

MODULE 3

Course Content

Professional Responsibility

Social Responsibility

Ethical Dilemmas

Whistle Blowing

Conflict of interest

Ethical Relativism

Safety at Workplace

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Professional responsibility is a set of duties within the concept of professional ethics for those who exercise a unique set of knowledge and skill as professionals.
- "Professional responsibility" is a catch-phrase that implies **obligations** and **standards** in the performance of services.

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Characteristically, there are **three** elements in the concept "professional responsibility" as it is defined by the professions.
- One element concerns the **effective use** of that body of knowledge or technology the profession has developed.
- A second concerns the **suitability** of the professional's attitudes and actions in dealing with the client
- The third element focuses on the **compliance with the professional's conduct** in view of the profession's self-image and defined interests.
- Typically, all three perspectives are commingled and may be presented as a "code of ethics" or "code of professional responsibility."

EXAMPLES OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

- A lawyer defending the culprit
- A doctor treating a terrorist
- A police officer arresting a person under political pressure.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Social responsibility means that businesses, in addition to maximizing shareholder value, must act in a manner **benefiting society**.
- Socially responsible companies should adopt policies that **promote the well-being of society** and the **environment** while lessening negative impacts on them.
- Companies can act responsibly in many ways, such as by promoting volunteering, making changes that benefit the environment, engaging in ethical labour practices, and engaging in charitable giving.
- Consumers are more actively looking to buy goods and services from socially responsible companies, hence impacting their profitability.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Social responsibility means that individuals and companies must act in the best interests of their environment and society as a whole.
- As it applies to business, social responsibility is known as **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) and is becoming a more prominent area of focus within businesses due to shifting social norms.
- In India, every company having net worth of INR 500 Crore, annual turnover of Rs. 1000 Crore, or net profit of INR 5 Crore has to contribute 2 % of their average net profits of three years on CSR.

EXAMPLES OF CSR BY INDIAN COMPANIES

- 'E-Choupal', a rural development initiative by ITC
- Nanhi Kali project by Mahindra & Mahindra
- Adult Literacy Program by TCS
- Construction Vocational Training in India (CVTI) by L & T
- Mid-Day Meal by Infosys

ETHICAL DILEMMA

- An ethical dilemma (ethical paradox or moral dilemma) is a **problem in the decision-making process** between two possible options, neither of which is absolutely acceptable from an ethical perspective.
- An ethical dilemma is a conflict between alternatives where, no matter what a person does, some ethical principle will be compromised.
- The biggest challenge of an ethical dilemma is that it does not offer an obvious solution that would comply with ethics and norms.
- Ethical dilemmas are especially significant in professional life, as they frequently occur in the workplace.
- People's inability to determine the optimal solution to such dilemmas in a professional setting may result in serious consequences for businesses and organizations.

HOW TO SOLVE AN ETHICAL DILEMMA?

Approaches to solve an ethical dilemma

- Refute the paradox (dilemma): The situation must be carefully analysed. In some cases, the existence of the dilemma can be logically refuted.
- Value theory approach: Choose the alternative that offers the greater good or the lesser evil.
- Find alternative solutions: In some cases, the problem can be reconsidered, and new alternative solutions may arise.

EXAMPLES OF ETHICAL DILEMMA

- Euthanasia
- Artificial Intelligence
- Time Travel
- Abortion

WHISTLE BLOWING

- Workplace whistleblowing occurs when an individual reports wrongdoing in an organisation, such as financial misconduct or discrimination.
- A whistle-blower is a person, often an employee, who reveals information about activity within a private or public organization that is deemed illegal, immoral, illicit, unsafe or fraudulent.

TYPES OF WHISTLE BLOWING

Internal whistleblowing

- It is when someone makes a report within an organisation.
- Often companies implement whistleblowing channels for this purpose so that employees and other stakeholders can speak up if they become aware of misconduct.

External whistleblowing

- It is when a person blows the whistle publicly, either to the media, police or via social media channels.
- People often choose the public option if they have little faith in their organisation's investigation or reporting procedure, have tried speaking up internally with no result or if there is no whistleblowing system in place.

WHY IS WHISTLEBLOWING BENEFICIAL?

- Whistle-blowers provide an important service to both their organisation and wider society.
- A whistleblowing system enables confidential reporting of irregularities.
- If matters can be resolved internally before becoming public in the press or on leak platforms, organisations can avoid reputational damage and fines that can prove substantial.

WHAT ARE THE ETHICS OF WHISTLEBLOWING?

- The ethics of whistleblowing can be seen as a tricky matter.
- It often brings two moral values, fairness and loyalty, into conflict.
- On the one hand doing what is fair and right (i.e. speaking up about misconduct) can sometimes conflict with loyalty (i.e. having worked for an organisation for many years).
- Whistleblowing might also be viewed as a breach of trust.
- Many whistle-blowers decide to report because they place the value of fairness and doing what is right over loyalty to their organisation.

ETHICAL DILEMMA IN WHISTLE BLOWING

- Ethical Dilemmas:
Moral Values vs Professional Ethics,
Honesty vs Transparency,
Trustworthiness vs Confidentiality,
Duty vs Rights
- Whether a whistle-blower is a “hero” or a “traitor” is purely down to their intentions.
- Are they doing it to right a wrong? Is it to protect the public? Or is the basis for the action the pursuit of self-interest or financial gain?
- One way to discourage “unethical” whistleblowing is to offer an internal, anonymous channel for reporting wrongdoing.
- The presence of such a system means whistle-blowers' identities are kept secret and they are less likely to report externally to the press where they could seek to make a name for themselves.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- A conflict of interest occurs when an entity or individual becomes unreliable because of a clash between personal interests and professional duties or responsibilities.
- Such a conflict occurs when a company or person has a vested interest—such as money, status, knowledge, relationships, or reputation—which puts into question on their actions, judgment, and/or decision-making
- When such a situation arises, the party is usually asked to remove themselves, and it is often legally required of them.
- In business, a conflict of interest arises when a person chooses personal gain over duties to their employer, or to an organization in which they are a stakeholder, or exploits their position for personal gain in some way.
- Conflicts of interest often have legal ramifications.

- Risk of Conflict of Interest arises at two levels

- i) Organizational Conflict of Interest

- It arises when an organization is unable to render impartial services

- ii) Personal Conflict of Interest

- It arises when a person's personal interest interfere with his professional duties

- Conflict of Interest situations do not necessarily imply wrong doing.
- However, if they are not managed appropriately, they can compromise work and organizational integrity.

EXAMPLES OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- Co-workers complain that a manager's relative always gets the biggest raise or the best assignment.
- A colleague accept gifts from potential vendors.
- A co-worker leaves work 20 minutes early every day so she can get to his/her second job.
- Conflict of Interest in research

ETHICAL RELATIVISM

- Ethical relativism is the theory that holds that morality is relative to the norms of one's culture.
- That is, whether an action is right or wrong depends on the moral norms of the society in which it is practiced.
- The same action may be morally right in one society but be morally wrong in another.
- For the ethical relativist, there are no universal moral standards.

- Most ethicists reject the theory of ethical relativism.
- Some claim that while the moral practices of societies may differ, the fundamental moral principles underlying these practices do not.
- Other philosophers criticize ethical relativism because of its implications for individual moral beliefs.
- The practice of slavery in pre-Civil war U.S. society or the practice of apartheid in South Africa is wrong despite the beliefs of those societies.
- The treatment of the Jews in Nazi society is morally reprehensible regardless of the moral beliefs of Nazi society.

EXAMPLES

- Racism
- Festivals
- Religion
- Customs

SELF-STUDY TOPIC

Safety at workplace

- Importance
- Benefits
- Ethical approach to safety at workplace