

Received: October 2023 Accepted: December 2023

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58262/ks.v12i1.301>

Ethical Decision Making by Arab Universities' Advisory and Shadow Committees: Forms of Corruption, Implications and Solutions

Raed Awashreh¹, Shamma Al-Naqbi², Moaz Gharib³

Abstract

Shadow and advisory committees among colleges play crucial roles in influencing decision-making processes and determining Arab universities' functions and programs. Both shadow and advisory committees have specific goals and purposes, while shadow committees represent students' scientific, practical, systematic, and noncurricular interests. Advisory committees can improve programs and align them with industry standards. This article examines the potential challenges of corruption in universities' advisory and shadow committees, explores its consequences, and proposes strategies to prevent and address it. The article adopts a descriptive approach and qualitative method through interviews using secondary and primary data to explore corruption and reveal indicators such as bias, nepotism, and personal enrichment. Different forms of corruption within advisory bodies that delve into the underlying causes of such misconduct are investigated, and some strategies are outlined to prevent and address corruption effectively. The paper reveals that corruption within universities' committees significantly threatens the transparency, accountability, and integrity of management decision-making. It concluded that universities could ensure the effectiveness and legitimacy of their committees by promoting a culture of transparency, strengthening oversight mechanisms, and promoting ethical behaviour. Corruption within university committees poses a significant threat to the integrity of decision-making and the public reputation of academic institutions.

Keywords: Committee, Corruption; Governance, Ethical Decision Making, Universities.

Introduction

Universities are multifunctional organizations that make significant contributions to culture, research, education, and social advancement in many ways. In other words, universities prioritize learning, growth, and scientific inquiry. The first perception of universities as prestigious centres earns respect for them and appreciation for their staff as well. An exemplary understanding of universities is that they are places of expertise that contribute through various means to developing the policies of nations and organizations and leading scientific research and various development works. However, reality shows that universities as a society do not differ much from the social context in which they are located, contradicting this lovely picture. Additionally, universities play multiple, specialized, and scientific roles; therefore, there is a need for committees that are necessary and supportive of the work of universities and that contribute to the development of university shadow committees, which are designed to provide alternative views and critical analysis. Shadow committees that were created to provide alternative perspectives and critical analysis could inadvertently become breeding grounds for corruption. This article seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the various forms of corruption that may emerge within these committees and to shed light on the complex dynamics that facilitate such behaviour (Sorokina, 2023).

¹ College of Business, A'Sharqiah University, Oman. ORCIDID: 0000-0002-2252-0299, Email: Raed.raya2020@gmail.com, Email: raed.awashra@asu.edu.om

² Assistant Professor, Rabdan Academy, UAE. ORCID: 0000-0002-3611-8460, Email: shalmaqbi@ra.ac.ae

³ Associate Professor, Dhofar University. ORCIDID: 0000-0002-7794-7900, Email: mnagib@du.edu.om

The study aims to show the corruption that appears in universities, specifically in the formation of committees that are supposed to play an advisory and developmental role for the benefit of the organization, as the practices recorded in some universities deal with these committees in the form of public relations, while some have gone as far as saying that they play a role like a false witness.

The literature has addressed advisory and shadow committees in organizations with less intention toward corruption and less concern for academic institutions. Few studies have addressed the corruption side of shadow and advisory committees at organizations, and higher education has been excluded. Previous studies have focused on the quality of education, cheating, and pluralism (Osipian, 2008), but fewer studies have evaluated university decision-making in relation to good governance and the ethical practices of advisory and shadow committees. This paper aims to address the issue of what is occurring frankly inside some universities in Arab countries.

The main question centred on how corruption appears in university committees and how it can be dealt with or confronted. The basic question revolved around how corruption appears in university committees and how we can deal with or confront it based on the evidence that comes from the field, despite the small sample. This is because the study seeks to prove the existence of the phenomenon of corruption and shed light on it in preparation for addressing it.

The conceptualization framework is centralized around the role of advisory committees that are playing in all types of organizations: government, nongovernment, and private organizations especially large organizations (Petracca, 2016; Welch & Gullickson, 2004). The major role is to produce ideas, options, recommendations, and solutions and map the decision to the concerned responsible people and units (Hussain, Hassan, & Hasan, 2015; Community Initiative, 2023). As an expert advisory committee's calls are taken into consideration and do count in official meetings and hearings, it is difficult or not easy to justify taking a role against their positions (Holland & Lane, 2018). Advisory bodies exist in the government to discuss and develop various policies to support professional management and work to assist in decision-making, including the processes of discussion, consultation, and deliberation and how these committees work (Kim, 2023). In NGOs, they provide several kinds of technical expertise: political, economic, policy, and human rights. In the private sector, they play similar roles but with wide functions, including financial, profit-risk, and marketing issues (Dar, 2015). In addition, advisory committees are both organizational requirement for the purpose of ensuring rightness and good governance and a government requirement (Empowering Local Governments, 2016). Advisory committees at universities are an organizational requirement and a ministry requirement. Without these committees, the correctness of the decision is not guaranteed; thus, universities are treated as if they are a one-person institution on the one hand and do not allow for the right decision on the other hand. The mandatory standards and requirements of government agencies should be considered (Petracca, 2016).

Two important issues for advising and shadow committees are the process of advisory committees, which might range from hearing one to many voices, discussing and voting, and taking recommendations or not. Many factors can affect the process of the advisory work, ranging from personal member interests to building small or large corporations, internal organization politics, seniority, and superiority when staff are working in their country or not, unprotected people, afraid people, and the usage of manipulation tools (Tehrani, 2023; Bebitoglu, 2022). In the end, both dimensions can be taken here: good governance practices in organizations and people's interests, including money and fear.

Literature Review

This section contains a literature review that covers important aspects related to university's committees, such as advisory committees, shadow committees, and good governance. Sounds like the paper is wearing the liens of institutional good governance practice. Dominating decision-making by top management and superior faculty members at universities turned unethical, or corrupted practices, into common practices (Alvesson & Spicer, 2019), which turned the second practice into heritage heritage-acceptable practices.

University Roles

In general, universities play a significant role in community development, research, and teaching (Sedlacek, 2013). This means that universities have a variety of roles and jobs that can be adjusted based on their current and future goals and objectives. Some of these roles include providing education and training, as both are major functions of universities for students and the community. The university provides a wide range of courses, degrees, and academic programs that aid students in acquiring the knowledge, abilities, skills, and credentials necessary for their desired careers. Additionally, universities carry out several studies and research projects via their centres and faculty members, which are supposed to lead to innovations and suggest solutions for various issues on national and international level. Another role is disseminating knowledge and information across communities through books, journals, and brochures and promoting society's heritage. In addition to deep community engagement, as universities are accountable for societal issues and local communities, colleges must promote and enhance critical thinking and analysis. Universities should promote and provide both lifetime learning and professional growth (Filho, 2011; Bayuo et al., 2020).

People look to advance their professions by providing continuing education, executive education, and skill enhancement programs. Universities that participate in international research and scientific collaboration, make recommendations to policymakers, and unquestionably have an impact on decision makers and society in terms of the economy and politics in general; universities are multifaceted organizations that make substantial and varied contributions to culture, research, education, and social advancement (Al-Mohammad, 2023; El-Awad, 2023).

Advisory and Shadow Committees

Advisory committees serve a different purpose than shadow committees. Advisory committees are often composed of outside experts, industry professionals, alumni, and/or faculty. These committees provide advice, guidance, and expertise to the college administration and faculty members in various matters related to curricula, program development and review, and industry trends, with a focus on linking them to industry sectors to gain a realistic character, in addition to many developmental issues (Chand & Dahiya 2008).

Advisory committees may usually consist of individuals who have experience in an area relevant to the college's programs. This may include professional members of the industry, successful alumni, educators, and other stakeholders. The main function of advisory committees is to provide insights and recommendations to help colleges align their programs and curricula with current industry needs and best practices (Chand & Dahiya, 2008; Attree, 2022). Committee members can provide feedback on curriculum relevance, program outcomes, emerging trends, and potential areas for improvement. Advisory committees contribute to program reviews, accreditation processes, and curriculum evaluations. Their contributions help ensure that the college's programs remain up-to-date and effective in preparing students for careers in their respective fields (Attree, 2022).

Advisory committees or boards are bodies that are formed to mimic the functions of actual boards or committees within universities. These shadow committees typically consist of faculty, staff, students, and

other stakeholders interested in the decision-making processes and governance of the university. The primary role of official advisory committees that are formed at the college and university levels includes enhancing transparency and accountability among colleges and universities, defending the interests of students and faculty members, reviewing and analysing current policies and how they affect the various aspects of the institution, and proposing better alternatives (Stensaker et al., 2021). Additionally, there are shadow committees composed of employees in both the academic and administrative and other student shadow committees, as if they play a parallel role to the official committees. These committees include a union, a club, a student council, a faculties' committee, and a students' committee.

Student shadow committees, also known as shadow councils or student advisory committees, are used by university students as a way to provide input, comments, and suggestions on various aspects of university policies, programs, and decisions. These committees are often student-led and aim to represent the interests of the student community. The formation and structure of shadow committees can vary from one country to another, as they may be formed by election or appointment, and the area of their union movement may be limited or wide. It may also be under the name of a club or a committee whose formation stems from several students interested in a topic or like-minded colleagues who share interests or goals. This group of students then gets together to discuss their goals and the areas they would like to address. The stated goal of student shadow committees is to defend students' interests and work to improve the educational process. This may include engaging with university officials, faculty, and other stakeholders to discuss issues such as curriculum development, campus policies, facilities, and student services (Southgate, 2009). Shadow committees also differ from state to state in terms of who reports to them.

Corruption and its Manifestations

The misuse of authority, clout, or resources for one's own advantage or to further a particular agenda, frequently at the expense of the university's mission and the best interests of its students and faculty, is corruption in university committees. There are different ways in which this corruption can reveal itself. In general, the term "corruption" refers to dishonest or immoral activity that involves the misuse of authority or a position for one's own advantage or benefit (Ashforth and Anand, 2003). The values of academic integrity, fairness, and openness may all be undermined by corruption in universities in a variety of ways (Jaber & Alzboun, 2022). Nepotism and favouritism, abuse of influence and facilitating the issuance of academic degrees, research that does not meet applicable standards for business, conflicts of interest, and accepting gifts that have an impact on admissions, grades, promotions, or research results are some of the frequent manifestations of corruption in universities (Awashreh, 2019). These instances of corruption can have far-reaching negative effects, including a decrease in the prestige of academics and researchers, harm to educational institutions, and hindrance to actual academic advancement. Transparency, moral conduct, and effective institutional governance are necessary for combating corruption in universities (Southgate, 2009; Stensaker et al., 2021).

Good Governance

Good governance refers to the effective and responsible management of an organization to ensure transparency, accountability, fairness, and ethical behaviour in all aspects of its operations. It involves creating clear structures, processes, and policies that enhance the institution's mission; uphold integrity (Jaber & Alzboun, 2022); and serve the educational process and science for students, faculty, staff, and the wider community.

Some of the key principles and components of good governance in universities are as follows: transparency, accountability, and stakeholder involvement; diverse interests, including those of students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members; and decision-making processes. This inclusiveness helps ensure the consideration of multiple viewpoints as well as ethical behaviour by upholding high ethical

standards and fostering a culture of integrity throughout the institution.

In addition, good governance requires discouraging and addressing any form of corruption, fraud, or misconduct. Fairness and equity are necessary for treating all individuals fairly and equitably, regardless of their background, identity, or position, to ensure that policies and practices promote diversity and inclusion (Awashreh, 2013).

Good governance insists on having a clear strategic vision, and a mission exists to guide the growth and development of the organization. Leaders must inspire and motivate the university community to achieve its goals. In addition, effective decision-making is essential for good governance and its processes and implementation (Brankovic, 2010), associated with the elements of good governance that were described before, faculty development is necessary for professional growth for staff to take their roles in advisory communities at universities and enhance collaboration with stakeholders (Awashreh, 2019). In addition to ensuring good government, managing conflict resolution requires establishing fair and effective mechanisms for resolving disputes within the university community to address issues quickly and transparently. Moreover, the government system should promote and foster a culture of research and innovation by providing resources, funding opportunities, and infrastructure to facilitate cutting-edge discoveries and contributions. The ultimate aspiration is for continuous improvement by adopting a culture of improvement, adapting to changing circumstances, and accessing emerging best practices in higher education. In addition, achieving and maintaining good governance in universities requires continuous effort, strong leadership, and a commitment to upholding good governance values (Awashreh, 2023).

Research Methodology

Committees aim to enhance the quality of decision-making and ensure the governance aspect of the decision-making process (Abu-Hummour & Athamneh, 2018). This suggests that the committee's decisions and recommendations are less susceptible to unilateral changes or influence by any one person. This underscores the significance and authority of the committee's decisions. Consequently, the potency of the committee's decision-making fosters shared responsibility. Manipulation of the committee, therefore, transforms corruption from isolated, individual instances to systemic, institutionalized, and organized problems.

As the researchers seek to explore the phenomenon of governance issues mentioned before in the article, the qualitative method is a suitable approach here, with questions that ask respondents about their personal experience. Instruments use a more flexible, iterative style of eliciting and categorizing responses to questions using semi-structured methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Köhler, Romyantseva, & Welch, 2023). Given the sensitive nature of the topic and the need for in-depth qualitative data, this research employs an exploratory descriptive approach utilizing in-depth interviews. The researchers reached out to faculty members within their network, encompassing individuals ranging from assistant professors to professors working in universities in Arabic countries, often referred to as the Middle East. These individuals were approached and invited to participate in the study with a commitment to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of countries, institutions, and interviewee identities.

The methods used in this study allow for the description and explanation of the phenomena through the gathering of both primary and secondary data. The methodology used a mix of methodologies for primary and secondary data with the instruction of good governance. Primary data collection was based on in-person interviews with respondents from the researchers' knowledge network at existing academic institutions in Arab countries. To learn more about the realities of shadow committees, the researchers contacted twelve participants, ranked from assistant professors to professors, with several years of

working experience from eight Arab universities. The paper does not intend to name countries or universities to protect either participants or researchers.

Since the study is based on interviews, it does not attempt to quantify the size or scope of the phenomenon; rather, it seeks to shed light on a significant phenomenon in the reality of Arab universities, which some have come to refer to as a bazaar or a money market and others treat as if it were their exclusive domain. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, the authors did not mention the names of the colleges or countries or even the identities of the respondents.

Participation was secured based on trust and a commitment to anonymity; no names were disclosed, and no signatures were needed. The questions employed a semi-structured format, allowing interviewees to freely express themselves, seek clarification, and pose follow-up questions. The following is a list of questions posed to the interviewees:

1. Please share your experiences on the advisory shadow committee at your current institution.
2. Provide insights into how committees function in your context.
3. State any challenges encountered while serving on university committees in your current role.
4. Share instances involving concerns related to good governance might be categorized as corrupt cases.
5. Describe the obstacles faced, suggest ways to overcome them, and provide recommendations for improvement.
6. Answers and notes were taken and then analysed, classified, and grouped within the findings-results section.

Committees at universities in Arab countries

This section presents some realistic cases related to university committees, both advisory committees and shadow committees, for universities located in some Arab countries. The paper's concern is the findings based on qualitative data. The following are the findings in the form of examples and short cases:

False Witnessing

Arab private universities contain several colleges and scientific centres and deal with university committees as paper only; however, none of the university committees work on matters relevant to good governance. Only those who captured the colleges worked. Interviewees 1, 2, and 3 saw committees stamp the desired decision, deal with few people manipulating the college, and work to spread corruption and mischief around them, as they want only someone to tell them that they are present and carry out their instructions. Interviewee 4 describes the college committee chairs; they control the college according to their interests, "playing with it as chess pieces." All that is going on is an unreal formality represented by obtaining signatures and packing papers. Interviewee No. 5 said, "We work at the university, and what matters to us is money. He commented, "We are here to get milk, not to quarrel with the shepherd". "Wherever the owner of the donkey wants, we will tie him up". We do what we are asked to do, and we do not mind signing papers if we are asked to terminate the contract of an employee or even our colleagues (interviewee 5).

Shadow Committees

Corruption lies in student shadow committees, which seek to achieve personal goals or interest groups by seeking a relationship with teaching and administrative staff. For example, students with intent are sought to exploit.

Corruption-suspicious relationships arise for personal services, as some members of the teaching staff obtain a high evaluation from the students; in return, they provide compensation from the teachers, for example, additional marks, preferences, and favouritism in various ways, such as giving them more time

and leniency. In other cases of corruption, student shadow committees are dealt with through department heads, deans, and some administrators, as they seek to deliberately and intentionally target a faculty member and in return obtain an impediment.

One lecturer says, the dean invited me to meet, and after hosting with kind words and some dates and local coffee, when the faculty member investigated the matter, he found that a relationship of interest had arisen between the dean and three male students for the purpose of targeting the teacher and, in return, providing them with facilities (interviewee 9). One of the lecturers at the Department of Public Administration is afraid of the prominent and active members of the student shadow committees, so he does not refuse their request and is lenient with them. This is unfair, and he favours them among the students (interviewee 12)

Imaginary Members

The committee for postgraduate studies at one universities hosts meetings, and although there is limited information and member participation it is as if they are present only in numbers. When voting on the decision, the Director of Studies Programs looked at their demands and voted with approval. The members were not complete, so he searched for any teacher to add to the meeting to obtain a quorum on the basis that he was not a member of this committee. Thus, there are two forms of imaginary membership: the first is for those who are originally included in the committee but do not actually participate in the meetings to the extent that they give legitimacy to the decisions of officials. The other form of fictitious membership is those whose names are added in an arbitrary manner to pass the legitimacy of the decision contract, and in both cases, the committees appear to be fictitious (interviewee 10).

Hiding Information

The person responsible for one of the colleges, who is one of the directors, intentionally hides information from the committees so that they make the decision he or she wants, and concealing information is recorded at more than one university. Hiding information related to programs and students and the purpose of doing so is to let their decisions be formal and clean and approved by the committee because the interest in hiding information will benefit from (interviewee 11).

Manipulating Evaluation Criteria

A university faces a major challenge when allegations arise within one of its committees. This case study looks at the details of the corruption scandal, its repercussions for the university, and the measures taken to address and prevent similar incidents in the future. This university has established a shadow committee charged with providing alternative perspectives and critical analysis to guide important decisions regarding the allocation of research funding. The committee included faculty members, administrators, and external experts with diverse experiences in various fields. The incident occurred over the course of several months, and whispers about unethical practices within the shadow committee began to circulate among university staff and stakeholders. The allegations ranged from favouritism in the distribution of funding to manipulation of evaluation criteria for personal gain. After investigating the issue, the findings that were motivated by growing concerns, the university management launched a thorough investigation into the activities of the Shadow Committee. The investigation revealed several cases of corruption, including financial benefits, favouritism, nepotism, and shading (interviewee 6).

Ghost Committee

A story about a university that authorized the deans to establish college committees is a complex issue that senior management is concerned about in its own way. The presence of committees in the form of colleges allows us to say that the reality of governance is important and leaves decisions to colleges.

What was from the colleges, especially their dean, and through a narrow circle, it had no more than one or two people by distributing the faculty members to the committees according to the self-aspirations of the deans of the faculties, and it was not satisfactory with that, as much information was hidden from the committees. Handling official committees, including college committees and administrative committees, is performed with temperament and manipulation. This statement applies to most college committees. The method used in the work of their colleges involves power and intimidation of interest. A university faces a major challenge when allegations arise within one of its committees; this case study looks at the details of the corruption scandal, its repercussions for the university, and the measures taken to address and prevent similar incidents in the future. This university has established a shadow committee charged with providing alternative perspectives and critical analysis to guide important decisions regarding the allocation of research funding. The committee included faculty members, administrators, and external experts with diverse experiences in various fields. The incident occurred over the course of several months, and whispers about unethical practices within the shadow committee began to circulate among university staff and stakeholders. The allegations ranged from favouritism in the distribution of funding to manipulation of evaluation criteria for personal gain. After investigating the issue, the findings were motivated by growing concerns, and university management launched a thorough investigation into the activities of the shadow committee. The investigation revealed several cases of corruption, including financial benefits, favouritism, nepotism, and shading (Interviewee 8).

Conflict of interest

The university did not clarify, through its members, the state of interest in the external accreditation committee or the internal committees. The conflict of interest is between a member of the internal accreditation committee and his brother on the external accreditation committee, on the one hand, and the presence of the children of a member of the accreditation committee within the university. Conflicts of interest in the external appropriations committee and internal university committees cause some information to be hidden on one side and muffled on the other. Several panellists failed to disclose their affiliations with companies that would have benefited from research funding decisions. Certain members of the committees have been pressured by external stakeholders to push projects aligned with their interests. In the same context of research, the director of the research office at a university applied for internal funding even though he claimed that he was not part of the committee that evaluated the research (Interviewee 8).

Favouritism and Nepotism

Nepotism is the most pervasive phenomenon in higher education and includes advisory and shadow committees. The results of investigating this kind of favouritism make it abundantly clear that it is based on benefit exchange and forces that support canthers of power. A faculty member compared what is going on in some universities to a popular market or a vegetable market, which is the epitome of corruption (interview 3 & 8, 2023). The peak of bullying, on the other hand, is for anyone who is independent and cannot be relied upon by a side that upholds moral principles.

Governance is crucial for accessing information, transparency, and accountability. To achieve this goal, the institution should provide clear procedures for committee members, make decisions, allocate resources, and ensure that all meetings are documented and available for review. Establishing a Code of Ethics and Conduct, whistle-blower protection, independent oversight, education and training, merit-based processes, financial control and audit, stakeholder engagement, a legal framework, and cultural transformation are essential elements. These measures help prevent corrupt behaviour and foster an accountability culture. Encouraging open dialogue about corruption and building group commitment to

combating corruption are essential for a strong and transparent governance system (Awashra, 2013).

Universities must establish robust systems for accountability, transparency, and ethical behaviour in their shadow committees to prevent corrupt practices and ensure integrity in decision-making processes (Marques, 2023). Risk components include a lack of monitoring, ambiguous rules, and inadequate accountability procedures. Corruption risks include biased and unfair decision-making, weakening the committee's ability to present unbiased analysis, and stifling innovative ideas. Corruption within shadow committees can stifle creativity, erosion trust, reputational damage, ineffective resource allocation, academic freedom, legal and regulatory consequences, poor decision quality, faculty and student disconnect, undermine leadership, financial losses, and weak oversight. This can lead to the misallocation of resources, hinder growth, and reduce the university's ability to address misconduct within advisory bodies. Universities must remain vigilant, implement robust mechanisms to prevent and detect corruption, promote transparency and accountability, and ensure that shadow committees operate with ethical behaviour (Marques, 2023; Awashra, 2013).

Implications of Corruption on Committees

Corruption of university committees has critical repercussions. Here are some:

1. **Erosion of Trust:** Corruption undermines stakeholder confidence in the integrity of the committee and its decision-making processes.
2. **Poor decision quality:** Corrupt practices lead to biased recommendations, which can compromise the quality of university decisions.
3. **Reputation impairment:** Universities risk damaging their reputation and standing within the academic community due to perceived unethical behaviour.
4. **Missed Opportunities:** Corruption may stifle innovative ideas and hinder the progress and development of the university.

Preventive Strategies to Address Corruption

The following are some strategies for preventing both advisory and shadow committees from being corrupted:

1. **A transparent selection process** will be used to choose members of the shadow committee, reducing nepotism.
2. **Code of Ethics:** Create and uphold a thorough code of ethics that spells out acceptable conduct and spells out penalties for infractions.
3. **Strong supervision:** enhancing oversight procedures and enlisting outside consultants or impartial observers to keep an eye on the committee's operations.
4. **Education and Training:** Train committee members in moral conduct, corruption awareness, and ethical decision-making.
5. This study provides details on preventive strategies to address corruption in shadow committees at universities.

Preventive strategies are essential for addressing corruption within university shadow committees and ensuring that these advisory bodies uphold transparency, accountability, and ethical governance.

The specific preventive tactics listed below can be used by universities to combat and reduce corruption within shadow committees. Clear selection standards establish precise and impartial criteria for choosing committee members based on their knowledge, skills, and qualifications. Additionally, create a transparent, consistent hiring procedure for members to lessen the chance of favouritism or improper influence. In addition to the Ethics and Conduct Code, all committee members must declare any possible

conflicts of interest, and these statements must be updated often. When conflicts develop, step-down procedures are put in place, and members with vested interests are not included in pertinent deliberations or decisions. Finally, it is important to establish a private and secure method for committee members and stakeholders to raise institutional suspicions to safeguard whistleblowers.

A faculty member, interview (8), closed the researchers' efforts by saying that, perhaps in the end, the challenges are related to top management and that the problem is that top management is keen to protect their interests, so they manage the whole university and college. Remember that top management is also an employee, and they have personal interests in accumulating money and power and remaining in their positions for as long as possible. Therefore, this is a major cause of valuation corruption in advisory and shadow committees.

Conclusion

To summarize, false witnesses at Arab universities exist; several colleges and scientific centres deal with university committees as papers only; none of the university committees work on matters relevant to good governance; and they work according to those who captured the colleges. Interviewees indicated that some members saw committees stamping the wanted decision, responsible people and a few people manipulated the college; they worked to spread corruption and mischief around them, as they wanted only someone to tell them that they were present and to carry out their instructions. Interviewees describe the college committee chairs; they control the college according to their interests, playing with it like chess pieces.

Although universities are supposed to be beacons of knowledge, values, and progress that are different from the negative manifestations of society, the truth is that there are many manifestations of corruption in universities. The focus of this research paper was on corruption in each of the advisory committees and shadow committees in universities operating in some Arab countries. The study showed that there are forms of corruption and perversion in the committees, and the most common forms are nepotism, favouritism, exchange of interests, and ghost councils. Corruption within university shadow committees poses a serious challenge to the principles of transparency, accountability, and ethical governance. By understanding the different forms of corruption, uncovering its root causes, and implementing targeted strategies, universities can effectively prevent and address corrupt practices within shadow committees. By joining forces to promote transparency, uphold ethical standards, and foster a culture of integrity, universities can ensure that their advisory bodies act as beacons for unbiased, informed, and ethical decision-making.

While both university shadow committees and college advisory committees play roles in influencing decision-making and program development, they have different structures and purposes. Shadow committees primarily represent student concerns and interests in the university context, while advisory committees provide outside expertise to help colleges improve their programs and align them with industry standards. The specific processes for forming and operating these committees can vary greatly depending on the organization and its goals.

Corruption within university shadow committees threatens the basic principles of transparency, integrity, and effective governance. By understanding the dynamics, indicators, and impacts of corruption, universities can take proactive measures to prevent corruption occurrence and preserve the vital role of shadow committees in promoting informed, ethical, and unbiased decision-making. It is essential that academic institutions remain vigilant, implement robust oversight mechanisms, and nurture a culture of transparency and accountability to ensure that shadow committees continue to serve their intended purpose.

Building upon this article, further large-scale studies should be conducted using both surveys and

interviews after constructing a framework for judging corruption and then formulating a code of ethics as well as best practices in Arab universities in the Middle East.

Acknowledgements

The researchers would like to thank several undisclosed faculty members who agreed to tell us about their stories from their universities.

Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest is associated with this article.

Funding

There is no fund received from any party.

References

- Abu-Hummour, A. & Athamneh, S. (2018). The Role of Committees in Enhancing Decision-Making Process: The Case of Jordanian Municipalities Dynamics of Public Administration, 35(1):149-162
DOI:10.5958/0976-0733.2018.00011.1
- Abu-Jaber, M. and Alzboun, M. (2020). The role of Jordanian universities in promoting academic integrity. *An-Najah University Journal of Research*, 36 (2): 333-347.
DOI:10.35552/0247-036-002-004
https://journals.najah.edu/media/journals/full_texts/4_3Eu3UbB.pdf
- Al-Ghaithi, A. (2023). The Challenges of Applying the concepts of Participatory Management, Teamwork, and continuous Improvement at the University. *Journal of the Faculty of Education*, 1(7), 52–92.
<https://doi.org/10.60037/edu.v1i7.1071>
- Al-Mohammadi, Q. (2023). Absorbing the Yemeni private universities law with the requirements of higher education governance. DOI: 10.58963/qausrj.v1i24.105
<https://journal.qau.edu.ye/index.php/srj/article/view/105>
- Alvesson, M. and Spicer, A. (2019). Neo-Institutional Theory and Organization Studies: A Mid-Life Crisis. *Organization Studies*, 40(2), pp. 199-218. doi: 10.1177/0170840618772610
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0170840618772610>
- Ashforth, B. E., & Anand, V. (2003). The normalization of corruption in organizations. *Research in organizational behavior*, 25, 1-52.
- Attree, K. (2022). What's in it for them? Examining the bidirectional advantages of student/alumni participation in university course advisory committees. Last accessed August 20, 2023, from the website <https://www.researchgate.net>
<https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/en/publications/whats-in-it-for-them-examining-the-bi-directional-advantages>
- Awashra, R. (2013). *Governance of Palestinian NGOs, a Case Study of the West Bank*. Lambert Academic Publishing, Germany
- Awashreh, R. (2023). Enhancing Innovation among Business Colleges at Omani Universities: A Theoretical Framework. *Seybold Report*, 18(02), 182-196. <https://seybold-report.com>
- Awashreh, R. (2019). Internal Governance, Management, and Democratic Participation: a Case study of the West Bank organizations. *International Journal for Research in Business, Management and Accounting*, 5(7):1-25
- Awashreh, R. (2013). *Governance of Palestinian NGOs, a Case Study of the West Bank*.

- Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing
- Bayuo, B., Chaminade, C., and Göransson, B. (2020). Unpacking the role of universities in the emergence, development, and impact of social innovations. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2020.120030>.
- Bebitoglu, M. (2022). The Impact of Sparking Leadership on Business Performance Perceived By the employees with gender and seniority interactions. *International Journal of Management Economics and Business* 18(2):507-524 Follow journal
DOI: 10.17130/ijmeb.964584
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1866006>
- Brankovic, J. (2010). Decision making on decision making: deciding governance in higher education in Serbia 2002-2005 (Master's thesis).
- Community Initiative. (2023). What is the Role of Advisory Committees? accessed September 30, 2023, from <https://communityinitiatives.org/blog/what-is-the-role-of-advisory-committees/>
- Chand, M. and Dahiya, A. (2008). Hospitality education and advisory committees in India Universities: An analysis of academic success. *Atna- Journal of Tourism studies*
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.12727/ajts.3.10>
<https://journals.christuniversity.in/index.php/atna/article/view/545>
- Dar, F. (2015). Emerging role of NGOs in the world's sociopolitical affairs. *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies*, 6(1), 1-9.
doi.org/DOI: 10.5897/IJPDS2014.0202
- El-Awad, Z. (2023). Introduction: The Role of Universities in Society.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-22284-9_1
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-22284-9_1
- Empowering local governments (2023). Advisory committees are both an organizational requirement for the purpose of ensuring rightness and good governance and a government requirement. Accessed September 30, 2023, from <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/governance/engagement/boards-and-commissions>.
- Filho, W. (2011). About the Role of Universities and Their Contribution to Sustainable Development. *High Education Policy* 24: 427–438. <https://doi.org/10.1057/hep.2011.16>
- Hobbs, W. (1975). Organizational roles of university committees. *Research in Higher Education* 3(3):233-242. DOI: 10.1007/BF00991212
- Holland, M. & Lane, J. (2018). Policy advisory committees: an operational view.
DOI: 10.46692/9781447333838.011
- Hussain, M., Hassan, R., & Hasan, A. (2015). Analysis of the development of legislation covering Shariah Advisory Council of bank the Negara Malaysia bank.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22452/js.vol23no2.6>
- Jaber, M., & Alzboun, M. (2022). The role of Jordanian universities in promoting academic integrity. *An-Najab University Journal for Research*, 36(2): 333–366. <https://doi.org/10.35552/0247-036-002-004>
- Kim, T. (2023). Nine Policy Advisory bodies in Korea Get access Arrow.
<https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781447362579.003.0009>
- Köhler, T., Rumyantseva, M., & Welch, C. (2023). Qualitative Restudies: Research Designs for Rethorizing. *Organizational research methods*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10944281231216323>
- Marques, M. (2023). Transparency and Accountability in Portuguese Public Universities. *Dutch Journal of Finance and Management*, 6 (1):21237. <https://doi.org/10.55267/djfm/13433>
- Osipian, A. (2008). Corruption in Higher Education: Does it Differ across the Nations and Why? DOI:10.2304/rcie.2008.3.4.345
- Petracca, M. (2016). Federal Advisory Committees, Interest Groups, and the Administrative State. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19441053.1986.11770776>

- Thongtanunam, P., Rastogi, A., khomh, F., Demeyer, S., Nagappan, M. Blincoe, K., Grex, R. (2021). Shadow program committee initiative: process and reflection. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353169763>
- Sedlacek, S. (2013). The role of universities in fostering sustainable development at the regional level. *Journal of cleaner production*, 48, 74-84.
- Sorokina, A. (2023). The significance of anti-corruption education in universities. *Modern Technologies and Scientific and Technological Progress* (1):242-343, DOI: 10.36629/2686-9896-2023-1-242-343
- Welch, W. and Gullickson, A. (2004). The role of advisory committees. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1474-7863\(04\)09009-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1474-7863(04)09009-X)
- Zeni, J. (1998) A guide to ethical issues and action research. *Educational Action Research*, 6:1, 9-19, DOI: 10.1080/09650799800200053
- Kogan, M. & Packwood, T. (2023). *Advisory council and committees in education*. Rutledge Revivals.
- Stensaker, B., Jungblut, J. & Mihut, G. (2021): Strategic advisory boards – the emergence of Shadow governance in universities? *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2021.1913237
- Southgate, D. (2009). Determinants of Shadow Education: A Cross-National Analysis. Accessed August 20, 2023 from http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1259703574
- Tehrani, M., Hassanpoor, A., Jafarinia, S., Zar, A (2023). Designing a Model of Employees Organizational Fear Management in Financial Organizations *Journal of human resources studies*.