

ETHICS IN MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Management academics have tended to rely on ethical code developed by researchers. The point of this paper is to understand ethical approach of management whether this remains a viable approach in the current climate that is characterized by a significant increase in ethical regulation across the social sciences. We suggest that management researchers to face ethical issues of a different nature to those most frequently confronted by other researchers, and argue for more explicit acknowledgement of various factors involved in management research.

An exploratory analysis of the content of ethics codes formulated by nine social scientific associations is undertaken to identify the main ethical principles they cover and to analyze their underlying ethical tone. Despite the risk that ethics codes may encourage instrumental compliance with minimal ethical obligations, we suggest they also have the potential to reflect a more aspirational agenda. The development of an ethics code for management research should therefore be seen as a potentially worthwhile project. We have first defined the meaning, history and importance of management research and then we went on to describe the framework and types involved in management research programme. And lastly conclude ethics in management research with the help of just understanding key enablers & cases of ethics in management research.

Keywords : management, ethics code

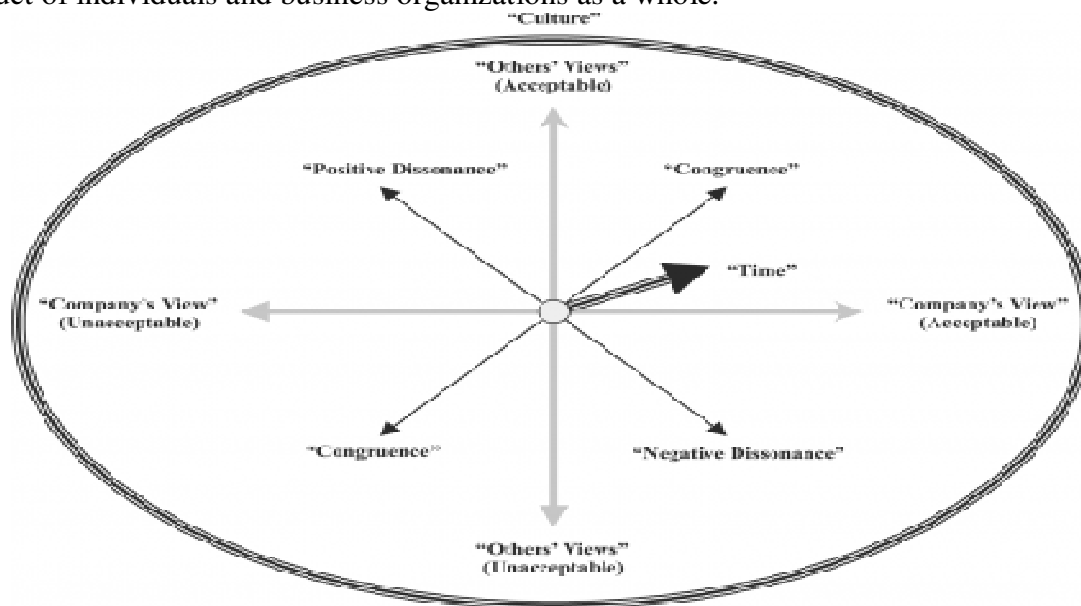
INTRODUCTION:

The profession of business ethics has long needed a highly practical resource that is designed particularly for leaders and managers -- those people charged to ensure ethical practices in their organizations. Unfortunately, far too many resources about business ethics end up being designed primarily for philosophers, academics and social critics. As a result, leaders and managers struggle to really be able to make use of the resources at all.

Simply put, ethics involves learning what is right or wrong, and then doing the right thing -- but "the right thing" is not nearly as straightforward as conveyed in a great deal of business ethics literature. Ethics, also known as moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that addresses questions about morality—that is, concepts such as good and evil right and wrong, virtue and vice, justice, etc.

WHAT IS BUSINESS ETHICS?

Discussion on ethics in business is necessary because business can become unethical, and there are plenty of evidences today on unethical corporate practices. Irrespective of the demands and pressures upon it, business by virtue of its existence is bound to be ethical, for at least two reasons: one, because whatever the business does affects its stakeholders—and two, because every juncture of action has trajectories of ethical as well as unethical paths, wherein the existence of the business is justified by ethical alternatives it responsibly chooses. It applies to all aspects of business conduct and is relevant to the conduct of individuals and business organizations as a whole.



Business ethics can be both a normative and a descriptive discipline. In academia descriptive approaches are also taken. The range and quantity of business ethical issues reflects the degree to which business is perceived to be at odds with non-economic social values.

OVERVIEW OF ETHICAL ISSUES IN MANAGEMENT THROUGH RESEARCH:

GENERAL BUSINESS ETHICS:

This part of business ethics overlaps with the philosophy of business, one of the aims of which is to determine the fundamental purposes of a company. Ethical issues concerning relations between different companies include issues such as hostile take-overs and industrial espionage; leadership issues such as corporate governance.

ETHICS OF FINANCE:

Ethical finance shares its border with behavioral science, sociology, economics, accounting and management. It is concerned with technical issues such as the optimal mix of debt and equity financing, dividend policy, and the evaluation of alternative investment projects, and more recently the valuation of options, futures, swaps, and other derivative securities, portfolio diversification and so on.

ETHICS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

Human resource management' occupies the sphere of activity of recruitment selection, orientation, performance appraisal, training and development, industrial relations and health and safety issues where ethics really matters. Ethical issues may arise in the employment relationship, including the ethics of discrimination, and employees' rights and duties are commonly seen in the business ethics.

ETHICS OF SALES AND MARKETING:

Marketing ethics "affect some people's morally significant perceptions of and interactions with other people, and if they can contribute to those perceptions or interactions going seriously wrong, these activities have bearing on fundamental ethical questions as pricing, anti-competitive practices, specific marketing strategies, content of advertisements, children and marketing, black market, grey markets etc."

ETHICS OF PRODUCTION:

Some of the more acute dilemmas in this area arise out of the fact that there is usually a degree of danger in any product or production process and it is difficult to define a degree of permissibility, or the degree of permissibility may depend on the changing state of preventative technologies or changing social perceptions of acceptable risk.

CASE 1: ETHICAL DILEMMAS AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITIES

After 14 months of fieldwork, plus nine successive summers, Becky Ross went into the field for her 11th season with a southwest Indian tribe. When she first entered the field, she had been accepted as a granddaughter by an elderly couple with whom she had always lived; the couple's three grown children and their spouses, who lived close by, treated her as a sister. Becky planned to spend the summer catching up on genealogies and reviewing a rough draft of her book on the tribe with her hosts.

When she reached the field, Becky learned that her "grandfather-father" was not well: he had Alzheimer's disease and diabetes, exhibiting distressing signs of senility, and drinking heavily and hallucinating. (The illness was particularly painful for Becky, whose parents had moved in with her when her father developed Alzheimer's). After a week of settling in, Becky learned that her "brother" Bob had an urgent project in a distant city and that he and his wife would not be back until late August. Soon afterwards, Rita, her "sister," told her that she and her husband were leaving on vacation; the next day, Conchita, the third child, announced that she, too, had an urgent project and was leaving with her husband. In addition, her two "cousin-nieces" left; one had spent a great deal of time doing errands for the old couple; the other lived just across the path, making her available for emergencies. Before leaving, Conchita said, "We've been doing it all year. It's your turn. We waited till you came to make our trip."

What could Becky do? She felt she had no choice. She behaved like the "granddaughter-daughter" she had always been called. She felt put upon in a way, but she also felt that a sense of responsibility accompanied her role as "occasional kin." The elders needed a great deal of care: Becky sat up nights with her "grandfather-father" when he was delirious; took them wherever they needed to go; did their shopping; cleaned the home; and helped her "grandmother-mother" prepare the food. Her "siblings" returned shortly before she was scheduled to begin the new semester of teaching at her university. The manuscript had not been reviewed. The genealogies were not updated. She remembers the summer with distress. It was exhausting, frustrating, and mostly unrewarding. More than a year later, her book is still unfinished.

The following summer, however, she found her relationship with the extended family had changed subtly. Several family members spent a great deal of time helping her nephew, a boy with emotional and educational difficulties whom, with the encouragement of the family, she had brought for a two-week visit. And, for the first time, Becky joined freely in family disputes about rights and responsibilities: "I had the same arguments with everyone they have with each other," she reported. Becky's response to the family's needs created a temporary dilemma for her, but it helped transcend the temporary character of her relationship with the family.

CRITICAL EVALUATION:

Becky Ross's experience provides both an example of responsibility in a fieldwork situation and a warning--a warning that entry into fictional or quasi-kinship relationships entails expectations and claims that the anthropologist may find onerous, especially if the relationship continues over the years as the anthropologist makes repeated visits to the same locality. Reliance on an individual or a family for assistance during periods of field research sets up counter obligations. Becky Ross honored the claim in a manner few of us would have the courage to do and behaved admirably.

Joan Cassell sees Ross's behavior in terms of its exemplary character rather than as a dilemma. But in ethics, one is rarely provided with a clear-cut choice between right and wrong. In fact, one is having to choose amidst contradictory claims in most cases. The case as given to us does not say whether or not Ross had received a grant to finance her summer of fieldwork. Ought she to return the grant because she was unable to carry out her proposed research? Or would the grantor be assumed to regard Ross's new position within her adopted family as an adequate recompense for the failure to check genealogies and complete the manuscript? What obligations do we have to those who finance fieldwork? How many of us in fact do what we said we would do when we asked for funding? Given the highly contingent character of fieldwork, the specificity of research proposals probably burdens all of us with unfulfilled promises.

Ross's experience also raises the question of whether those beginning field research should be advised against entering into the kind of close personal friendships or quasi-kinship relationships which are so reassuring and satisfying when we are the gainers from the relationship. At the very least, we ought to alert novices to the fact that they are creating obligations and they ought to learn what these may entail.

THE FOUR LEVELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS:

Social disregard: the company shows carelessness for the consequences of its action.

Social obligation: the company does not wish to extend its activity any further than just meeting its legal responsibilities

Social responsiveness: the company adjusts its policies according to the social conditions, demands and pressures

Social responsibility: the company decides to concentrate on its long - term goals for the benefit of society in general.

10 BENEFITS OF MANAGING ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE:

Many people are used to reading or hearing of the moral benefits of attention to business ethics. The following list describes various types of benefits from managing ethics in the workplace.

1. Attention to business ethics has substantially improved society.
2. Ethics programs help maintain a moral course in turbulent times.
3. Ethics programs cultivate strong teamwork and productivity.
4. Ethics programs support employee growth and meaning.
5. Ethics programs are an insurance policy -- they help ensure that policies are legal.
6. Ethics programs help avoid criminal acts “of omission” and can lower fines.
7. Ethics programs help manage values associated with quality management, strategic planning and diversity management -- this benefit needs far more attention.
8. Ethics programs promote a strong public image.
9. Overall benefits of ethics programs:
10. Last - and most -- formal attention to ethics in the workplace is the right thing to do.

CASE 2: THE HAZARDOUS CONSENT FORMS:

As part of a long-range investigation of the social and physiological effects of heroin, Jim Sanders, an anthropologist affiliated with a medical school, set up a study of pregnant women and their infants. The study design involved statistical comparisons of the course of pregnancy, birth, and infant development in 30 addicts and 30 non-addicts; data were to be gathered from hospitals and public health clinics in three inner city neighborhoods.

The medical school Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study, with the requirement that the women sign detailed consent forms indicating that they understood the purpose of the study and agreed to take part. It was agreed that the clinic nurses would read the consent forms to the women and ask them to sign.

Two months into the study, Sanders, visiting the research sites, discovered that few nurses were using the consent forms; instead, informal undocumented consent was being obtained.

Sanders were in a quandary. Institutional Review Boards are designed to protect those studied from harm and, also, to make sure that people do not unknowingly or unwillingly participate in research that might put them at risk. The medical school IRB, accustomed to biomedical experiments posing the risk of physical harm to subjects, routinely required written consent from those studied. In this case, however, the research posed no possibility of physical harm; instead, the only risk to those studied came from the signed consent forms: these would document that addicted women were engaging in illegal behavior.

Should Sanders go back to the Institutional Review Board and attempt to educate them about social research? This might obstruct his project or endanger his research subjects. Should he leave well enough alone, let the IRB think he was following their procedures while allowing the nurses to continue obtaining verbal undocumented consent? In deceiving--or at least, not enlightening--the IRB, he would

protect his research subjects. What else might he do to protect his subjects and his study without condoning deception?

CRITICAL EVALUATION:

Sanders make several unwarranted assumptions about the risk the study population faces and about the goals and potential actions of the Institutional Review Board. The description of the case states that the only risk faced by the subjects is from the signed consent form. This, of course, is not true. The signed consent form should spell out the potential risks to the subject and, if properly written, should include the potential risks from divulging names or other information received from the subjects. The form or an accompanying document should detail the measures being taken by the investigator to protect the confidentiality of the records and forms, which will have access to them and what will be done with the data once the project has been completed. The subjects should be told about plans to publish the results or whether papers will be given on the material. The subjects should also receive assurance that their names will not be used, and that procedures will be taken to assure that their identity cannot be traced through the consent form or other identifiable characteristics of the population.

The second assumption made by Sanders is that the Institutional Review Board is a regulatory or policing agency of the U.S. government. The fact is that the IRB functions to protect its parent institution and as such is interested in assisting the researcher to do the best research possible while protecting the rights of the subjects of that research. IRBs remind researchers of the necessity to do what they should want to do anyway if they follow their own profession's code of ethics, perhaps suggesting some means to do it better, suggestions which are garnered from having read many other proposals. It seems that Sanders's attitude is one of protecting his subjects from the IRB. Members of the Institutional Review Board are also researchers or persons who have had experience in dealing with similar problems and are most acutely aware of the necessity for protecting the confidentiality of records and the identity of research subjects. The records of the IRB are also confidential.

So, in answer to the questions posed, the IRB has had prior experience with similar cases and is undoubtedly aware of the problems involved. However, there may exist institutions where there is little social science research (Sanders may be in one of these) and so the IRB may have to be enlightened about the special problems involved. Usually the IRB is accustomed to dealing with the special problems endemic to different fields and is open and teachable.

From what has been said above, it should be clear that subjects will not be placed at additional risk by virtue of a discussion with the IRB. In fact, a frank discussion with the Board is called for since the procedures submitted by the investigator and approved by the IRB are not being followed; the investigator is in violation of federal rules and regulations, placing his research and the institution in jeopardy. The rules and regulations under which the IRB and the investigator operate have the force of law and include penalties for their violation.

Other actions that might be taken by Sanders include filing an amended consent form which calls for verbal rather than written consent; here a description must be provided of what each subject will be told, by whom, and signed by the person doing the explanation and, perhaps, a witness. Another possible action is retraining the nurses to handle the consent forms and supervising them to make certain they obtain consent in the approved manner. The IRB may suggest one of these actions when they are made aware of the situation. (Our institution requires periodic reports from investigators to ascertain that approved procedures are being followed. An on-site inspection may be made periodically to assure that

appropriate procedures for record keeping are being followed, including the signing of consent forms.) Whatever Sanders does, he should avoid deception of any kind.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Research is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information and an art of scientific investigation. It is the pursuit of truth with the help of study, observation, comparison and experiment. The objective of the research is to reach new conclusion to establish fact to study a subject scientifically and verify the knowledge.

Research methodology is a systematic way to solve the research problem. The task of data collection begins after a research problem has been defined and research design/plan chalked out. While deciding about the method of data collection to be used for the study, the researcher should keep in mind two types of data viz. primary and secondary. The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, thus happen to be original in character. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statical process. For the collection of information secondary data method has been used for this paper.

CONCLUSION:

From all these discussion we can conclude that each individual organization needs to review their ethics used in management by research as it is the prime importance in various situations. The concept has come to mean various things to various people, but generally it's coming to know what it right or wrong in the workplace and doing what's right -- this is in regard to effects of products/services and in relationships with stakeholders. Also, far too many resources about business ethics contain sensationalistic stories about businesses "gone bad" or prolonged preaching to businesses to "do the right thing". These things we understood through concept of business ethics, overview and cases used in this paper. So as per current era of the world ethics in management research is the key factor of every business environment.

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