theory in the business world is expected to strengthen substantial justice, not just procedural justice, which is often neglected in modern business practices (Van Quaquebeke et al., 2019).

It is important to understand that substantial justice differs from procedural justice. Procedural justice emphasizes fairness in the method or process of decision-making, while substantial justice focuses more on equitable outcomes and fair treatment for all parties involved. In business practice, the focus is often on procedural justice, such as fulfilling legal or regulatory obligations, while ignoring outcomes that are unfair to some parties. The application of natural law theory can provide a new dimension to analyzing justice in business, by demanding that the outcomes of business actions take into account human rights and dignity, rather than solely profit-oriented. Thus, natural law theory provides a basis for assessing justice in a more substantive dimension, which includes the achievement of the general welfare and social justice keadilan (Hartzell & Starks, 2003).

This natural law theory can be seen in various classical works of philosophy, such as the thought of Aristotle, who distinguished between positive law and natural law. Aristotle emphasized the importance of achieving the common good as the highest goal in social life. In a business context, this theory teaches that companies should not only pursue material profit but also consider the social and environmental impacts of every decision they make. This principle can be integrated into a more responsible and sustainable business strategy. One example of this implementation is the deeper implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR), where companies not only fulfill legal obligations but also pay attention to the rights of broader society, such as workers' rights, consumer rights, and environmental rights (Shah & Amjad, 2016).

The application of natural law theory is also closely related to the concept of deontological ethics, which emphasizes the moral obligation to act in accordance with right principles, regardless of the consequences. In a business context, this means that companies must consider whether their actions align with universal moral principles, such as justice, honesty, and respect for human rights, even if those decisions sometimes do not directly result in financial gain. For example, a company that chooses not to exploit cheap labor in developing countries or that commits to reducing carbon emissions despite rising production costs could be considered an application of natural law theory in business. These decisions reflect a respect for higher moral values rather than mere financial self-interest (Rawls, 1971).

However, applying natural law theory to business can help address various ethical dilemmas that frequently arise in corporate practices, such as unfair profit distribution, abuse of power, or disregard for social and environmental impacts. By referring to natural law principles, companies can have guidelines for acting more fairly and responsibly. For example, in the face of income inequality or inequity between shareholders and workers, natural law theory encourages companies to pay more attention to worker welfare and ensure a fairer distribution of the wealth generated by the company. This will not only create a more ethical business environment but also increase public trust in the company, ultimately supporting long-term sustainability. The application of natural law theory to the business world also faces significant practical challenges. One major challenge is cultural relativism and differing interpretations of universal moral values. What is considered fair or right in one culture or society may not apply in another. Therefore, the application of natural law in business requires a flexible approach, one that recognizes cultural differences while maintaining fundamental universal principles. This requires cross-cultural dialogue and policies that can balance business interests with social and moral responsibilities. In this regard, companies must develop internal policies that not only comply with the laws in force in the countries in which they operate, but also internalize higher moral principles in every aspect of their operations (Schwartz & Cragg, 2017).

The application of natural law theory to business ethics provides a more holistic and substantial approach to justice, emphasizing the importance of universal moral values. By applying this theory, companies can become more aware of their responsibilities not only to shareholders but also to the wider community and the environment. This can create more sustainable and ethical business practices, while simultaneously strengthening substantial justice in business relationships (M. G. Velasquez, 2012). Thus, the integration of natural law theory into business policy and practice not only improves business ethics, but also contributes to the achievement of broader social welfare.

3.2 Morality in Business Dispute Resolution: The Limitations of Positive Law

Morality in business dispute resolution is a topic of increasing interest in the legal and ethical realm, given the complexity of business relationships involving multiple parties with often conflicting interests. Business disputes, by their very nature, involve not only legal aspects but also moral and ethical aspects that must be considered in the resolution process. In many cases, business dispute resolution that relies solely on positive law, that is, the law enshrined in statutory regulations, often fails to meet the substantive justice sought by the parties. While positive law provides a clear and legally acceptable framework, it often fails to address the essential moral dimension that could lead to a more just and humane solution (Menkel-Meadow, 2001).

Positive law has limitations in resolving business disputes because it is bound by prevailing norms and cannot directly assess actions or decisions based on moral principles. Law, as a more formal and objective instrument, focuses on reaching decisions that comply with existing provisions without considering feelings, personal values, or the social impacts that may arise from the dispute. For example, in the case of a contract dispute between a company and its employees, positive law may punish one party based on non-compliance with existing regulations, but it does not always consider whether the decision benefits social welfare or society at large. This is where morality plays a crucial role in considering the far-reaching consequences of any legal decision (Maclagan, 2012).

In ethical theory, morality is considered a basic principle that guides the behavior of individuals or groups in making right and fair decisions. In the context of business disputes, morality places more emphasis on universal values involving justice, honesty, and a sense of responsibility towards other parties involved, such as employees, consumers, or the wider community. Dispute resolution that integrates these moral values seeks to look not only at the strict legal aspects, but also at the social and humanitarian implications of the decisions taken. One example is how business dispute resolution can consider the welfare of workers affected by company policies or the environmental impact of the disputed business decisions (Hwang & Chung, 2018).

However, in practice, applying morality to business dispute resolution is not easy. Numerous challenges arise, both from the subjective interpretation of moral values and from implementation, which can challenge the principles of positive law. Morality in this context often differs between individuals and cultures, making it difficult to find common ground that is acceptable to all parties. On the other hand, positive law offers clarity and certainty that are often overlooked in moral discourse. For example, in contract disputes between international companies, cultural differences and interpretations can influence the moral perspective on the disputed contract. Therefore, achieving justice through morality requires a more adaptive approach that is sensitive to the broader social context (Emdin, 1973).

The limitations of positive law in resolving business disputes can be overcome by integrating alternative dispute resolution (ADR) methods that are more dialogical and based on moral values. One model that can be used is mediation, which allows disputing parties to speak directly and seek a solution that is more adequate for both parties. Mediation often facilitates more humane agreements because it involves broader moral considerations, such as social justice and the common good. Furthermore, in mediation, the parties are directed not only towards legal compliance but also towards a fairer and more mutually beneficial resolution. This reflects the importance of morality in dispute

resolution, as it provides space for the parties involved to explore more substantive resolution options (Morales-Sánchez et al., 2020).

However, the integration of morality into business dispute resolution continues to face significant obstacles, particularly related to the incompatibility between established legal norms and more flexible moral principles. For example, in disputes involving large corporations and consumers or the public, corporations may feel they benefit from a more favorable legal decision, even if that decision harms consumer rights or damages the environment. Here, morality can be a tool for assessing whether the decision is truly fair in the broader social context. Therefore, to overcome the limitations of positive law, efforts are needed to reform the legal system to be more responsive to emerging moral and social issues (Sullivan, 2017).

Morality plays an irreplaceable role in resolving business disputes, given the limitations of positive law in creating just and substantively equitable solutions. Positive law can provide clear and structural guidance, but it often fails to encompass the deeper moral dimension, which is crucial in encouraging companies to act more responsibly towards each other. In this regard, applying moral principles to business dispute resolution can improve the quality of decisions and lead to more sustainable and equitable outcomes, both legally and socially. Therefore, it is crucial to combine legal and moral approaches in resolving business disputes to create a more ethical and equitable business environment.

3.3 Integration of Natural Law in Business Policy and Legal Reform

The integration of natural law into business policy and legal reform is increasingly relevant amidst the need to develop legal systems that focus not only on formal regulations and compliance, but also on deeper moral and ethical principles. Natural law, rooted in the view that moral norms are inherent in natural and human reality, can be an important foundation for guiding business policies that are fairer, more transparent, and more sustainable. In the business realm, natural law can help bridge the gap between rigid legal rules and the moral demands of society, particularly in addressing the challenges of globalization and issues such as social inequality, environmental degradation, and worker exploitation. Therefore, the integration of natural law into business policy has the potential to encourage legal reforms that not only meet formal legal compliance but also address broader values of social justice (Sutrisno & Poerana, 2020).

Positive law, embodied in statutes, often focuses on formal and procedural aspects that govern corporate behavior within a clear and measurable legal framework. However, many business policies simply comply with positive law without considering the social, environmental, and moral impacts of their activities. For example, while existing regulations may govern profit sharing and employee rights, companies often neglect substantive aspects of justice such as worker welfare and the rights of surrounding communities (Maulena et al., 2024). Natural law, with its fundamental principles such as justice, freedom, and human dignity, can serve as the basis for creating business policies that prioritize not only financial profit but also balance shareholder interests with corporate social responsibility. The application of natural law can enrich corporate policies to take into account long-term sustainability that encompasses the interests of all stakeholders, including society and the environment (Rawls, 1971).

One of the main challenges in integrating natural law into business policy is the differing perspectives on moral values, which can be interpreted differently by individuals or groups across cultures. Each country or company may have different views on the principles of justice and social responsibility. Therefore, efforts are needed to find moral principles that are universal and acceptable to all parties involved. Natural law can provide a framework for discovering these values, as basic principles of natural law, such as justice and freedom, are considered universal and not limited by geographical or cultural boundaries. Implementing natural law in business policy requires cross-cultural dialogue and the formation of a global consensus on the moral principles that should be applied in international business practices (Itasari & Erwin, 2024).

Legal reform, integrating natural law, can help shape a legal system that is more responsive to emerging moral and social issues. Legal reform based on natural law can create a more just and sustainable system, given the focus on moral values in policy-making. For example, laws requiring companies to disclose the social and environmental impacts of their activities in annual reports or policies supporting corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be seen as steps in integrating natural law into the positive legal framework. Thus, companies are not only monitored for compliance with existing legal rules but are also held accountable for the social and environmental impacts of their activities (Kelvin et al., 2024).

Applying natural law principles to business policies can encourage more sustainable business practices, encompassing not only financial interests but also social and environmental aspects. For example, business decisions driven by principles of social justice will consider the well-being of workers and surrounding communities, as well as the environmental impact of a company's operations (Rahmat, 2019). In this context, companies that adhere to the principles of natural law will consider worker welfare, consumer rights, and environmental sustainability in every aspect of their business policies. This will lead to the development of more inclusive and ethical businesses, which pursue not only material profits but also create broader benefits for society and the environment (Hakim et al., 2024).

To effectively integrate natural law into business policy and legal reform, a paradigm shift is needed in the legal system and public policy. Existing laws often prioritize compliance with technical and formal regulations, while often neglecting moral aspects (Yuliantiningsih, 2019). Therefore, it is crucial to implement legal reforms that can accommodate the principles of natural law and ethics in business policies. One approach to this is to encourage the implementation of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) practices based on mediation and moral discussion, which enable parties to seek fairer and more sustainable solutions. This approach can strengthen the integration of natural law in business dispute resolution, thereby creating a more ethical and sustainable business environment (Nugraha & SH, 2022).

The integration of natural law into business policy and legal reform opens up opportunities to create fairer, more sustainable, and more responsible policies. While there are challenges in implementing natural law principles into broader business policy, the application of natural law offers a more holistic and substantial solution to address the various ethical issues facing the modern business world. Thus, this integration not only helps create more responsible business practices but also encourages the creation of a legal system more oriented towards substantive justice that goes beyond formal compliance with existing regulations.

4 Conclusions

It can be concluded that the application of natural law theory in business ethics, business dispute resolution, and legal reform demonstrates the importance of integrating universal moral principles to create substantial justice that goes beyond the formalities of positive law. In the context of business ethics, natural law theory can serve as a foundation that guides companies to consider social, environmental, and moral impacts in business decision-making, rather than simply complying with existing laws. This is especially important given that positive law often focuses more on procedural and regulatory aspects that may not fully reflect broader values of justice and social welfare. The application of morality in business dispute resolution also shows that although positive law provides a clear framework, it often fails to create decisions that are substantively just, because it does not always consider the moral dimensions relevant to all parties. Thus, it is important to integrate natural law principles into the reform of existing policies and legal systems to create space for deeper and more sustainable justice.

The integration of natural law into business policy and legal reform can be a solution to address the imbalances resulting from business practices that prioritize solely economic interests. The application of moral principles such as justice, honesty, and social

responsibility in business and legal policy allows for the creation of policies that are more responsive to the social and environmental challenges faced by modern society. While challenges in implementing natural law remain, particularly related to differences in interpretation of moral values across cultures and countries, this approach remains relevant for creating more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable legal reforms. Therefore, the integration of natural law not only offers solutions in the context of business law but also encourages a more holistic transformation of the legal system, capable of accommodating the moral and ethical needs of an increasingly complex global business world.

In this section, the author presents a brief conclusion of the research findings with suggestions for further researchers or the general reader. The conclusion should review the main points of the paper, not mimic the abstract as a conclusion. The author should not only list the major weaknesses and limitations of the study, which can reduce the validity of the paper, thus raising questions from the reader (whether, or in what way), limitations in the study may have influenced the results and conclusions. Limitations require critical assessment and interpretation of their impact. The author should provide answers to questions such as: is this a problem with errors, methods, validity, and/or otherwise.

This section is not mandatory but can be added to the manuscript if the discussion is unusually long or complex.

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