

Ethics and Morality in Theory and Practice

Abstract

The fundamental issues in today's rapidly changing and globally expanding world are ethical and moral. This paper critically reviews the literature relating to the gap between theory and practice in the area of ethics and morality at the work-place. Where we expected ethical behavior from others but forgot our own behavior in the same situation. The paper aims to address the theory-practice gap and suggested some fruitful solutions to narrow this gap by emphasized the role of ethical management in every institute or organization. Which could be a helpful measure to manage the human resource that results in building our nation in a new and desirable way.

Keywords: Ethics, Morality, Intrinsic-Value, Conscience, Work-Ethics.

Introduction

We generally know the right and wrong, ethical and unethical , behaviour according to morals or not, this is the reason we choose the most appropriate option given for ethical behaviour in any questionnaire. But what happened when it comes to reality, practical aspect of life? Here we change our norms for 'us' and for 'them'. This attribution style of our personality creates the gap between theory and practical aspects of ethics in our life . And this dilemma became more serious when it comes to our work place, because at our workplace we are not only responsible for ourselves but for others too who are directly or indirectly depends on us whether we are providing a product or services.

Ethics and Morality

Ethics and morality are not synonymous but both have something to do with the concepts of good and bad. *Ethics* comes from the Greek *ethica*, meaning character or custom. Morality comes from the Latin *moralis*, meaning customs, manners or proper behaviour. Both words deal with the customs or the manner in which people do things. Their modern meaning relate to the way people act either good or bad. Morality is looking at how good or bad our conduct is, and our standards about conduct. Ethics is used to refer to the formal study of those standards or conducts.

Descriptive and normative

In descriptive sense, "morality" refers to personal or cultural values, codes of conduct , which only refers to what is considered right or wrong. In normative sense, "morality" refers to what is actually right or wrong which may be independent of the values held by peoples or cultures.

Work Ethics

The work ethic is a cultural norm according to which an individual should be personally accountable and responsible for the work that one does .Work ethic is a set of values including being reliable, honest, having initiative, pursuing new skills and hard work and so on. In work ethics it is believed that work has intrinsic value and provide pleasure to the worker. It is morally beneficial for both the worker and beneficiary.

Employer selected workers for better positions and more responsibility who shows good work ethics. Workers who fail to exhibit a good work ethic considered as failures to the expectations of employer and thus not promoted or placed in positions of greater responsibility.

We all have a sense of responsibility and knowledge of moral purposes, even then sometimes engaged in immoral behaviour. However, when we engage in immoral behaviours we still feel as we are moral individuals. Moral self-licensing attempts to explain this phenomenon and proposes that self-image security increases the possibility to engage in immoral behaviour. Our past moral behaviour gives us confidence that we are a moral person and cannot do anything

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immoral or having some logic behind our involvement in immoral behaviour.

Concept of ethics and morals, originates one more concept that is of 'values'. Ethics are related to values, as we are inclined to know how the conduct should be rather than how it is. Values are of two types on the basis of motives- intrinsic and extrinsic. In intrinsic values- the conduct is the end in itself. In extrinsic values – the conduct acts as the means for achieving some end. In ethics our focus is intrinsic values, where human behavior is guided by intrinsic values because they are rewarding in itself, where men performs the ideal conduct because of the pleasure provided by the conduct itself not for some external incentive. Hedonists believed that human behavior is guided by 'Hedonism'- means to attain pleasure, happiness, and joy of life. This hedonism is of two type-

1. Psychological hedonism, and
2. Ethical hedonism

which is both the self and other directed. According to Sidgwick the psychological hedonism is the view that "volition or desire is determined by pleasures or pains prospective, actual, or past". Brandt defined "ethical hedonism" as the view that "a thing is intrinsically desirable or undesirable if and only to the degree that it is pleasant or unpleasant. Ethical hedonism is of two type- egoistic hedonism and altruistic hedonism. According to egoistic hedonism the highest aim of life is to benefit ourselves or the self-pleasure. While the altruistic hedonism believed in the universal benefit. This hedonism is one of the major factors to determine moral obligation which defines an individual rights and duties. Rights to give birth to virtues- which are learned attitudes or habits. Duties to respect life, society and truth, i.e. duties to self, others and God. Individuals are aware of their rights, which are ethical demands, but simultaneously they are bound to their duties, it is a kind of ethical debt which require it's repayment. Continuous practice of duties also give birth to virtues. In this way hedonism is not always demands gratification for self-needs but demands self-sacrificing also. Same logic applies for work 'you will reap what you saw'. As there is no shortcut for real success.

Aim of the Study

Objective of this paper is to analyze and minimize the theory-practice gap regarding ethical and moral practices adopted by people at work place.

The differences between Theory and Practice

Some things are fine in theory, but do not work in practice. Kant's ethical theory was criticized for the same as there is always a gap between theory and practice. Theory provides general rules but it cannot tell us how to apply them; practical judgment is needed for that. This means that those who lack judgment might be helpless, even though they know a lot of theory.

According to Kant moral rules have no exceptions; thus we may never lie, we may never break a promise, and so on. Such an ethic seems not to work in practice, as in extreme circumstances even very serious rules may have to be broken and sometimes even by the rule-maker themselves.

For example, suicide is wrong both in ethics and law. But the hero who sacrifices himself to save others is not a suicide, nor is the man who kills himself while blind with grief, as he lacks the required rational intention. It might be thought that such gaps could be closed by adding further principles to the theory but in reality we cannot fill all such kind of loopholes.

Many ethical ideals are endorsed even though they are unattainable. Then what is the utility of such ideals if it cannot be put into practice. Such ideals might be understood as goals toward which we should strive, even though unattainable. But this does not mean that ethical theory is useless in practical decision-making.

Ethical Issues at Work

Most of us want to behave ethically, and we also know when something isn't right. But sometimes it can be very hard to speak up in support of our beliefs. Following tips can help us in solving ethical issues.

First, realize that ethical dilemmas are a normal and predictable part of our job. It happens at some or other point with all of us, recognizing this reduces the stress that can limit our confidence and capability to face these issues effectively.

Second, treat an ethical issue like any other workplace or business issue. Don't feel guilt for targeting other if you are on right side; instead, figure out the problem and person whom we need to talk to resolving.

Third, handle the issue with rationalizations, as we know about the gaps between theory and practice in implementation of ethics.

Fourth, draw attention of people to positive outcomes of ethical behaviour.

Ethical Management

We can make an organization more ethical by adopting certain steps. Ethical or unethical behavior of individual employees is influenced in the workplace both by their own moral development and the influence that the organization culture exerts on them. They are influenced by a group of forces that surround them such as their peers, their supervisors, and superiors, the reward system, group norms, institutional values and policies and the manner of their implementation. Ethical behavior can be developed and managed in a number of ways. Manage and develop ethical behavior among employees is the task of human resource management of that organization. Human resource management department can execute this through training, communication and discipline.

Role of Education

Our educational system may also play significant role in cultivating work ethics. Education system should develop the basic skills of reading, writing, decision-making and problem-solving, along with the employability skills, pride in work, personal image, interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence. If we succeed in inducing above qualities, these students will grow into young adults having the benefit of a more holistic and practical education. Who would be ready to face issues whether with work or ethics. This ultimately increases their productivity.

The Value of Work Ethics in the Context of Nation-Building

Work is actually the physical and mental effort or activity directed towards the production or accomplishment of something. It is what we do or rather perform especially in an occupation or job. Some people work really hard and get paid less or even nothing for their effort while others do a little or nothing and only get paid because they have a job. This is an unbalanced situation. However, Moral virtues direct us for purpose, responsibility and vision that are crucial in nation's building. Nation building requires cooperation, hard work, honesty, self sacrifice and conscience for differentiating between right and wrong. Since we suppose to be a true positive reflection of our inner self in terms of our attitude and behavior and in the context of work we should have great passion for our work, be at work on time with minimum holidays, treating others at work the way we expect to be treated, be with positive attributes such as accountability, honesty, integrity and loyalty, we need to justify every penny earned and this could only be achieved through hard work and good service. There is no way of building the nation's conscience if our own conscience is at deep sleep. So, let our conscience be awakened and be guided by work ethics. It is not sufficient only to talk about the ethics and morals but one should be concerned about the cultivation of same in human society, as these are not innate but acquired practices. And great heights of success could be accomplished with implementation of ethics at work.

Conclusion

We often saw the system failure at work place because of corruption, personal attitudes/ traits or desire to gain success at earliest in comparison to others whether deserving or not. There could be several other reasons also but broadly fall under above causes. We all hope for a clean system that could enhance the growth of our developing nation and proved beneficial for us and next generation too. But to achieve this obvious and ultimate goal we all

have to follow the work ethics and have to check our morals indiscriminately. There could not be some other rule for others and something else for me. We all know the right & wrong, so to be mentally healthy follow your conscience not the materialistic goals. Sometime work ethics demands self scarification but it will definitely give better results in the long run. So we should not chase our personal goal rather work for the nation building, which we left behind us as our footprints.

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