



# East West University

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**PROJECT-3: Ethical Decision Making in the field of IT/CSE and criticism and justification of actions/stance as per ethical framework**

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**Scenario:** Let's assume, Alice was a young software engineer with a bright future ahead of her. She was talented, hardworking, and passionate about her work. She had recently been promoted to lead a team of engineers for her company. The company wanted to monitor employees' progress and productivity of each day. So, the project was to develop a software that would allow the company to track their employees' productivity. Then, one of the higher authorities proposed to develop a new type of AI software that would monitor the employees all the time and company accepted the idea. Afterwards, Company assigned Alice for the project. Alice was excited about the project, but she soon realized that there was an ethical dilemma involved. The software that Alice was developing would be able to track employees' every move. It would record how long they spent on each task, how many times they took breaks, and even how many times they went to the bathroom. This level of surveillance would give the company a huge amount of power over their employees. It is true that this will increase productivity of the company, but using AI to monitor the humans is not fair. Alice knows that some the company would use this power to exploit their employees. They might use the software to pressure employees to work longer hours, or to fire employees who were not meeting their productivity goals. Alice was worried that the software would create a hostile work environment and make it difficult for employees to have a work-life balance. In this case, Alice is so confused and she has to make a choice.

### **Brainstorming phase**

#### **People and organizations affected:**

- Alice (software engineer and team leader).
- Employees of Alice's company.
- Alice's company.

#### **Risks, issues, problems, consequences:**

- Invasion of employees' privacy and loss of autonomy.
- Potential exploitation and increased pressure on employees.
- Hostile work environment and decreased work-life balance.
- Potential erosion of trust between employees and the company.
- Employees can their lost job.
- Impact on employee morale and job satisfaction.
- Possible legal and ethical violations.

#### **Benefits:**

- Increased productivity and efficiency for the company.
- Enhanced ability for management to monitor and optimize work processes.
- Alice may receive a promotion and increased income.

#### **Dilemma:**

- Alice will develop the AI software.
- Alice will not develop the AI software.

#### **Possible actions:**

1. Proceed with the development of the AI software.
2. Refuse to develop the software that invades employee privacy.
3. Engage in discussions and negotiations with company to stop the project.
4. Raise ethical concerns and propose alternative approach (implementing goal-setting and performance management software).
5. Informing law enforcement about unethical decision.
6. Quitting the job.

## **Analysis Phase**

### **Responsibilities of the Decision Maker:**

- Uphold the principles of fairness, integrity, and respect for individual rights
- Consider the well-being and interests of all stakeholders, including employees

### **Rights of Stakeholders:**

- Alice has the right to make ethically sound decisions without fear of retaliation. **(Negative right)**
- Company has the right to do betterment of his company by increasing potential productivity improvements of his employee. **(Positive right)**
- The company has the right to monitor and optimize work processes, but within ethical boundaries. **(Positive right)**
- Employees working in the company, have the right to privacy, autonomy, and a healthy work environment and not to be exploited by the company. **(Negative right)**

### **Impact of Action Options on Stakeholders:**

- Continuing the project without addressing ethical concerns may lead to employee exploitation and a hostile work environment.
- Quitting the project puts Alice at risk of losing her job and potentially facing financial difficulties.
- Convincing the company to stop the project may replace Alice with some other software engineer for the project, or may job risk or may be convinced.
- Informing law enforcement may not be feasible or effective without clear violations of the law.
- Raising ethical concerns and proposing implementing goal setting and performance management framework: Upholds privacy, rights, fairness, and work-life balance for employees. Also helps the company to track productivity within legal and ethical boundaries.
- Quitting the job puts Alice in the financial risk. But company may give the project to another software engineer. So potential risk of the employees will not remove anyway.

### **Consequences, Risks, Benefits and cost Harms:**

- **Proceed with the development of the project:**  
Consequence: Potential exploitation of employees and erosion of trust within the workplace  
Risk: Employees have to work in a hostile environment. May the works not be that productive.  
Benefit: Alice's potential promotion and increased income. Company will be benefited.  
Harm: Negative impact on employee well-being, privacy, and work-life balance.
- **Refuse to develop the software:**  
Consequence: Alice may lose the job.  
Risk: Alice's financial condition risk. Negative impact on employee.  
Benefits: Alice may console himself that he is not doing anything against ethics. Company will be benefited.  
Harms: Alice's financial condition, family's wellbeing may harm. Employee deprived.
- **Engage in discussions and negotiations with company to stop the project:**  
Consequence: Alice may lose the job/replace from the project for not doing the given task. Or may convinced not making the software.  
Risk: Alice's financial condition risk. Or other software engineer may do the job. If convinced there will be no risk

Benefits: if convinced, then employee will not be deprived. Otherwise, company may meet their goal of tracking productivity.

Harms: if not convinced, she may lose her job/demoted for not doing the task.

- **Informing the law enforcement:**

Consequence: Informing law enforcement may help Alice to not doing the project if the company could not show any legal consent of the employee of tracking their personal data.

Risk: Informing law enforcement may not be feasible or effective without clear violations of the law.

Benefits: if no consent, he does not have to do the project. Employee well-being.

Harms: if there is no violation, law enforcement cannot do anything about it. Alice may have job risk for taking legal action against the company as an employee.

- **Raising ethical concerns and propose alternative approach (implementing goal setting and performance management software):**

Consequence: Employees do not have to work in a hostile environment. Rather they will make a report on their work and submit to a software which will track if the goals meet on their time or not. Afterwards software will give update to the employee about their goal meeting.

Risks: Some employee may not report their work honestly.

Benefits: Instead of relying on intrusive monitoring technologies, companies can establish clear goals and performance metrics for employees. Company can still ensure the productivity. Employees have friendly working environment and respect their rights also. Alice may get promotion for making this new software.

Harms: if someone does not submit their work report honestly, software will track wrongly if the employee is meeting his goal.

- **Quitting the job:**

Consequences: Alice's financial risk and any other may build the software.

Risks: if some other software engineer built the software, problem remain unsolved.

Benefits: company will still have all the monitoring to

Harms: financial degradation of Alice. Employees may be deprived after the software built by the other software engineer.

### **Kant's, Mill's, and Rawls' Approaches:**

- **According to Kant's ethical theory-**

One should always respect the humanity in others, and that one should only act in accordance with rules that could hold for everyone.

✓ Therefore, Kant's approach emphasizes treating individuals as ends in themselves, suggesting that Alice should prioritize respecting employee rights and privacy. So, Alice should raise ethical concerns and propose an alternative approach (implementing goal setting and performance management software).

- **According to Mill's ethical theory-**

Its goal is to justify the utilitarian principle as the foundation of morals and that is the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

✓ therefore, Mill's approach emphasizes maximizing overall happiness and well-being, which includes protecting employee rights and fostering a healthy work environment. So, Alice should raise ethical concerns and propose an alternative approach (implementing goal setting and performance management software).

- **According to Rawls' ethical theory-**

Society of free citizens holding equal basic rights and cooperating within an egalitarian economic system.

✓ Therefore, Rawls' approach highlights the need for fairness, justice, and equal opportunity, suggesting that Alice should consider the impact on all stakeholders and prioritize employee well-being. So, Alice should raise ethical concerns and propose an alternative approach (implementing goal setting and performance management software).

### **Categorization of potential actions:**

- Proceeding with the development of the AI software: Ethically questionable due to invasion of privacy and potential harm to employees.
- Refusing to develop the software: Ethically acceptable, as it upholds privacy rights, but may have personal consequences for Alice.
- Engage in discussions and negotiations with management to stop the project: Ethically acceptable, as it is proposing to stop project that considers employee rights. But the higher authorities may not accept this because of the company's well-being.
- Raising ethical concerns and proposing alternative approach: Ethically obligatory, considering the responsibility to protect privacy, autonomy, and fairness in the workplace.
- Informing law enforcement: Ethically acceptable, as it may help to cancel the project.
- Quitting the job: Ethically questionable, because it does not end anything. The company will bring another engineer in her place to continue the project.

### **Decision phase**

The stronger option is to raise ethical concerns and propose alternative approaches (implementing goal-setting and performance management software). This involves initiating discussions with company, presenting the ethical concerns related to privacy, autonomy, and work-life balance, and proposing alternative methods to monitor productivity that respect employee rights. One alternative method to monitor productivity while respecting employee rights is "Implementing goal-setting and performance management software". Instead of relying on intrusive monitoring technologies, companies can establish clear goals and performance metrics for employees. This can be done through collaborative discussions between managers and employees to set realistic and measurable objectives. Regular check-ins can be conducted to provide feedback, guidance, and support, allowing employees to track their progress and make adjustments as needed through the software.

By focusing on outcomes and results rather than micromanaging tasks and activities, this approach respects employees' autonomy while still ensuring productivity. It allows employees to have flexibility in how they accomplish their work while maintaining accountability for achieving the desired outcomes. This method emphasizes trust, collaboration, and continuous improvement, fostering a positive work environment.

Again, it can be considered ethically right. Among the ethical theories, we are considering utilitarian ethics for the raise ethical concerns and propose alternative approach. We know, in the utilitarian ethics, greatest number of people will be beneficial by that. If the company implementing goal-setting and performance management frameworks, both company and employees get benefits. Because, there will be respecting employee autonomy, balancing productivity and employee well-being, trust and transparency and friendly environment.

Overall, raise ethical concerns and propose alternative approach (implementing goal-setting and performance management software) promotes a culture of trust, accountability, and mutual respect, enabling companies to monitor productivity effectively while respecting employee rights.