**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL BELIEFS DRIVE BEHAVIOR OF EMPLOYEES**

# Abstract

Today’s organizations are operating in a highly competitive and changing environment ‎that ‎pushes them to adapt their organizational structures to such ‎environments continuously. ‎However, the ethical behavior of employees is considered a bridge to the organization’s success ‎, driven by positive beliefs. This study's purpose of examining the psychological and ethical ‎beliefs' that influence employees' behavior at the workplace through a literature review. This ‎paper uses two terms: "ethical beliefs” and “psychological beliefs.” They both ‎are different but can significantly influence the behavior of employees. Positive psychological and ‎strong ethical beliefs drive ethical behaviors at the workplace, such as honesty, accountability, ‎fairness, responsibility, trust, and integrity, which lead to better performance, a productive team, and ‎positivity in the workplace. It helps to develop a professional relationship with employees, ‎effective communication, accountability, and professionalism at work. While negative ‎psychological and weak ethical beliefs drive unethical behavior, including taking credit for other ‎hard work, abuse, verbal harassment, violence, lack of ambitions and professionalism, theft, ‎corrupt practices, etc. Finally, the arguments demonstrate that some ethical beliefs are perceived ‎to be more objective and appropriate than psychological beliefs. The ethical beliefs of workers ‎considered more formal than psychological beliefs. ‎.

***Key words****: Ethical Beliefs; Psychological Beliefs, Ethical Behavior; Workplace*

# Introduction

Human beliefs and behaviors remain a mystery. It also needs much more work would be done to understand them. Some questions remain unsolved regarding beliefs and behaviors (Seitz & Angel, 2020). Scientists have been trying to find out the mind's true potential, for instance, the nature of intuition and extra-sensory perception. ‎According to scientists, we have not yet tapped into our brain’s full potential (Seitz, Paloutzian, & Angel, 2016). It is an important facet of this involves understanding how the system of belief is formed. Another question is how it affects our behavior. Another important aspect of this complex question is the growing awareness that exists of reality in the human mind primarily. It indicates that a person's reality perception is different or unique to another person.

Hence, it is based on our own beliefs, emotions, thoughts, and experiences, sensory, perceptual and biological processes. If one person is biologically unique from the other one, we are also psychologically different from each other which makes us behave differently (Seitz et al., 2016). The majority of our behaviors are driven by our beliefs. When we create a belief, we prefer to collect information that supports our belief and also filter out information that contradicts it. The unsupported beliefs can cause psychological problems that create significant distortions or drive unethical behavior that can be treated (Zezelj & Lazarevic, 2019).

Moreover, understanding the psychological problem is the first step of cognitive-behavioral treatments that enable a person to think more accurately and it is also better for the health of people, especially workers (Short, 2008). Using the example of the four minutes mile, we can understand the impact that belief has on our behavior and ultimately on our achievement (Smith, 2019). In this story, individuals were measuring the speed of humans for 80 years or more, starting around the mid of the 1800s. Today, many experts concluded that for humans it was impossible to run a mile in under four minutes. Therefore, beliefs are identified as convictions and assumptions, which people generally hold to be true, usually without evidence or actual proof, and considered as basic assumptions that we make ourselves. It indicated that how people think things are and what people expect things to significantly affect their behavior that can be ethical or unethical (Schwitzgebel, 2021).

Belief is potent as it drives our behavior. Beliefs are behind every communication, decision, and action (Seitz & Angel, 2020). Sometimes, they are made up of many unidentified thoughts filled with the content of emotions accumulated since childhood. Due to that, several childhood beliefs are largely more charged than adult beliefs are as those are unresolved and unsatisfied. However, childhood beliefs fade due to the emotional maturity and experience of adults sometimes but often they don't (Seitz et al., 2016). For instance, if the individual believes since childhood that the sky is blue, this belief could either be rated positively (if one likes the blue (color) most and thinks a red sky would be worse), or the belief could be negative (if one dislike blue (color) and believes red sky would be nicer).

In the above example, the beliefs serve as the basis or foundation of attitudes. The central question in the debate is whether our beliefs drive our behavior. Is it always or ever morally right to believe based on enough evidence, or when there is no evidence, do you withhold your belief? What are the differences between psychological and ethical beliefs? Do our ethical beliefs drive ethical behaviors or not? In addition, Are psychological beliefs drive ethical behaviors or not? Firstly, the main question is how and when beliefs are formed? (Porot & Mandelbaum, 2021)

The system of belief development probably initiates with humanity itself. 1000 years ago, primates evolved into human beings consciously thinking through a process called a revolution of cognition. It is the movement of an intellectual, which initiate the interdisciplinary study of the brain and its process, in the 1950s (Brandt, 2022). Today, it became a science of cognition. The ability of humans to communicate and think abstractly about things beyond the "now and here" may have contributed to the development of a religious, and spiritual world (Brandt, 2022).

It mainly originated as religious and cultural beliefs (Seitz & Angel, 2020). During the Era of Foundations 8000 BCE - 600 CE (Pollard, 2008), Most major systems of beliefs developed that influenced the modern world. Philosophical and religious beliefs help to define complex questions of human existence, for instance, What is the nature of human interactions/relationships?, What happens after death? or Where did we come from? (Porot & Mandelbaum, 2021). Today, Belief systems include [acosmism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acosmism), religious, objectivism, supernatural, cultural, ethical, moral, psychological, and rituals; spiritual, epistemological beliefs, etc. are considered the main factors of behavior determined by the conceptual and theoretical models.

## Research Question

How do psychological and ethical beliefs influence the behavior of the employees at works?

## Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze the psychological and ethical beliefs influence on employees' behavior at the workplace, through a literature review.

# Theoretical Background

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) proposed by Ajzen (1991) stated that there is a link between beliefs and behavior. It maintains that three main components, namely, beliefs, subjective norms, and attitude, together shape the behavior of an individual (Peach, Jimmieson, & White, 2005). Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) theory proposed by Aaron Beck (1960) stated that our behavior, body sensation, emotions, and thoughts are connected. What we think and do influences the way we feel. The model of cognitive-behavioral theory shows in Figure 1. Talking therapy by CBT may help a person to solve any psychological problems by altering the way he/she thinks and behave. It is used to treat anxiety and depression that drives unethical behavior (Sauer‐Zavala, Southward, & Semcho, 2022).

**Figure 1 Conceptual model between beliefs and behavior**

# 3. Literature Review

## 3.1 Beliefs

According to the philosophers, the term “belief” refers to the attitude that people have. Whenever, people regard it as true (Seitz & Angel, 2020). In the relevant sense, people believe many of the things that are considered quite mundane for instance, we have a head, it is the 21st century, a coffee mug is on the desk etc. (Busse, 2021; Chignell, 2018; Porot & Mandelbaum, 2021; Schwitzgebel, 2021; Smith, 2019). (Schwitzgebel, 2021) argued that forming beliefs is one of the most important features and basics of the mind. Its concept plays a vital role in both epistemology and philosophy of mind. Similarly, epistemology revolves around questions about how or when our beliefs are qualified and justified as knowledge and how beliefs affect our behavior.

Previous researchers explained that beliefs drive behaviors that can be ethical or unethical (Busse, 2021; Porot & Mandelbaum, 2021; Sauer‐Zavala et al., 2022). Busse (2021) argued that positive psychological beliefs drive ethical behavior that leads to increased job performance, and employee levels. As a motivating factor, it encourages employees to work hard and produce quality outcomes, satisfy employees and reduce turnover intention. Seitz et al. (2016) argued that the long scholarly discourse in philosophy and theology of Western on religion, faith, and spirituality, explained what a system of belief is. Other aspects of the system of beliefs are remaining that should have to identify.

Moreover, research in cognitive neuroscience demonstrated belief in human capacity. The study provided evidence indicating that believing is a function of our brain that results in representations of probabilistic with personal attributes such as the value that guides the behavior of humans. Similarly, personal beliefs are the same function and the building blocks parts of individual behavior. Constantly, the individual is faced with boundaries that are imposed by the individual existing surroundings. The universal dimensions of peer group and interpersonal are social cognition that guide the behavior of an individual that is considered an important phenomenon that affects both the personal and professional life of an individual and needs to be handled.

Porot, N., & Mandelbaum, E. (2021) argued that belief has been advancing rapidly, All aspects of cognitive science are brought together... Most people rely on the belief that they can understand and predict behavior. Furthermore, belief research offers evidence for robust generalizations, including about how humans change, store and fix their beliefs. They identified that psychological beliefs remain unexplored whether they drive ethical behavior or not. Therefore, in that way the new aspect of belief holds promise, questions should be illuminated not only about the mind architecture but also about how to develop our informational modern world.

Izraeli (1988) argued that Ethics determines how an individual ought to will or not and how an individual does will, as it occurs with references to wrongness and rightness. Ethics is the morality of the choices that an individual makes (Sense of morals and mind). In contrast, Goodwin and Darley (2009) argued that psychology deals with the volition process, as it simply occurs without wrongness or rightness references; It is studying the human brain (mind), When we consider the ethical and psychological beliefs, they both drive the behavior of human but their points of view are not similar. In this paper, two terms have been used that include "ethical beliefs" and "psychological beliefs". They both are different but can significantly influence the behavior of employees at the workplace, which has discussed below,

### 3.1.1 Psychological Beliefs

It refers to the own principles of an individual regarding wrong and right. Behavior is the outcome of a person’s beliefs attitudes and values (Chignell, 2018). Positive psychological beliefs are characterized by self-efficacy degree to achieve goals, having optimism about the future, adapting, and preservations to achieve goals. She, Rasiah, Turner, Guptan, and Sharif Nia (2021) argued that psychological beliefs at work namely locus of control, attitude, and knowledge related to finance drive negative financial behavior among Malaysian working adults. Furnham (2021) argued that if an individual believes that he/she is competent, capable, and deserving of a dream job, During the interview his/her interviewer is most likely to seek out opportunities that will help him to achieve his goals. High levels of resilience, optimism, hope, and self-efficacy are thought to be predictive of positive behaviors. In addition, if an individual thinks that I can do more work in a limited time as I am a smart worker or I can do multitasking work. It will enhance the confidence or self-efficacy of the employee.

In contrast, Gricus and Wysiekierski (2022) argued that negative psychological beliefs drive unprofessional behavior at work that leads to anxiety, and depression at work, which significantly lower the performance of employees. Zezelj and Lazarevic (2019) argued that irrational beliefs such as fear of death affect individual rational thinking that leading to negative societal and personal outcomes. Moreover, Zacher and Rudolph (2021) said that if employees believe that they do not have enough time to do all day works in 5 hours or I am not doing well so there is someone else fault or the system we work in is not good, indicated negative psychological belief. It will create frustration and disappointment. Similarly, Seitz and Angel (2020) if an individual deeply believes that I am not worthy and enough or I am not capable of doing this work, I am worthless, inadequate and a failure, Human cannot be trusted, People are malicious or People will hurt me, etc. Those types of beliefs are toxic to individuals and others. These drive unethical behavior. It can decreases productivity, performance, and reputation at work.

### 3.1.2 Ethical Beliefs

Ethical beliefs are the moral principles set, that guide behavior of an individual. That is shaped by religious influences, and practices of cultural and social norms. It relates to the conduct of “wrong” and “right” (Feng, Keng-Highberger, Li, & Savani, 2022). Where, Ethics refers to rules offered by source (external), for instance, principles in religion and codes of conduct in workplaces. Ford and Richardson (2013) argued that strong ethical belief drives ethical behaviors that indicate a high level of passion for any work employees do. On other hand, weak ethical beliefs drive unethical behavior, and a lack of ambition and professionalism in the workplace (Suseno, Chang, Hudik, & Fang, 2021). For instance, an organization you are working in might pick a set of core beliefs namely integrity, trust, responsibility, equity, fairness, accountability, and honesty. The person who believes in ethics can differentiate between bad, good, unjust, just, wrong, and right in terms of individual behavior.

Feng et al. (2022) argued that ethically positive employees are hardworking as well as honest, driven by principles of decency and fairness principles at the organization. It boosts overall morale and increases organizational performance. Brieger, De Clercq, and Meynhardt (2020) said that there is a significant relationship between beliefs (namely social value creation) and behavior that enhanced work-related performance of the individual, but the process might be different with an orientation of occupational and personal that significantly reduce burnout and increase satisfaction and work engagement. Campagna, Mislin, Dirks, and Elfenbein (2021) argued that ethical belief namely trustworthiness drives the cooperative behavior of an employee to increase the opportunity of willingness to do better performance in the workplace.

## 3.2 Behavior

Behavior is the way an individual reacts or acts (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021). It is important to understand that ethical belief drives ethical behaviors that indicate a high level of passion for any work employees do. Hence, the company should set a core of beliefs that enhance integrity, trust, responsibility, honesty, accountability, fairness, and equity, (Chignell, 2018). In contrast, Leslie, King, and Clair (2019) said that weak ethical beliefs drive unethical behavior that indicated a lack of ambition and professionalism. Suseno et al. (2021) argued that organizations that have established policies of behavior can achieve long-term success and improve their reputation. It drives a vital role in bringing profits to a business in many ways. An employee with ethical belief can attract customers more which lead to an increase in the profits and sales of the company. A company's good reputation can also build by honest and loyal staff. It also helps to attract new clients/customers. It also maintains the high position of the company in the market.

Employee behavior at the workplace plays an important role. Employees who behave more efficiently and professionally become irreplaceable and are hired as permanent for long period. It is more formal in the profession (Furnham, 2021). Behavior in the workplace shows how an individual communicates with their clients or colleagues through both non-verbal and verbal communication. Fleischman, Johnson, and Walker (2019) argued that ethical/unethical behavior of employees could lead to better performance, productive team, favorable/unfavorable situation in the organization, and positivity. The positive beliefs lead to ethical behavior that is the best choice, which guides to help someone in need, keep promises and tell the truth (Chignell, 2018).

**Figure 2 Beliefs Drive Behavior**

# Discussion

Understanding how beliefs affect behaviors and how they form is important because it can aid understanding of social phenomena like group decision making, obedience to authority, attraction, impression formation, aggression, helping, discrimination, prejudice, and ethical behaviors of employees at work (Smith, 2019). Based on the above theoretical and literature discussion on the beliefs and behavior relationship, the research model has been developed, shown in Figure 2. Many peoples from initial experiences that were reinforced over the period constructed beliefs as Protection Walls. Unless an individual determines the belief validity, it will hold maybe for a long time or lifetime. These beliefs can only provide superficial relief. Not every belief can ever satisfy the real need that lies behind it (Furnham, 2021). This indicated that we have become prisoners of our own beliefs. There are complex systems, which can be bit by bit untangled. Beliefs are formed due to conscious awareness. It limits our choices. For instance, an individual believes that I am (Type-A) personality so I cannot change my impatience (Suseno et al., 2021). Another example is that individual belief that my quality of work is high than other employees. We have various types of beliefs that control what/how we do our work (Furnham, 2021).

Similarly, those are unchallenged and unexplored. They develop primarily our expectations and assumptions about other person’s experiences, our own lives, etc. Scientists have been working to understand a model of neurological that determine how belief is formed and how it impacts our behavior (Smith, 2019). Ethical behavior is not for workers (employees) only but also for Employers as they are also bound to the ethics of the workplace. For instance, in the workplace ethical behaviors includes developing a professional relationship with employees, obeying the rules of the company, effective communication, taking responsibility, integrity, honesty, and discipline. fair, respect, work smarter, accountability, professionalism, uphold trust, show initiative without being told, and mutual respect for other workers (Colleagues) at the organization. It ensures maximum productivity and positive outcomes in the workplace. And could be pivotal for the growth of a career that is significantly driven by beliefs, attitudes, or norms (Smith, 2019).

# 5. Conclusion

The above arguments of this paper demonstrate that each individual perceives ethical beliefs differently, and some ethical beliefs are perceived to be more appropriate and objective than psychological beliefs. It also shows differences between psychological and ethical beliefs as negative psychological beliefs form behavior that is more unethical than ethical beliefs (Nordahl & Wells, 2020). If an individual enables to understand that the negative beliefs shape his/her unethical behavior then he/she can apply various strategies to change his/her unethical behavior into ethical behavior by changing his/her beliefs that also will affect his/her "performance."

Ethical beliefs can be strong or weak. Similarly, psychological beliefs can be positive or negative. Positive psychological beliefs and strong ethical beliefs drive ethical behaviors at the workplace that includes developing a professional relationship with employees, obeying the rules of the company, effective communication, and responsible employee, working smarter, and accountability, professionalism, upholding trust, show initiative, creativity, and mutual respect for workers. In contrast, negative psychological and weak ethical beliefs drive unethical behavior including violence, verbal harassment, abuse, taking credit for other works, non-related work of the office, lack of ambitions and professionalism, extended breaks, theft, corrupt practices, etc (Nordahl & Wells, 2020).

Ethically act of employees enhance benefits and improves business outcomes. It can increase trust, organizational commitment, the performance of the employee, satisfaction of job, and behaviors of organizational citizenship. Positive psychological beliefs encourage, support, motivate employees, and make them confident. It also helps businesses in product design, build better workspaces and foster healthy behavior. It supports employees to think about self-improvement and self-efficacy. For instance, an individual believes that I am capable of continuous self-improvement and I have enough time to accomplish my task. Negative beliefs could well be holding employee career back that would avoid by the employees. Moreover, People with a strong work ethic are more likely to be hired by employers. A person with this characteristic is a better employee who gets the job done no matter what. Their daily activities require less supervision than others do, and they are capable of accomplishing bigger tasks (Fleischman et al., 2019).

HRM also plays an important part in hiring professionals with good ethics. Attracts talented employees with the same values, and ethics and minimizes the costs of recruitment (Fleischman et al., 2019). Future research can be conducted to get the most influential drivers of ethical and psychological beliefs' influence on behavior in organizations through both quantitative and qualitative studies. Psychological beliefs and their impact on behavior are relatively unexplored or have few papers only. Therefore, it should consider an important factor that significantly affects the behavior of employees.

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