

Ethical Dilemma Response: Favoritism in Project Assignments

Issue Description:

The supervisor of an information technology unit in a medium-sized company frequently imposes high-visibility work on a small pool of its members. These are competent individuals who are not the sole people who can carry out such activities. The rest of the team members, whose qualifications are similar or even better, are always assigned roles with less exposure. This favoritism has been perceived to cause poor morale, lack of involvement, and an increase in the turnover intentions of the neglected workers.

Decision:

The project assignments have to be based on a skill-based mechanism that is transparent and promotes fair chances and morale within the team. The division of work will be done by considering the strengths of each individual, their previous work, and future development objectives. Incorporation of rotation policies and a feedback system, including anonymous surveys and open houses, will strengthen the transparency of policy, reduce discrimination and bias, and create a more collaborative and driven team-based organizational approach.

Ethical Principle: Objectivity

Impartiality in decision-making means that objectivity must be used without favoritism or personal relations. As an IT supervisor, this principle ensures fairness in the allocation of duties, as it supports both performance evaluation and talent development (Tarigan et al., 2023). Maintaining objectivity improves team credibility and avoids internal conflicts. It also enables the development of a merit system, where every member feels important and trusted, and is equally empowered to contribute and grow.

Justification as a Leader:

Favoritism erodes credibility, undermines employees who have been ignored, and sabotages team spirit. A good supervisor should take on the responsibility to develop the members of the team, not just their immediate team. Supplying objectivity and fairness will enhance the results of equality, increase engagement, and improve the working environment. The strategy facilitates group initiatives, boosts work efficiency, and aligns team members towards the long-term organizational objectives.

Real-World Examples

In 2014, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) internal audits reported the scheduling and assignment of favored employees and the omission of other employees in important work (Schroeck et al., 2022). This preferential treatment was one of the reasons that led to inefficiency, demoralization, and late services to the veterans. The scandal attracted the attention of the nation, leading to resignations among the leadership ranks and policy changes at the federal level towards greater accountability and openness of performance at the agencies.

An investigation carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2017 revealed allegations that some senior managers of the organization distributed projects and other international appointments to individuals based on their loyalty to them instead of merit (Onu & Ngwube, 2024). This habit demoralised the teams and lowered the performance. The resultant backlash produced policy reforms internally aimed at promoting merit-based decisions, conflict-of-interest training, and ethics monitoring.

References

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