Abstract

An ethical dilemma is a complicated situation that involves a clear inconsistency between moral imperatives, obeying one will contravene the other. In such situations, there are only two choices presented to an individual, moreover, neither of these two choices is capable of resolving the case in an ethically acceptable way. When under an ethical dilemma, societal and personal ethical guidelines cannot provide a credible solution that will satisfy both the two moral imperatives. Notably, applying the guiding moral principles when under an ethical dilemma cannot place one in a position to determine the wrong and the right course of action. Ethical dilemma has been a huge problem to ethical theorists.

*Key words*: ethical dilemma, choices, solution, moral principle.

The ethical dilemmas involved

From the story of the two friends, Miriam and Jennifer, it is apparent that Miriam is faced with an ethical dilemma. Miriam is aware that Jennifer is misusing the resources of the company for her own personal benefits while on the other she views Miriam as a close friend, reporting Jennifer’s misconduct is the same as betraying the friendship they have. Being the referee of Jennifer, reporting the case to the authorities will put Miriam’s ethical stance in question. Miriam is therefore uncertain about the action she has to take in order to achieve the best outcome. Miriam has only two choices, either to report her friend’s misconduct or keep mum about the all issue. The future results of these two decisions cannot be determined because the facts that influence the outcomes are not available.
Arguably, the ethical dilemma faced by Miriam revolves around her friendship with Jennifer. Miriam suspects that her friend uses the company’s resources to maintain and live a posh lifestyle that is different from hers, and this poses threat to both their friendship and her trust by the company. Furthermore, if Miriam reports the issue, guilt will haunt her when she sees jobless Jennifer with an ill child. Alternatively, if she decides to remain silent, the company will fall gradually, and their future financial stability will be at stake. Miriam is therefore in a very conflicting situation that she ought to make decisions.

*Describe the stakeholders involved in the ethical dilemma, their individual interests, and the potential conflicts between them.*

A stakeholder is a party that has concern in an organization. Notably, stakeholders are normally affected by the actions that are undertaken within the company, this includes ethical issues as the one presented in Miriam’s case (Weiss, 2009, p. 287). Some key stakeholders to a company include, employees, government agencies, creditors, suppliers unions, directors and the community from which the company draws its resources. The ethical issues within a company affect these parties in one way or the other.

Arguably, the chief stakeholder who is involved in this ethical dilemma is Miriam. Miriam does not know whether to report destructive behavior practiced by her friend or remain silent. Remaining silent has its own negative outcomes, while reporting the case has its own outcome too, Miriam is therefore placed in a situation where there are only two choices of which neither of the two choices resolves her situation in an ethically acceptable fashion.

Jennifer then again experiences the ethical dilemma in a different angle, if Jennifer decides to stop her unaccounted actions of acquiring money, she will have forgone her
poshlifestyle, and she will not be in a position to settle her hospital bills since her young boy is sick. Alternatively, if she decides to continue with the destructive actions, she will put her future in the company at stake and her friends as well.

Another stakeholder involved in the ethical dilemma is the accountant, possibly, in order to gain the unwarranted resources from the company; Jennifer must have struck a deal with the employees aware of her actions so that they cannot blow the whistle. The accountant is put in a situation where he or she has to decide whether to betray her manager Jennifer or remain mum and gain from the misused company resources.

Jennifer’s secretary and the employees working in the store are probably aware of the ethical misconduct going on in the company, these employees are left to decide whether to report her or remain and continue enjoying the privileges. Both these decisions have consequences attached, and therefore no decision in this situation will solve dilemma faced by these employees.

Consider the responsibilities of the organization to address the dilemma, both those described by law and by best practices in corporate culture, policy, and procedure.

Arguably, no matter how organizations try to deal with ethical dilemmas and issues in the company, these issues keep emerging. Organizations are therefore obliged to design ways of addressing these ethical dilemmas and the fundamental conflicts embedded in these problems. The leaders in an organization are obliged to attend on the causes of the organizations dysfunctions and the fundamental inconsistency of values that manifests itself into a company (Langlois, 2011, p. 34) the organizational leaders should therefore change how they perceive ethical problems that plague the outcome of the company.
In order to effectively address issues concerning ethical dilemmas in an organization, the organization has the responsibility of approaching the ethical dilemma from two major perspectives, one approach must focus on the practical consequences of the company’s actions, and the other approach would lead one to ask whether the action in itself is right or not.

The organization has to weigh the available options before making any move when faced with an ethical dilemma. It has to list all alternative courses of action so as to adopt the most effective, additionally, it has to consider the consequences attached to these alternatives, the consequences should be determined by viewing benefits and harms, the short term and long-term implications. Based on the benefit and harms caused, the organization should adopt a decision that produces a best blend of harm-minimization and benefits maximization.

The organization has the responsibility of analyzing the actions when faced with an ethical dilemma. It is advisable for a company to measure up the decision they adopt against the company’s moral principles and values like honesty, equality, human rights, and recognition of environmental and social vulnerability (Ferrell, Fraedrich, & Ferrell, 2013, p. 238). After adopting a more effective decision form the dilemma, the organization must integrate its system to align with the decision adopted. The organization is obliged to bring together all parts of the analysis, make an informed decision, and act on it. After the analysis, the company should think about the situations that led to the dilemma and permanently remove the cause of the dilemma.

An organization has the responsibility of training its employees on the virtue of ethics in order to solve the ethical dilemmas they encounter. One consequence faced by organizations due to the unethical behaviors of employees is subjecting the business to civil litigation, which in turn tarnishes the name of the organization. By training employees on ethical and professional way of
doing things, the ethical stance of the company is upheld therefore promoting sales and reputation of the company.

*Review the guidelines of your chosen professional society and relate them to the ethical dilemma.*

A professional society is an organization whose members constitute of individual professionals (Perkin, 1989, p.1). This paper reviews the guidelines attached with significance by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), this professional society isthe world’s largest association committed to the management of human resource. The following are the codes provision and guidelines as put forward by this association:

**Professional responsibility**

*Code Principle*

As professionals, the members that belong to this association are responsible for upholding the ethical policies and guidelines of the organizations they work in contributing to the moral success of the organization. The professionals should accept to take responsibility of their actions and decisions.

**Guidelines**

- Advocate the proper treatment and appreciation of employees as fellow human beings.
- Obey the law
- Give the best level of service, performance and social responsibility
- Measure efficacy of human resource in achieving the organizations goal and objectives
- Work in uniformity with the values attached to human resource profession
Advocate for debates in forums in order to influence the results and the decisions made.

Adhere to the highest standards of professional and ethical behavior.

Professional development

Code principle

As a respectable profession, the members of this association struggle to attain the highest standards of competence.

Guidelines

- Pursue certification such as PHR, CPA, CCP, etc. where there exists measures of required knowledge and competence.
- Pursue official academic opportunities
- Commit to the application and embracement of new skills and knowledge that is related to HR management.
- Contribute and advocate for the evolution of knowledge, growth of the profession, dissemination of knowledge and research.

Fairness and justice

Code principle

The professions in this society are ethically liable for promoting and advocating for fairness and justice to all employees in an organization regardless of their status.

Guidelines
✓ Practice sound management and act responsibly in countries where these professionals work.
✓ Administer, develop, and promote policies and procedures that boost fair and equitable treatment of all.
✓ Respect the inherent and unique worth of everybody
✓ Treat people with respect, dignity, and compassion to boost a trusting liberated working environment free of harassments and intimidations.
✓ Support decisions made by the organization that are legal and ethical regardless of one’s personal interests
✓ Ensure that everyone has opportunity to develop competencies and new skills

**Ethical leadership**

**Core principle**

The organization expects its members to portray individual leadership as role models for upholding high ethical standards.

**Guidelines**

✓ Act ethical and professionally in any interaction while at work
✓ Seek professional guidance and clarification whenever in doubt.
✓ Question group and individual actions to make sure that the decisions made are ethical
✓ Members should support the development of others as ethical leaders in organizations

**Use of information**

**Core principle**
The HR professionals are obliged to protect the rights of their fellow human beings especially in matters pertaining to dissemination of information, while ensuring honest information and informed decision making.

**Guidelines**

- The members of this society are obliged to use appropriate information in decisions affecting employment relationships
- Acquire information through responsible and ethical means
- Maintain accurate HR information
- Safeguard all confidential information
- Take the recommendable steps in ensuring accuracy and completeness of information concerning HR practices and policies

**Conflicts of interest**

**Core principle**

Being a member of this professional society, an individual must maintain and uphold high level of trust with the stakeholders. This professional society has the responsibility of protecting the interests of all the stakeholders of the organization they work in and should avoid any activities that create potential conflicts of interest.

**Guidelines**

- Renounce from using your position for gain
- Refrain from seeking special treatment in the human resource
- Disclose conflicts to relevant stakeholders
Adhere to published policies on conflicts of interests within the organization

From the above guidelines and policies guiding the SHRM society, the dilemma in Miriam’s story could have been avoided if Jennifer was a member to such a professional society. Arguably, the ethical dilemma in question came due to conflicts of interests, due to conflicts of interest; Miriam cannot disclose her friend’s unethical behavior. Additionally, Jennifer is not an ethical leader, if Jennifer had adhered to the virtue of ethical leadership, the dilemma could have been avoided in that the resources of the organization could have been safe. Jennifer lacks professional responsibility that is why she misuses the resources of the organization. Notably, Jennifer is not fair and just in her actions, by misusing the resources of the organization depicts that she does not care about the organization’s stakeholders.

Address your personal values as they relate to the ethical dilemma, including how you may hold conflicting values that apply.

Notably, all people have their own personal values that influence their way of thinking, these values stream from the societies we come from, our religions, and experiences. Ethical dilemmas arise when these personal values argument with the practices in the company. From my experience, I have learnt to treat people with respect, equality, and dignity. These values cannot allow me to indulge in practices that can hurt others, the dilemma in question rose due to Jennifer’s failure to analyze the negative outcomes that her actions could bring.

As an ethical leader with the necessary educational background and values to make decisions, when such conflicting issues arise, I will first weigh the consequences of each decision before adopting any. The second step will be to make an informed decision, and act on it, I will
then think about the situations that led to the dilemma and permanently remove the cause of the dilemma to avoid similar situation in the future.

Finally, propose a strategy the employee could take. What are the progressive steps could be taken to address the dilemma and what risks and benefits the employee might face?

Dealing with ethical dilemmas can lead to emotional, mental, and spiritual torment. In order to effectively solve the ethical dilemma in this organization, it is very important to apply the following steps:

1) Identify the subject matter of the ethical dilemma, it is important for one to collect all the necessary information about the problem before taking any step.

2) The second step is to determine if the problem recount to moral or legal issue. One should make a list of the critical issues in the dilemma. Under this step, it is wise to weigh the impacts of the outcome, the harms and the benefits gained.

3) In the third step, one should relate the dilemma to the ethical policies of the organization, if there are no policies in place; the organization should apply the local and national laws to solve the problem.

4) List the possible options in reaction to the ethical dilemma, and then go ahead and consider the consequences of the action or the inaction. One should place him or herself in the shoes of the stakeholders, and analyze the outcomes from different perspectives.

5) Consult a professional, a mentor, colleague, or friend who can provide another viewpoint to the situation.
After gathering all this information, write and decide the best avenue for solving the problem based on the gathered information.

In this dilemma, adopting a decision comes with its benefits and harms, the common harms may be that the people involved in the unethical behavior will be fired, arrested, or fined. The benefits gained by the company will include its upheld ethical stance and improved performance.

In conclusion, the ethical dilemma faced by Jennifer, Miriam and other stakeholders rose due to the unethical practices in the organization. Ethical dilemmas can be prevented and solved in an organization. Establishing policies and guidelines that states the ethical stance of the company will help prevent any misconduct in the organization.
References


