PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

CASE STUDIES LOG

MUHAMMAD HURMAN BAQAI

AI-023

CASE STUDY #01: "The Plagiarism Problem"

SCENARIO: Sophie, a university student, is working on a team project. One of her team members, Alex, suggests copying a design template from an online source without attribution, arguing it's a "common practice" and would save time. Sophie feels uneasy, knowing it could be considered plagiarism.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Should Sophie allow Alex to use the uncredited template for the project?** *Answer:* No, Sophie should discourage plagiarism. Using content without proper attribution violates ethical and academic standards.
2. **How can Sophie address Alex's suggestion without creating conflict?** *Answer:* Sophie can propose creating a unique design or using credited sources, emphasizing the importance of integrity in their work.
3. **What are the risks if the copied template is discovered?** *Answer:* Discovery could result in academic penalties, harm to reputation, and potential legal issues if copyrighted material is used.
4. **How can the team ensure they avoid similar issues in the future?** *Answer:* The team should adopt a practice of proper attribution and originality, using tools to verify content authenticity.

5. **Should Sophie report Alex's suggestion to their supervisor?** *Answer:* If Alex insists on plagiarism, Sophie may need to involve their supervisor to address the issue responsibly.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?** *Answer:* Integrity, responsibility, and respect for intellectual property are key principles to follow.

CASE STUDY #02: "Biased Performance Reviews"

SCENARIO: Michael, a manager at a tech company, notices that one of his supervisors consistently rates male employees higher than female employees, regardless of performance. This disparity is evident in promotions and raises.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Is it ethical for the supervisor to rate employees based on gender bias?** *Answer:* No, such behavior violates principles of fairness and equality.
2. **What steps should Michael take to address this issue?** *Answer:* Michael should collect evidence, address the supervisor directly, and escalate the issue to HR if necessary.
3. **How can the company ensure unbiased performance evaluations?** *Answer:* Implementing standardized metrics and diverse review panels can minimize bias.
4. **What are the potential consequences of ignoring this issue?** *Answer:* Ignoring bias can lead to demoralization, decreased trust, and loss of talent.
5. **Should Michael discuss this issue with the affected employees?** *Answer:* While sensitive, addressing concerns and assuring fairness is critical to restoring trust.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?** *Answer:* Fairness, accountability, and non-discrimination are essential.

CASE STUDY #03: "Confidential Data Leak"

SCENARIO: Emma, a software engineer at a financial institution, discovers that her team is using unsecured cloud storage for customer data. She raises her concerns, but her manager dismisses them, saying the system is "good enough" and implementing changes would delay a product launch.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What should Emma do after her concerns are dismissed?**
   Answer: Emma should escalate the issue to higher management or the compliance team, as protecting customer data is a critical responsibility.
2. **What are the risks of continuing with the current system?**
   Answer: Risks include data breaches, financial losses, reputational damage, and legal penalties.
3. **Should Emma report the issue anonymously?**
   Answer: If direct communication fails, anonymous reporting could ensure the issue is addressed while protecting her identity.
4. **What ethical responsibility does the team have regarding customer data?**
   Answer: The team has a duty to maintain data privacy, integrity, and security.
5. **How can the organization prevent such issues in the future?**
   Answer: Regular audits, training, and robust data protection policies can help prevent such vulnerabilities.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?**
   Answer: Responsibility, diligence, and respect for privacy are key principles.

CASE STUDY #04: "AI Bias in Recruitment"

SCENARIO: A company uses AI software for screening job applicants. Sarah, an HR specialist, discovers that the AI consistently favors candidates from specific demographics, potentially due to biased training data.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Is it ethical to rely on biased AI for recruitment?**
   Answer: No, relying on biased AI perpetuates discrimination and unfair hiring practices.
2. **What actions should Sarah take?**
   Answer: Sarah should report her findings and recommend auditing and retraining the AI system with diverse data.
3. **How can the company ensure fairness in AI systems?**
   Answer: By validating algorithms, using unbiased datasets, and involving diverse stakeholders in AI development.
4. **What are the consequences of ignoring Sarah's findings?**
   Answer: Ignoring the issue could result in legal liabilities, reduced diversity, and reputational harm.
5. **Should the company disclose the AI bias to rejected candidates?**
   Answer: Transparency is important, but disclosure should align with legal and ethical guidelines.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Fairness, accountability, and transparency are essential.

CASE STUDY #05: "Conflict of Interest in Procurement"

SCENARIO: John, a procurement officer, is evaluating vendors for a project. One vendor offers him free tickets to a major event in

exchange for selecting their bid, which is slightly more expensive than others.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Should John accept the vendor's offer?**
   Answer: No, accepting the offer constitutes a conflict of interest and compromises his integrity.
2. **What steps should John take?**
   Answer: John should report the incident to his supervisor or ethics committee and ensure a fair evaluation process.
3. **How should the company address such vendor practices?**
   Answer: The company should establish a strict code of conduct for vendor interactions.
4. **What are the risks if John accepts the offer?**
   Answer: Risks include loss of credibility, financial inefficiency, and potential legal consequences.
5. **Should John disclose the vendor's offer to colleagues?**
   Answer: Disclosure to relevant authorities is necessary, but not to the entire team unless instructed.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Integrity, fairness, and accountability are key principles.

CASE STUDY #06: "Greenwashing in Marketing"

SCENARIO: A marketing team is instructed to advertise a product as eco-friendly despite knowing it only meets minimal environmental standards. Lucy, a junior marketer, feels this is misleading to customers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Is it ethical to market the product as eco-friendly?**
   Answer: No, misleading customers about environmental benefits violates ethical marketing practices.
2. **What should Lucy do if her concerns are ignored?**
   Answer: Lucy can escalate the issue to higher management or suggest alternative messaging that is accurate.
3. **What are the potential consequences of greenwashing?**
   Answer: Consequences include loss of consumer trust, reputational damage, and regulatory penalties.
4. **How can the company ensure truthful advertising?**
   Answer: Establishing a review process for marketing claims and aligning with industry standards can ensure accuracy.
5. **Should Lucy report this issue anonymously?**
   Answer: If direct communication fails, anonymous reporting can be a valid option.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?**
   Answer: Honesty, responsibility, and respect for consumers are critical.

CASE STUDY #07: "Cybersecurity Oversight"

SCENARIO: A startup stores customer passwords in plain text rather than encrypting them. Mark, a developer, raises concerns, but his manager dismisses them, prioritizing speed over security.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What should Mark do to address his concerns?**
   Answer: Mark should escalate the issue to senior management or the compliance team.
2. **What are the risks of storing passwords in plain text?**
   Answer: Risks include data breaches, loss of customer trust, and legal consequences.

3. **How should the company handle this situation?**
   Answer: The company must prioritize encrypting passwords and implementing robust security protocols.
4. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Responsibility, diligence, and respect for user privacy are essential.

CASE STUDY #08: "Favoritism in Promotions"

SCENARIO:
Lisa, a high-performing employee, is overlooked for a promotion, which instead goes to Tom, a less qualified candidate. Lisa suspects favoritism, as Tom is a close friend of the manager.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Is it ethical for the manager to favor Tom?**
   Answer: No, favoritism undermines fairness and meritocracy in the workplace.
2. **How should Lisa address her concerns?**
   Answer: Lisa should document her achievements and have a transparent discussion with HR or a higher authority.
3. **What are the long-term consequences of favoritism?**
   Answer: Consequences include decreased morale, reduced productivity, and potential loss of talent.
4. **How can the organization prevent favoritism?**
   Answer: Implementing objective criteria for promotions and conducting third-party evaluations can ensure fairness.
5. **Should Lisa consider leaving the company?**
   Answer: If the issue persists and impacts her growth, leaving for a better opportunity might be a viable option.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Fairness, transparency, and accountability are key principles.

CASE STUDY #09: "Data Fabrication in Research"

SCENARIO:
David, a researcher, discovers that his colleague has fabricated data in a joint research project to ensure positive results.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What should David do upon discovering data fabrication?**
   Answer: David must report the issue to their research supervisor or ethics committee.
2. **What are the consequences of fabricated data in research?**
   Answer: Consequences include loss of credibility, retraction of publications, and potential legal action.
3. **How can David address this issue without jeopardizing his position?**
   Answer: David can present evidence and request anonymity when reporting the misconduct.
4. **Should the colleague face disciplinary action?**
   Answer: Yes, disciplinary action is necessary to uphold research integrity.
5. **How can research institutions prevent such incidents?**
   Answer: Institutions should enforce strict guidelines and conduct regular audits of research processes.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Integrity, honesty, and responsibility are essential.

CASE STUDY #10: "Conflict Over Credit"

SCENARIO:
During a project presentation, Anne realizes her team leader is

taking full credit for her contributions without acknowledging her efforts.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **What should Anne do in this situation?**
   Answer: Anne should address the issue with her team leader privately and seek acknowledgment.
2. **Is it ethical for the team leader to take credit for Anne's work?**
   Answer: No, taking undue credit is dishonest and demoralizing for contributors.
3. **What are the long-term effects of such behavior?**
   Answer: It can lead to mistrust, low morale, and high employee turnover.
4. **How can Anne ensure her contributions are recognized in the future?**
   Answer: Anne should maintain documentation of her work and highlight her contributions during discussions.
5. **Should Anne escalate the issue if her leader denies acknowledgment?**
   Answer: If necessary, Anne can report the issue to HR or higher management.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?**
   Answer: Honesty, fairness, and respect are critical.

CASE STUDY #11: "Whistleblowing on Corruption"

SCENARIO:
Ethan, an employee at a construction company, discovers that his manager is inflating costs and embezzling funds from the budget.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Should Ethan report the corruption?**
   Answer: Yes, whistleblowing is necessary to uphold ethical practices and protect the organization.
2. **What risks does Ethan face as a whistleblower?**
   Answer: Ethan risks retaliation, including job loss, harassment, or damage to his reputation.
3. **How can Ethan report the issue safely?**
   Answer: Ethan can use anonymous reporting channels or involve regulatory authorities.
4. **What are the consequences of ignoring the corruption?**
   Answer: Ignoring it could lead to financial losses, reputational damage, and legal consequences.
5. **How can the organization address corruption?**
   Answer: The organization must enforce anti-corruption policies and conduct regular audits.
6. **What ethical principles are at stake?**
   Answer: Integrity, accountability, and transparency are essential.

CASE STUDY #12: "Ethical Dilemma in AI Surveillance"

SCENARIO:
A tech company develops an AI-based surveillance system for law enforcement. Emma, a developer, realizes the system could be misused to invade citizens' privacy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Is it ethical to create technology that could be misused?**
   Answer: No, developers have a responsibility to minimize potential harm from their products.
2. **What should Emma do about her concerns?**
   Answer: Emma should raise the issue internally and advocate for stricter usage policies.

3. **How can the company ensure ethical use of the technology?**
   Answer: By establishing clear guidelines, monitoring usage, and partnering with oversight committees.
4. **What are the consequences of ignoring Emma's concerns?**
   Answer: Misuse of the system could lead to public backlash, loss of trust, and legal repercussions.
5. **Should the company disclose potential risks to clients?**
   Answer: Transparency is essential to maintain trust and ensure informed decision-making.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?**
   Answer: Responsibility, respect for privacy, and accountability are critical.

CASE STUDY #13: "Pressure to Meet Unrealistic Deadlines"

SCENARIO:
Sophia, a project manager, is pressured by her CEO to complete a software development project within an unrealistic timeframe. This would require her team to work overtime continuously.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **Should Sophia agree to the CEO's demands?**
   Answer: No, agreeing could lead to burnout and reduced quality of work.
2. **How can Sophia handle this situation?**
   Answer: Sophia should present a realistic timeline and explain the risks of rushing the project.
3. **What are the consequences of overworking employees?**
   Answer: Consequences include burnout, decreased morale, and higher employee turnover.

4. **How can the organization support ethical workload management?**
   Answer: By setting realistic goals, ensuring work-life balance, and promoting open communication.
5. **Should Sophia involve HR in this discussion?**
   Answer: If necessary, HR can mediate and advocate for the team's well-being.
6. **What ethical principles apply here?**
   Answer: Fairness, responsibility, and respect for employees' well-being are critical.