

UNIT-12

Ethics in the Workplace:

⊗ What is Ethics?

The principles and values that help people resolve questions of right and wrong make up their ethics. A system of ethics, or morality, is based on values, the ideals that govern a person's actions. Many people have similar values—believing in honesty, justice, hard work, and equality. The values help people to set rules, or principles, to guide their behaviour. For example: when a stranger walking along with us drops a 100 rupees note, we noticed and our ethical decision says to return or inform him/her rather than keeping it.

Benefits of Ethical Decisions: Living ethically allows people to reap the consequences of their behaviour—such as gaining the respect of others and having access to the privileges of society. Responsible and ethical people get to vote, borrow money, serve in public office and travel freely. Acting ethically:

- Helps a person live amicably and responsibly with other human beings.
- Keep an individual's conscience clear and provides peace of mind.
- Defines a person's character, showing what kind of person he/she is.

Consequences of Unethical Behaviour: When people do not behave ethically, they are subject to the pitfalls that are the result of their poor judgement—possible convictions, questionable reputations, and guilt. Unethical behaviour affects not only an individual personally, but also family members and members of society who must deal with the consequences.

⊗ Creating a culture of Ethics:

The process of being socialized that determines human experiences is known as culture. It includes equality, privacy, personal space, time and schedules, religion, duties and responsibilities etc.

There are various ways for creating and maintaining the culture of ethics in the workplace. They are discussed below:

1) Ethical leaders: The ethical leadership can be defined as the process of influencing employees by providing purpose, direction and motivation to behave ethically. A person carrying out this process by applying leadership attributes such as belief, values, ethics, character, knowledge and skills is called an ethical leader.

2) Writing Code of Ethics: In companies for which no code of ethics exists, we may be asked to help write one. Or we may start our own business, one that could benefit from a written code. Writing a code of ethics requires us to think about our personal values and to reflect on the values we want our employees to exhibit.

1) Personal code: The process begins with our personal code of ethics, a statement of our values and standards. We can begin by taking a hard look at our own sense of values and ethical conduct.

2) Corporate code: A corporate code is likely to be a collaborative effort involving several team members. The following suggestions may help us come up with ideas for our code:

→ What are the company's values?

→ What kinds of ethical conflicts are typical of our organization?

⊗ What Do you When Faces with an Ethical Dilemma?

The best approach is to prevent an ethical conflict in the first place by acting above board, taking about decisions with people we trust, following our personal values, and knowing and following the values held by our company. We can adopt following precautions when we faced with ethical dilemma:

1) Clarify the position: We may need to clarify our position before we decide whether we have an ethical dilemma. We use the following questions to help clarify our position regarding the dilemma to reach a solution:

- Would my actions be legal?
- Have I thought the possible consequences of my actions?
- How uncomfortable am I?
- Is there an obvious solution?

2) Analyze Ethical Dilemma: For analyzing our ethical dilemma, consider the following points:

- Take time to think about what is happening.
- Examine the facts.
- Clarify short and long-term goals.
- Talk to someone you can trust.
- Explore alternatives.

3) Choose a responsible course of action: The following criteria would be more helpful for choosing a responsible course of action as a way to judge right things to do:

- i) Rights: We need to ask ourselves: Will my actions infringe on the rights and dignity of others?
- ii) Justice: Are my actions just or fair?
- iii) Utility: Will my actions affect most people in the best way possible?
- iv) Care: Do my actions show that I care about others?
- v) Empathy: Do I have empathy for other people?
- vi) Consistency: Is my decision consistent with my other policies?
- vii) Values and principles: Is my action consistent with the values and principles I follow?

⊗ Why is it so difficult to behave ethically?

It is because unethical behaviours are not easily noticeable. One cannot notice them easily and most of them pass unnoticed by the witness. On the other hand, ethics cannot be measured absolutely. It is relative to time, place and situation, and

even from one person to person. The other difficulty to behave ethically is the drawbacks of legal system that it cannot address such unethical behaviours directly.

Defense Mechanisms:

Following are the some ways to defend a person against unethical behaviour:

- i) Bandwagon approach: It refers to an appeal to public to follow what majority of people are doing. This technique encourages us to think that we should do it or we'll be left out because everyone else is doing the same.
- ii) Denial: It is the act of saying 'no' to any unwanted favor. It is better to deny unethical behaviours and accept ethical behaviours.
- iii) Rationalization: Rationalization is generally a way to avoid looking at the real issues. People invent excuses for their behaviour.
- iv) False sense of security: Where there is doubt, it leads to false sense of security. Person knows what he/she has done and must live with the consequences.
- v) Stress: It may be best to deal with the stress and the moral dilemma separately, as they are two different issues.
- vi) Revenge: People want payback. Someone may justify that government tax is unfair. However, two wrongs do not make a right.
- vii) Blame: People believe that because they did not create a situation, they do not have to correct it. A wise person understands that it is best to deal with the situation at hand - regardless of who caused it.



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