

Researcher examines the emotions and ethics in decision-making

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Sukumarakurup Krishnakumar, assistant professor of management, and Doug Rymph, co-wrote the paper, "Uncomfortable Ethical Decisions: The Role of Negative Emotions and Emotional Intelligence in Ethical Decision-making," which has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Managerial Issues*.

"The intriguing relationship between morality and emotions goes a long way," Krishnakumar said. "The previous few years have seen a number of accounting/management scandals and ethical violations in the [business world](#) (e.g. Enron). In this paper, we examined how emotions could influence managerial ethical decision-making, and the impact of emotional intelligence on the ethicality of decisions. Though it is widely known that ethical dilemmas involving other employees/managers are inherently emotional, not many studies have looked at this phenomenon."

In two experimental studies, they found that such strong negative emotions as [sadness](#) and anger influenced individuals to make less ethical decisions, and that emotional intelligent individuals were able to make ethical decisions against the biasing influence of those [negative emotions](#).

"As far as we are aware, this is the first [empirical study](#) to test the direct influence of emotional intelligence in ethical decision-making in a business context," Krishnakumar said. "In light of these findings, organizations should consider selection and training procedures that will

enable the use of emotional intelligence at work. This includes using well-established and validated tests for selecting and/or re-assigning employees and training procedures to enhance emotional intelligence skills of existing employees."

Provided by North Dakota State University

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