

Ethics Case Study Class 04

27th July, 2024 at 5:00 PM

CASE STUDY 1 (05:02 PM)

- You are a young athlete representing India at an international-level competition. To your surprise, during the competition, you witness a few senior athletes injecting something using a syringe in private. When you approach them, they explain that it is a performance-enhancing drug, which is very common in such competitions and you should take the same as well. You are aware that if these players get caught in a doping test, it may damage India's reputation. You are confused and afraid of the repercussions and decide to approach the coach to discuss the event you witnessed. However, you get to know that the athletes are taking the drug on the advice of the coach himself.
- (a) What would you do in this scenario? Discuss the options available to you and chart your course of action.
- (b) What are the reasons behind the use of performance-enhancing drugs in competitive sporting events? How can this practice be minimized

SOLUTION TO CASE 1

- The above case study represents the classic case of means (unethical) vs ends (winning) ethical dilemma. The use of performance enhancing drugs makes a mockery of competition as well as the international reputation of India is at stake.

OPTIONS

- (a) Options and Course of Action:
- Option 1: Warn the Athletes and Coach
- Merits: Allows them to rectify their actions discreetly.
- Demerits: Risk of not being taken seriously; potential retaliation.
- Option 2: Report to Higher Authorities Immediately.
- Merits: Ensures fair competition and adherence to ethical standards.
- Demerits: Potential backlash and media scrutiny; involvement of higher officials.
- Option 3: Report After the Competition.
- Merits: Protects the team's performance during the competition.
- Demerits: Continued unethical behavior; risk of getting caught and tarnishing the country's image.
- Preferred Course of Action:
- 1. Gather Information: Confirm the use and legality of the drugs.
- 2. Persuade Athletes and Coaches: Advocate for stopping drug use, emphasizing health risks and ethical issues.
- 3. Report to Higher Authorities: If persuasion fails, escalate the issue to the Team Managers, Sports Authority of India, and relevant bodies.
- (b) Reasons for Using Performance-Enhancing Drugs and Minimization Strategies:
- **Reasons:**
- 1. Desire to Win: Pressure to perform and achieve success.
- 2. Economic Gains: Financial rewards and career longevity.
- 3. Systemic Issues: Historical prevalence and weak enforcement of anti-doping laws.
- 4. Influence of Coaches and Peers: Guidance from authority figures and peer pressure.

- **Minimization Strategies:**

- 1. Preventive Measures: Educate athletes on the dangers and legal consequences of doping; implement stricter testing policies.
- 2. Punitive Actions: Enforce strict penalties for violations, including bans for athletes and coaches involved.
- 3. Promotive Steps: Encourage best practices and ethical behavior through funding and support mechanisms.
- 4. Universal Measures: Use of athletes' biological passports and Therapeutic Use Exemption (TEU) certificates to monitor and regulate drug use.

Conclusion:

- In sports, success must be achieved through fair and honest means. Ethical behavior ensures the integrity of competition and protects the health and reputation of athletes and nations alike. Implementing a multi-faceted approach can help curb the unethical practice of doping in sports.

CASE STUDY BASED ON TECHNOLOGY & ETHICS (05:30 PM)

- In a metropolitan city in India, law enforcement authorities decided to adopt facial recognition technology to improve their crime-fighting capabilities. They implemented a facial recognition system that integrated with existing surveillance cameras across the city, allowing real-time identification and tracking of individuals. The system was intended to assist in identifying known criminals, missing persons, and suspects in ongoing investigations. One evening, a woman reported a mugging incident where the perpetrator wore a hoodie, obscuring most of his face. The victim provided a vague description to the police, and based on that information, the authorities decided to use facial recognition technology to locate potential suspects. The system scanned through hours of surveillance footage from various locations near the crime scene. The facial recognition algorithm generated a list of potential matches, and one individual's image stood out as a close match to the description provided by the victim. The police considered this individual a prime suspect and proceeded with his arrest. Subsequently, it was discovered that the arrested person was innocent. Further investigation revealed that the facial recognition system had misidentified the innocent individual due to the limitations of the technology and the partial description provided by the victim. The police released the arrested individual; still, his reputation was tarnished for life. He, along with his family, was evicted from their current place of residence. The psychological impact of the incident has been tremendous owing to which his job is also on the line.

With reference to this case study, answer the following:

(a) What are the issues involved in this case?

(b) What measures can be taken to minimize the negative implications of adopting such technologies

SOLUTION

Introduction:

- The case highlights the misuse of facial recognition technology, leading to wrongful arrest and severe personal repercussions for an innocent individual.
- (a) Issues Involved:
 - 1. Misidentification: Incorrect identification due to technological limitations, resulting in wrongful arrest.
 - 2. Invasion of Privacy: Continuous monitoring violates individuals' privacy and freedom.
 - 3. Lack of Accountability: Insufficient scrutiny of matches and responsibility for errors.
 - 4. Undermining Justice: Technology biases perpetuating social inequalities.
 - 5. Over-reliance on Technology: False security, neglecting traditional investigation methods

(b) Measures to Minimize Negative Implications:

- 1. Robust Testing and Evaluation: Rigorous testing to identify and mitigate biases and limitations.
- 2. Regular Audits and Reviews: Independent audits to ensure fairness across demographics.
- 3. Transparent Guidelines and Regulations: Clear rules on data protection, consent, and technology limits.
- 4. Ethical Framework and Oversight: Prioritize human rights, privacy, and due process.
- 5. Public Awareness and Engagement: Open discussions to incorporate societal concerns.
- 6. Accountability and Redress Mechanisms: Systems to hold authorities accountable for wrongful arrests and rights infringements.

Conclusion:

- Facial recognition technology must operate within ethical and legal frameworks to ensure fairness, privacy, and human rights are upheld. Balancing technological advancements with humane principles is essential for its beneficial use.

CASE STUDY BASED ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (05:46 PM)

- The Indian Railways (IR) has approximately 43,000 hectares of vacant land, which is not required for operational purposes in the foreseeable future. Such plots of land are entrusted to the Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) by the Railway Board for commercial development. As the Vice-Chairman of the RLDA, you are responsible for identifying the potential of these vacant lands and working out the best mode of commercial development. Meanwhile, the Union government is planning to build India's first intermodal stations. Intermodal Stations (IMS) are terminal infrastructures, that integrate various transportation modes such as rail, road, mass rapid transit system, bus rapid transit, inland waterways, auto-rickshaws, taxis, and private vehicles so that people can move from one mode to another seamlessly. The Union Ministry has shortlisted two cities to build IMS. The land identified in one city, which also happens to be the hometown of a Union Minister, belongs to the RLDA. You are supposed to clear a final report on this land based on which it will be cleared for building IMS. After going through the land details, you discover that the land contains a natural urban forest with more than 40,000 trees that provide diverse ecosystem services to the residents of the cities. Clearing this land for the project will lead to the cutting of these trees. Also, the news of this land being under consideration is already out and the environmental civil society groups in the city are protesting against it. They are threatening to go to court if the trees are cut to proceed with the project. Further, an alternative site has been proposed by an environmental think tank, which could be suitable in terms of the sustainable development of the project. On the other hand, there is pressure from the Union Minister to clear the land for the project. A senior member from the Railway Board has also approached you to look into the issue favourably else it might upset the political executive.
 - (a) What are the ethical dilemmas faced by you in the given situation?
 - (b) Under the given conditions, what are the options available to you?
 - (c) Critically evaluate each of the options listed by you.
 - (d) What option would you adopt and why?

SOLUTION:

Introduction:

- The Vice-Chairman of the Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) must decide whether to clear a forested land for an intermodal station (IMS) amid environmental protests and political pressure.

- **(a) Ethical Dilemmas:**

- 1. Environmental conservation vs. Economic development: Balancing infrastructure needs with environmental protection.
- 2. Political interest vs. Public interest: Ensuring decisions benefit the broader public, not just political interests.
- 3. Political interference vs. Impartial decision-making: Resisting undue influence to maintain integrity.
- 4. Accountability: Balancing political accountability with public transparency.

(b & c) Options and their Critical Evaluation:

- 1. Clear the land and proceed:
 - Merits: Immediate progress on a significant infrastructure project.
 - Demerits: Environmental destruction, legal challenges, and reputational damage.
- Reject the proposal:
 - Merits: Protects the environment and avoids legal issues.
 - Demerits: Delays in infrastructure development and potential political fallout.
- Suggest an alternative site:
 - Merits: Balances development with environmental conservation; addresses stakeholders' concerns
 - Demerits: Requires additional resources and time for site assessment.
- Delay the decision: Merits: Allows for thorough evaluation and stakeholder consultation.
 - Demerits: Delay projects and increase political pressure.
- (d) Preferred Option: Suggest an Alternative Site.
 - Rationale: This option balances environmental and developmental concerns, addresses stakeholders' issues, and promotes sustainable development. Engaging with my senior to explain the report's details and concerns ensures transparency and responsible decision-making.

Conclusion:

- Prioritizing sustainability while ensuring infrastructure development aligns with ethical standards and public interest.

CASE STUDY BASED ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (06:19 PM)

- A manufacturing company is located in a small town where it is not easy for people to find jobs otherwise. The company has stayed in the town even though it could find cheaper workers elsewhere because workers are loyal to the company due to the jobs it provides. Over the years, the company has developed a reputation in the town for taking care of its employees and being a responsible corporate citizen, owing to its CSR activities. The manufacturing process used by the company produces a by-product that has been flowing into the town river for some time now. According to some media reports people living near the river have started reporting illnesses off late and there is also damage to aquatic life. People, however, have refused to come forward as their livelihood depends on the company. You being the Sustainability Officer of the company believe it to be your duty to report this to the higher management. You are of the opinion that this matter is associated with the prestige of the company and should be taken seriously. In the meanwhile the new CEO, who has just joined the company, has called you for briefing and understanding the local issues. On the basis of the above case, answer the following:
 - (a) Identify the stakeholders in the case above.
 - (b) What arguments would you put forth to the CEO to convince him to act on this matter?

SOLUTION

Introduction:

- The case highlights a conflict between short-term economic gains and long-term health and environmental sustainability. The manufacturing company's waste disposal practices are potentially harming local residents and aquatic life, raising serious ethical and operational issues.

(a) Stakeholders:

- 1. Local population: Suffering from health issues due to pollution.
- 2. Employees: Directly affected by company actions.
- 3. Management: Responsible for addressing the issue.
- 4. District and local administration: Ensuring public welfare and regulatory compliance.
- 5. Environment: Impacted by pollution, specifically the river and aquatic life.

(b) Arguments to Convince the CEO:

- 1. Health of Workforce: Ensuring a healthy workforce is crucial for productivity and efficiency.
- 2. Brand Value: Addressing the issue promptly preserves the company's reputation and trust.
- 3. Legal Risks: Proactive measures can prevent legal challenges and potential fines.
- 4. Media Scrutiny: Timely action can avoid negative media coverage and further public outcry.
- 5. Long-term Sustainability: Protecting the environment ensures long-term viability and prevents future catastrophic damage.

Course of Action:

- 1. Immediate Enquiry: Constitute an inquiry to investigate the issue.
- 2. Health Camps: Initiate weekly/bi-weekly health camps in affected areas.
- 3. Medical Allowance: Provide medical support for affected employees and locals through CSR funds.
- 4. Sensitization Drives: Conduct communication programs and town halls to build trust and inform about CSR activities.
- 5. Transparency: Ensure full cooperation with local administration and maintain transparency throughout the process.
- By taking these steps, the company can address the immediate health concerns, protect its reputation, and demonstrate a commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices.

CASE STUDY BASED ON ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS (07:10 PM)

- Many Indian cities are facing a major problem of management of household waste. Huge volume of wastes have meant that landfill sites are facing the problem of overcapacity. On the other hand, the waste-to-energy plants constructed to solve the problem are also facing flak due to their inefficiency and release of poisonous pollutants. The manner of waste disposal by people is identified as one of the main reasons behind this problem. The government has notified rules regarding disposal, collection and treatment of waste and has initiated numerous awareness campaigns in the past. Still, the problem does not seem to be getting under control. Given such a situation, answer the following questions:
- (a) What do you think is the reason behind the apathy of people towards issues like waste disposal that affect the larger interests of society in general?
- (b) Identify the stakeholders and the significance of their involvement in addressing the issue.

SOLUTION

- **Introduction:**

- The given case highlights the challenges in managing household waste in Indian cities. Despite rules and awareness campaigns, waste disposal practices remain inadequate, causing environmental and public health concerns.
- (a) Reasons Behind Apathy Towards Waste Disposal:
 - 1. Sociological Factors: Traditional caste-based stigmas associate waste disposal with lower castes, making it a "dirty job."
 - 2. Not in My Backyard Attitude: People prioritize personal cleanliness over public sanitation, not recognizing the broader impact.
 - 3. Lack of Awareness and Political Will: Insufficient sensitization about health hazards and inadequate political focus on waste management.
 - 4. Lack of Seriousness: Absence of segregation mechanisms and incentives for proper waste disposal.
 - 5. Situational Factors: Inconvenience, lack of information, and cost-saving motives deter proper waste disposal.
 - 6. Structural Constraints: Limited resources and poor access to disposal sites.

- **Conclusion:**

- For proper waste management in India, behavioral change is as important as other policy initiatives. Social and Behavior Change Communication should form the core of the whole strategy. Initiatives like Swachh Bharat Mission, which focuses on collective behavioral change for achieving cleanliness, is a positive step in this direction. A balanced approach addressing stakeholder concerns, ensuring law and order, and promoting environmental conservation will help achieve effective waste management.

CASE STUDY BASED ON CORPORATE GOVERNANCE (07:40 PM)

- For some time now, business news across the world has been filled with reports of massive layoffs taking place, particularly in technology firms and new-age startups. This, when only till a while ago, limitless money and funding were flowing to startups from all over - Angel Investors, Venture Capital firms, Private Equity, and so on. The money tap seems to have been suddenly closed now. What has replaced the news of record valuations and remunerations, is that of massive firing of employees. The founders of startups and technology firms are justifying the exercise in the wake of their responsibility to ensure profitability of their ventures and their accountability towards their investors and shareholders. The argument being advanced pertains to ensuring sustainable growth and profitability. However, it is well known that behind the present scenario lie a series of poor and irresponsible decision-making. But it is the entry and middle-level employees who are unfortunately being made to bear the brunt of it. In this context, answer the following:
 - (a) Mention the stakeholders and ethical issues surrounding the recent mass layoffs in new age startups.
 - (b) Identify the reasons behind such irresponsible conduct by higher management, particularly in startups in India.
 - (c) Suggest some measures to tackle the aforementioned problems.

SOLUTION

Introduction:

- The given case pertains to the mass layoffs in technology firms and startups, highlighting the imbalance between initial exuberance and subsequent financial mismanagement, impacting primarily entry and middle-level employees.

(b) Reasons behind Irresponsible Conduct:

- 1. Self-Interest and Greed: Prioritizing personal financial gains over long-term sustainability.
- 2. Empire Building: Rapid expansion without strategic planning.
- 3. Attracting Investment: Overly optimistic projections to secure funds.
- 4. Poor Corporate Governance: Minimal regulatory compliance leads to a lack of transparency.
- 5. Apathy of Investors: Major investors are often not involved in daily operations.
- 6. Unnecessary Expenditure: Spending on non-essential activities like lavish parties.
- 7. High Merger Costs: Costly mergers and acquisitions impact financial stability.

(c) Measures to Tackle the Problems:

- 1. Responsible Financial Management: Develop robust financial frameworks with regular audits.
- 2. Regulatory Oversight: SEBI should enforce accurate valuation rules for IPOs.
- 3. Leadership Accountability: Promote values of frugality and mindful expenditure.
- 4. Profitable Business Models: Focus on models generating profitable incremental revenue.
- 5. Cost-Cutting Alternatives: Explore reducing non-essential expenditures, pay cuts, and job sharing.
- 6. Transparency and Communication: Ensure clear communication with stakeholders to maintain trust.
- These measures can help startups achieve sustainable growth and maintain ethical standard.

The topic for the next class: Continuation of discussion on case studies