

The role of self-awareness in avoiding unethical behavior in the workplace

Ali Abdzaid Jebur¹, Muhannad Karim Saleh², Ahmed Kadhim Idan³

¹ Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical, Iraq , ali.gebur@atu.edu.iq

² Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical, Iraq, muhannad.salah.ims@atu.edu.iq

³ Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical, Iraq, ahmeed.braak@atu.edu.iq

Abstract

The current research aims to demonstrate the role of self-awareness, an independent variable represented by self-evaluation, self-confidence, self-reflection, and emotional awareness, in avoiding unethical behaviors in the workplace, a dependent variable represented by misuse of time and resources, theft, bribery and corruption, and withdrawal. The descriptive analytical approach was adopted to present the theoretical aspect of the research, as well as to analyse and interpret the obtained data. We used the questionnaire as the primary tool to collect data from the Musayyib Technical Institute in Babylon, the research organization, and randomly selected a sample of 122 to retrieve the data. We selected 84 questionnaires for analysis and used the SPSS programme to test the hypotheses and verify their validity. We discovered that self-awareness plays a significant role in preventing unethical behaviors in the workplace.

Keywords : self-awareness , unethical behaviors, AL- Musayyib Technical Institute

1- Introduction

Employees in organizations engage in both ethical and immoral behavior on a regular basis. Companies look for ethical behavior as a means of promoting success and performance. For many reasons, unethical behavior worries businesses a lot. Concerns associated with unethical behavior include diminished organizational performance, monetary losses, harm to one's reputation, safety issues, and a decline in consumer base. Knowing the motivations behind these kinds of actions may be crucial to an organization's success.(Octavia A.Askew,et.al:2015) Occasionally, we learn about the growing number of immoral situations

and controversies in our society. Scandals involving corruption, bribery, and fraud may be considered unethical. All industries are susceptible to these three prevalent malpractices; however, the severity may differ across them.

Previous research has shown that educational institutions may be just as corrupt as other facets of business and government. Some university students are now distorting the universal qualities found in the systems.(S. Heyneman, 2015) Teaching is a vocation that involves intense human interactions, unavoidable involvement with all parties involved, and a strong emphasis on ethical practices and procedures. The ethical significance of their work becomes more crucial when it pertains to a profession that has a profound influence on the development of all individuals in society. In their study, Sidekli and Aydın (2016) discovered that teacher behaviors had a crucial role in the development of students ethical behavior abilities. Unethical practices refer to behaviors that do not adhere to accepted norms of social or professional conduct. Students are the primary constituents and central focus of educators at different educational levels.

The issue of unethical conduct remains a significant concern in both the workplace and higher education institutions. Academic integrity issues in higher education have garnered increasing attention and are a topic of ongoing discussion among several stakeholders. Self-awareness is crucial in preventing individuals from engaging in unethical conduct in the workplace. Through self-awareness, individuals can get a deeper comprehension of their own values, beliefs, and motives, enabling them to effectively navigate their decision-making process and subsequent actions .The study (Xin Liu,et al ,2023) examined how workplace ostracism affects unethical behavior related to one's job and emphasized the function of moral disengagement as a mediator. The study highlighted the significance of self-awareness in identifying the stimuli and outcomes of immoral conduct. while The study of (Raka Tegar,2023) examined the correlation between self-awareness and safety behavior among workshop personnel.

The results highlighted the beneficial effect of self-awareness in encouraging safe behavior in the workplace, showing the wider influence of self-awareness on ethical behavior. As a result, this paper will discuss what self-awareness is and what the different types of unethical behavior are in higher education institutions, as well as identify the dimensions of self-awareness that can influence unethical behavior in higher education institutions.

2- Background and theory

Psychologists primarily study the motivational aspect of unethical behavior, emphasizing the contradictory motives individuals have when engaging in cheating. Engaging in dishonest

behavior can potentially help someone attain their objectives, but it can also have detrimental effects on their self-perception. Conversely, preserving a favorable self-perception by being truthful can result in improved academic performance. People can choose to either maintain a positive self-perception or engage in dishonest behavior to achieve specific goals. Studies indicate that when faced with such challenges, individuals may exhibit a degree of deceitfulness in order to accomplish specific objectives, but they refrain from engaging in outright dishonesty to preserve a favorable perception of themselves. Mazar and her colleagues conducted a study which revealed that individuals who engaged in cheating did not alter their self-concept to reflect increased dishonesty, even when they overstated the number of matrices they claimed to have solved. Curiously, a significant number of individuals engage in minor forms of cheating, typically amounting to 20% of the potential extent, in order to preserve a positive self-perception while still benefiting financially.(Ren Li,2017)

2.1 the concept of Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a cognitive process where individuals engage in introspection and compare themselves to certain standards in order to have a deeper understanding of themselves and strive for personal growth.(Ashley and Reiter-Palmon,2012) Self-awareness refers to the state of being conscious of one's own existence and is not bound by time; it is always present and continuously happening. Every individual have the ability to direct their attention towards their own being, although this ability is not always utilized.(Feize and Faver,2019) Self-awareness refers to the degree to which humans possess conscious awareness of their internal states and their relationships with others.(Lawrence et al.2018) Self-awareness is an ongoing process of comprehending and acknowledging one's own identity, beliefs, ideas, qualities, motives, feelings, and actions, as well as recognizing their impact on others. Furthermore, it entails impartially analyzing one's individual convictions, attitudes, abilities, and constraints. Self-awareness entails the cognitive process of introspection. This trait pertains to the cognitive examination of one's own thoughts, emotions, convictions, principles, actions, and the input received from others.(Rasheed,2015)

2.2. the Root of self-awareness

Self-awareness refers to the cognitive ability to perceive, understand, and reflect on one's own thoughts, actions, and experiences. It plays a crucial role in exercising self-control. Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund originated this theory in 1972 . According to their theory, individuals have the ability to direct their attention towards either themselves or the external environment at any given time. When individuals become self-centred, they tend to evaluate themselves against established norms, which can result in alterations in their actions and emotions, including feelings of pride and discontentment. Extensive research conducted since

the 1970s has consistently provided solid evidence in favor of this theory. Numerous studies have shown that when people are not focusing on themselves, they tend to behave in ways that are not in line with their personal standards, Research methodologies that enhance self-awareness encompass techniques such as employing mirrors to create a reflective environment, utilizing video recordings to capture individuals' behavior , analyzing audio recordings of their voices, or inducing a sense of conspicuousness. Individuals' use of self-referential vocabulary and pronouns, along with their prompt recognition of self-relevant information, assess transient levels of self-awareness. The notion of self-awareness theory remains both productive and contentious, with a recent emphasis on its application to clinical conditions characterized by negative self-evaluation and excessive self-consciousness. An ongoing debate revolves around the question of whether self-awareness facilitates precise assessments of oneself. Several academics argue that self-awareness enhances the clarity of one's understanding of internal experiences, feelings, and qualities. (Duval and Wicklund ,1972) Nevertheless, some individuals acknowledge that the self-concept is subject to change, intricate, and influenced by the situation. By emphasizing certain parts of oneself, self-awareness can potentially amplify and skew evaluations of one's own characteristics.

2.3 Dimensions of self-awareness:

Many researchers have defined the dimensions and components of awareness. According to (Ashley and Reiter 2012), self-awareness encompasses three fundamental dimensions. The ability to read one's own feelings is known as emotional awareness. The second dimension is accurate self-assessment, which means the individual's awareness of his strengths and weaknesses. The third dimension is self-confidence. There are those who believe that self-awareness consists of two types. The first includes awareness of the private self, which is awareness of the hidden aspects of the self. The individual who possesses this type of awareness has great knowledge of his thoughts, feelings, emotions, and behavioral tendencies. Private self-awareness, also known as awareness, represents the second type. Aspects of the self-manifest as social objects that have an impact on others. We will adopt the scale (Scheier & Honigstein 1975), which includes self-evaluation, self-confidence, self-reflection, and emotional awareness.

2.4 Unethical behavior in the workplace

Unethical behavior, including cheating, fraud, and organizational malfeasance, poses significant issues in contemporary society. As frequently emphasized by the media, extreme

and expensive fraudulent activities are prevalent. However, even more common and widespread are instances of 'everyday' unethical conduct—unethical behaviors carried out by individuals who prioritise morality but act unethically when presented with a chance to deceive or cheat. Emerging studies in behavioral ethics and moral psychology indicate that individuals who possess a genuine concern for moral behavior are still susceptible to engaging in morally questionable actions(Gino,2015) refers to actions within organizations that breach commonly accepted moral standards.

It is a prevalent occurrence. In 2008, KPMG surveyed 5065 managers and employees in the United States, revealing that 74 percent of respondents had witnessed unethical behavior within their organization in the previous year. The Compliance and Ethics Leadership Council conducted a study in 2008, surveying 1752 managers and employees from large companies across five countries. The findings revealed that 16% of respondents reported witnessing harassment, 15% reported witnessing discrimination, 11% reported witnessing theft, and 7% reported witnessing falsification of expense claims within their organization in the past year. Unethical conduct in the workplace weakens and damages interpersonal relationships. Organizations face the challenge of avoiding, identifying, and addressing unethical behavior due to its financial, reputational, and emotional consequences (Kaptein, M. 2011)

2.5 Unethical Behavior in Higher Learning

Unethical behaviour refers to actions that deviate from accepted moral standards or norms. This type of conduct may manifest itself among students, professors, and administrative personnel in institutes of higher education. Corruption in higher education encompasses various forms, including illicit acquisition of goods and services, fraudulent practices in admission, grading, graduation, housing, and academic output, unethical behavior such as favoritism towards relatives, sexual exploitation, grading bias, research plagiarism, tax evasion, and misuse of university resources.(Heyneman,

2015) Table 1 shows examples of unethical behaviour involving lecturers(Ishak, N. K,2019)

Authors	Examples of unethical behavior
Keith-Spiegel (1993)	The lecturers failed to address instances of student cheating, provided inaccurate information in students' recommendation letters, awarded higher grades to students without regard for the quality of their assignments, and included examination questions that did not align with the syllabus.
De Russy (2003)	The lecturer consistently arrives late to class, employs abrasive language

	when interacting with students, misuses research funds, engages in plagiarism, has inappropriate relationships with students, refuses to fulfil teaching and research responsibilities, and is incapable of fulfilling assigned administrative duties.
Saat, Jamal, & Othman (2004)	Plagiarism, engaging in inappropriate relationships with students, and disregarding the laws and regulations of colleges.
Elliot, Marquis & Neal (2013)	Pseudoscientific inquiry and failure to provide appropriate attribution to the primary author
Chapman (2014)	Embezzlement, misappropriation of funds, altering students' grades in exchange for monetary or non-monetary benefits, trading admissions, selling examination results or grades, and manipulating data. Presenting, authoring, and ghostwriting.
Abanobi (2017)	The individual's strong desire for advancement, excessive desire for wealth, and lack of dedication to their chosen occupation.
Tiong, Kho, Mai, Lau, & Hasan (2018)	Examples of unethical behaviours in academia include absenteeism from work, falsely attributing publication authorship to someone who did not contribute, engaging in academic plagiarism, concealing a student's exam malpractice, fabricating research data or findings, teaching as an adjunct lecturer without obtaining permission from the university, leaking exam questions, pressuring students to purchase books or other learning materials, falsifying exam records, writing student assignments for financial gain, and accepting bribes to alter student grades.

2.6. Dimensions of unethical behaviors

Numerous researchers have employed a multitude of metrics to assess unethical work behaviors, characterized as deviant and harmful actions that jeopardize the well-being of both the organization and its members, and undermine established organizational norms and regulations. The researcher opted for the (Al Bashir 2012) scale, which he adapted to suit the requirements of his current study. This scale is not only one of the most recent to address unethical behaviors, but it is also the most consistent with the study's requirements. The scale consists of five dimensions that can be used to grasp the concept of unethical work behaviors: misuse of time and resources, theft, bribery and corruption, and withdrawal.

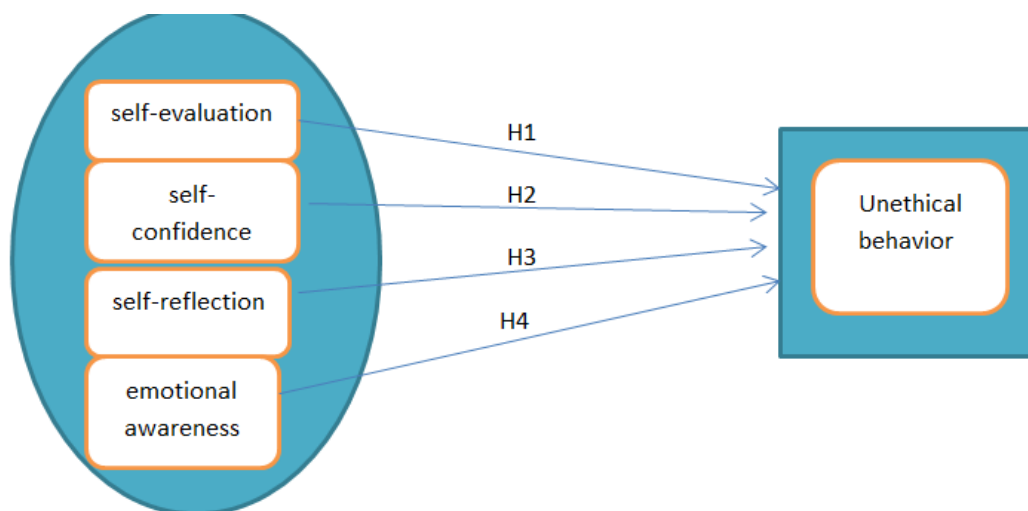
3- Method

3.1 population sampling

The study employed descriptive analytic methodologies. The questionnaire was used. We pick a sample from a specific population based on specific criteria, deeming it sufficient to accurately represent the population. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) used the sample table to determine the sample number. The entire universe is made up of 450 people. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison's research, the minimum number of samples required to achieve a 99% confidence interval and 5% margin of error is 107. In this study, the number of samples collected was 84. We administered a survey to 122 participants, who included teaching staff, teaching assistants, and technical personnel. However, the study deemed only 84 of them eligible for inclusion. Due to time and financial constraints, we limited the study to employees exclusively from the Musayyib Technical Institute in Babylon province, instead of including personnel from all university branches. The logistical challenges of reaching the requisite population led to the decision to conduct the study at the Musayyib Technical Institute with a small sample. Applying sampling theory revealed that only 84 out of the 122 samples were considered appropriate.

3.2 .research model

The working framework and the set of variables for the model created based on the research hypotheses are shown in Figure 2 below



3.3 Hypotheses of the study

H1: There is an effect of self-evaluation on unethical behavior in the workplace.

H2: There is an effect of self-confidence on unethical behavior in the workplace.

H3: There is an effect of self-reflection on unethical behavior in the workplace.

H4: There is an effect of emotional awareness on unethical behavior in the workplace.

3.4. Data Collection Tool

The research's statistical analysis relied on data obtained directly from primary sources. Data from publications, statistics, and web pages inform the conceptual area. The questionnaire incorporates the scales used in the questionnaires that were specifically planned and developed to fulfill the study objectives. Time and cost constraints limit it to a specific number. The questionnaire comprises two components. The initial segment encompasses a designated space for gathering demographic data. The second section develops scale expressions to gauge the level of self-awareness and unethical behavior in the workplace. We presented the respondents with a questionnaire in the form of a five-point Likert-type rating scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

3.5. Research Methodology

The research methodology involves descriptive analysis and focuses on exploring the phenomenon to obtain conclusive answers to the defined questions. Most research considers descriptive analysis as a fundamental element, as it offers a suitable response to a specific research question, enabling comprehension of it (Loeb et al., 2017). We analyzed the questionnaire data collected from the respondents using the primary programmer of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 25) to conduct the necessary analysis. We conducted the study at Musayyib Technical Institute in Babylon Province from April 1st to April 30th, 2024. Prior to executing the test, the study implemented normality and missing value tests. The analysis involved the calculation of kurtosis and skewness coefficients, as well as the creation of histograms. We provided observations and interpretations based on the obtained data.

3.6. Finding

The results were obtained using a five-point Likert scale, as depicted in Table 2 below.

The results from Table 3 indicate that 98% of the respondents who filled out the questionnaire were younger than 40 years old. This aligns with the preference of business settings to hire individuals who are in their younger years. The results indicate that 76% of the respondents were male. 34% teaching assistants 28% Teaching staff 23 technical personnel.

Table 2 likert model

Very percentage	High	High rate	moderate	Poor	Very poor
5	4	3	2	1	

Table 3 personal data

	Statement	frequency	Percentage
Age	Less then 30 years	37	44%
	30-40 years old	45	54%
	41-50 years old	2	2%
	51 years and above	0	0%
Gender	Male	63	76%
	Female	21	24%
Position	Teaching staff	28	33%
	teaching assistants	34	40%
	technical personnel	23	26%
Education	Bachelor's degree	12	14%
	Master degree	61	72%
	Doctorate	11	13%

This outcome confirms that the targeted demographic demonstrated a clear interest in the survey's subject and that only those who expressed interest received it. The data reveals that 72% of the participants own a master's degree, while 14% hold a bachelor's diploma and 11% have obtained a PhD.

Referring to Table 4, which tests the dimensions of self-awareness (Independent variable), clearly shows that the total arithmetic mean of the variable reached 4.050, indicating a good level, while the total standard deviation of the variable reached 0.773 and the coefficient of variation reached 0.195, indicating a level of dispersion of approximately 19.5% and a level of homogeneity of approximately 19.5%. The results show that the employees at the Musayyib Technical Institute have a high level of self-awareness, which positively impacts their self-confidence, self-evaluation, and emotional awareness, ultimately influencing their behavior at work.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for the self-awareness

	Mean	SD	Coefficient of variation
self-evaluation	4.14	0.75	0.18
self-confidence	4.02	0.75	0.18
self-reflection	4.08	0.76	0.18
emotional awareness.	4.05	0.77	0.19
Total self-awareness variable	4.05	0.77	0.19

Referring to Table 5 In this paragraph, the results of the response of the research sample to the dependent variable are represented, (unethical behavior) analyzed and interpreted.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics for unethical behavior

	Mean	SD	Coefficient of variation
misuse of time and resources	4.02	0.75	0.188
Theft& bribery	3.78	0.92	0.24
Corruption	4.22	0.71	0.16
Withdrawal	4.18	0.74	0.177
Total unethical behavior variable	4.05	0.78	0.19

It is clear from the table relating to the test of unethical behaviors in the workplace and its sub-dimensions that the total arithmetic mean of the variable reached (4.053), a good level, while the standard deviation of the total variable reached (0.782) and the coefficient of variation reached (0.194), i.e., a level of dispersion of approximately 19.4%. And at a level of homogeneity of approximately 80.6%, the percentage indicates a high level of consistency in the sample's answers. This confirms that the respondents have sufficient knowledge of the unethical behaviors that occur, as well as the existence of practices of unethical behavior in the workplace, of which they are aware.

3.8. Hypothesis results

It is clear from Table 6 that the results indicate that there is a significant effect for the total variable (self-awareness) in five influence relationships, that is, at a rate of (100%), that is, there is an effect on all dimensions of avoiding unethical behavior. It is clear that the value of the fixed term (α) reached (1.223), which This means that self-awareness is able to avoid unethical behaviors. The value is (α), even if the level of the independent variable (self-awareness) is equal to zero, while the value of the slope coefficient (β) reached (0.624), that is, a high level, which indicates a change of one unit. In self-awareness, it leads to a change in the unethical behaviors of the organization studied by (62%). As for the value of the coefficient of determination (R^2), it reached (0.389). This means that (38%) of the variance

occurs in the organization’s ability to avoid unethical behaviors. The self-awareness variable explains it, while other factors not included in the hypothetical model or random errors account for the remaining percentage. The overall level reached a value of (sig), which is less than the significance level (0.05), indicating that the self-awareness variable has a significant effect. Avoid unethical behavior and accept the main hypothesis (there is a significant effect of the self-awareness variable on avoiding unethical behavior in the workplace)

Table 6 Hypothesis results

unethical behavior	self-awareness	misuse of time and resources	Theft& bribery	corruption	Withdrawal	unethical behavior	Significant relations	
							Significant	t
self-evaluation	A	2.616	2.308	1.469	1.168	1.890	5	100%
	B	0.283	0.37	.529	.451	.533	5	100%
	R ²	.080	.140	.280	.205	.284	5	100%
	sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		Significant	significant	significant	significant	Significant		
self-confidence	A	2.069	1.557	1.772	2.350	2.597	5	100%
	B	.276	.422	.521	.341	.498	5	100%
	R ²	.076	.178	.271	.116	.248	5	100%
	sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		Significant	significant	significant	significant	Significant		
self-reflection	A	2.620	2.073	1.454	1.762	.977	5	100%
	B	.276	.422	.521	.341	.498	5	100%
	R ²	.076	.178	.271	.116	.248	5	100%
	sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		Significant	significant	significant	significant	Significant		
emotional awareness.	A	2.573	2.436	1.612	1.581	2.051	5	100%
	B	.349	.410	.593	.454	.583	5	100%
	R ²	.122	.168	.352	.206	.340	5	100%
	sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
		Significant	significant	significant	significant	Significant		
self-	A	2.057	1.647	.620	.566	1.223	5	100%

awareness							
B	.356	.466	.626	.486	.624	5	100%
R ²	.127	.217	.392	.236	.389	5	100%
sig	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
	Significant	significan t	significant	significant	Signif icant		

4. Conclusion

1. This paper has exclusively focused on one aspect, namely self-awareness, that may have an impact on unethical behavior, however there could be additional contributing factors.
2. The results show descriptive statistics for the dimensions of the independent variable self-awareness. came in first place after self-reflection in terms of relative importance, because it obtained an arithmetic mean (4.14), which is the highest compared to other means. In terms of importance, self-reflection ranked second. In terms of the unethical behavior variable's relative importance, corruption in the accounting circles ranked first with a value of 4.22, followed by withdrawal with a value of 4.18. This confirms the presence of these dimensions in the study's organizational sample.
3. There is a direct influence between self-awareness and its dimensions on avoiding unethical behavior. the percentages were high for all dimensions. This refer to that employees' self-awareness influences their avoidance of unethical behavior, serves as evidence of their self-confidence, fosters cooperation between the organization and its employees, and demonstrates the presence of organizational justice.

5. Recommendations

1. The Institute is required to focus on the importance of self-awareness by developing self-confidence through educational and guidance activities and programs, with the aim of motivating individuals working to develop self-awareness.
2. The necessity of preparing an ethical code that includes undesirable behaviors during work and setting laws that limit the occurrence of any unethical behavior.
3. The researched organization must build an organizational culture that supports positive behavior and encourages the submission of innovative and creative ideas that contribute to investing employees' perceptions of self-awareness.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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