

Ethics Case Studies (41 to 50)

Ethics Case Studies (41 to 50)

Case Study 41:

You are walking home from your work. There is a railway track nearby, which bifurcates some distance away from your home. While on your way you notice that four women have been tied to the tracks. A goods train is approaching fast. Some distance away you notice that your daughter is walking on the other track which is actually a bridge below which a deep gorge is located. There is an option to save all five women by changing the route of the train to other track. If you do so, you will kill your daughter. Your daughter has no escape option. She is unaware of any of these developments as she is walking blissfully listening to her favourite songs from iPod from her headphones. That track on the bridge is not used by trains owing to some reasons.

You can not run and untie all five women as it's impossible to do so without risking your life. If you do so, you will also get killed along with the five women.

In this situation, what will you do? And explain why.

Answer:

This situation involves conflict between my emotional feelings and moral responsibilities. If I succumb to emotional feelings and save my daughter, the act of selfishness might cause great dissonance as this inaction will cause immense suffering to 5 people.

Utilitarian approach advises me to reduce the suffering of the consequence by saving five lives at the expense of one. Doctrine of Nishkama Karma advocates that inaction is equivalent to death and one should perform his duty with detachment.

According to Kant's Principle of Universability, an act to save five helpless lives at the cost of one would have been taken up by any other virtuous person if the decision maker were not me.

As it is given that there is a deep gorge below the second track on the bridge and also that track is not used by the trains so diverting the train on that track

will risk the lives of the train driver, conductor and other railway staffs on board as well as my daughter walking on the same track. Not taking any action is also not even worth considering as i can never forgive myself for this inaction throughout my life. Since the train is approaching fast so i do not have enough time to untie women and save them that too risking my life which will mean end to every hope of saving the endangered lives. Given i am returning from office may mislead that it is dark all around but the fact that i could see five women tied on the track and my daughter walking on the other track proves it wrong and indicates it is yet visible. So the best i could do is to follow the principle of Nishkam Karma i.e. perform my duty with detachment by trying to stop the train by waving my cloth in hand and through panic body gestures so that the driver or other staff on the train could see me (as it is yet visible outside) and stop the train.

Case Study 42:

Suppose you are sitting on the seat of a crowded local train, you saw an old lady standing near you and then you offered her your seat but before she could take the seat a man took the seat and the man was aware that you had offered your seat to that old lady. In such a situation how will you manage the same seat for her?

Answer:

The case is a grim reminder of the loss of values in society and we often witness these incidences in our daily commutation. This situation presents two alternatives:

(a) The man is not feeling well and desperately needs the seat to rest. Obviously my interrogation to the person would give me an expected reply, that i am not well, whether he is or not. So i should rely on my observation and if i feel that he is not well i will not argue with him.

(b) But, in the other case the man would have blatantly ignored the old lady. This is often witnessed in peak hours. The culture of silence further supports this type of unemphatic behaviour. The situation demands my bold expression to ask him to vacate seat for the old lady. I must pay attention to use descent language. My boldness in asking seat will catch attention and support of other commuters and will force the man to vacate the seat. This is just another example of development of herd tendency in society. As soon as you take an initiative good

people support you as society has still not become so immoral. Just an initiation is needed.

Case Study 43:

You are a father of 7 year old girl. You are living in a flat with your wife and daughter. You are working in high profile job in an MNC. Your boss is your close friend and because of him you have landed a good job. You also owe him lots of money. If it was not for him, you would have continued in less paying old job. Your boss frequently visits your flat. He is close to your daughter and wife. One day, your daughter complains that your boss did something unnatural to her in her bedroom. He actually sexually molested your daughter.

What will you do now? In the light of laws of the land, human rights and personal ethics, suggest a course of action that you should take.

Answer:

It is clearly a case of child sexual abuse. My boss on whom my daughter confides has not only broken her trust but has also made her feel insecure even inside her own room by sexually exploiting her. This is not only a case of child abuse, it is also a violation of her fundamental rights and her rights as a child.

First I'll take her to a hospital and get her checked for any external or internal injuries. I'll inform my wife about this and we both will talk to her. We will tell her how courageous she is and will try to calm her down. After this I'll contact the local police station and register an FIR against my boss. I'll also contact a child rights NGO about this as similar incidents might also have happen to any other child whose parents work under my boss. To protect my daughter from any harassment via the media or the police, I or my wife will always accompany her during any question sessions with the police.

I'll also write about my boss's action to the senior members of my MNC and will try to get him expelled from the company. The fact that he was a close friend or had helped me to secure a good job is too minuscule to be of any significance compared to the criminal act committed by him on my baby daughter.

I'll leave no stone unturned to get justice for my daughter and will ask the court not to show any leniency towards such a damaged and horrible person.

Case Study 44:

You are posted as Superintendent of Police to a District. The stenographer, a beautiful young lady who is smart and hard working, grows close to you. You take her assistance in many office tasks. In the office and beyond a rumour spreads that you are having an affair with her. To make things worse the stenographer has confessed to her friends in office that she loves you. You are affectionate towards her but you are faithful to your wife. You do not worry about rumours and carry on with your work meanwhile growing more close to stenographer. Your wife comes to know about these rumours. A point is reached where the stenographer becomes powerful in the office thanks to your close association. Your continued association is straining your relationship with your wife and is also affecting your public image.

What will you do in these circumstances? Which values would you uphold most in such a scenario and explain why?

Answer:

In these circumstances, the foremost thing that I will do is to –

i) talk to her personally and letting her know about the consequences of this kind of confession in a work place, which is against the code of conduct of any department. Will try to make her understand that this is not only going to affect personal life but it will hamper one's self-respect, honor, integrity. Neither she nor I will be able to do work in a peaceful manner, where rumors keep on spreading like wildfire.

By directly letting her know that, since I am married and I am loyal and faithful to my wife and trust being one of the most important aspect of one's married life, this kind of relationship will directly affect each others life as in this case it is affecting me.

I will try to make her understand that she is young and beautiful, and this might be just an infatuation and nothing more than that.

ii) Second option would be to talk in front of my wife. This will also clear all the rumors that she is listening to. A direct face to face meeting along with my wife will help her understand the deeper sense of understanding and trust that me

and my wife have for each other.

iii) Last option, if the above two does not work, would be to hold a meeting with all the colleagues and subordinates and let her know of the consequences and coming to a decision to send her to another post.

Case Study 45:

You are the principal of a girls' residential high school. One day a girl from an hostel complains that her warden, a lady who is also her class teacher, had beaten her last night for falling asleep early. It is a rule in the hostel that every student should study till 10 pm. The girl has suffered minor injury on her head because of the beating. The girl is requesting you to allow her to go home for treatment. You are aware that if her parents comes to know about this incident, things might turn ugly and also the issue could be sensationalised by the media, which in turn would affect the reputation of your school.

In this situation, what will you do and why?

Answer:

Corporal punishment is banned under RTE. Thus while the student has broken the law by not studying and sleeping early the warden too has exceeded her authority. In this situation the demand to go home can also bring unusual trouble to my hostel so i will take following actions:

(a) First i will call the hostel doctor to treat the injured girl. I will also talk to her to placate her and help her come out of that shock. After she is comfortable i will try to know the reason of her early nap. If it is due to some illness i will arrange the necessary treatment.

(b) Allowing girl to travel to her home in injured state may be hazardous for her as she may collapse midway. So i will inform her parents.

(c) As the warden has broken law i will immediately suspend her and setup an inquiry to know the truth. Police shall also be informed as the RTE law demends me to do so.

With these actions in place well before the parents of girl child arrive and through my motherly treatment of the girl i can ensure and convince the parents of the girl to avoid any media reporting as requestive actions have already been taken by me. I will try to convince and assure the parents that any hype can

effect the studies of other girls in the hostel. With these measure i am convinced that i will be able to control the situation with justice done to both the girl student and the warden.

Case Study 46:

You are a boss of a small private organisation. You are about to meet important clients who will be visiting your office shortly. But you get a call from your wife that your son who is suffering from autism is performing dance in his school, which is first for you both and a very happy occasion. The meeting which was scheduled can not be postponed, moreover if the meeting is successful, your company benefits enormously in terms of new contracts. As you deem son's performance is more important than the business deal, you ask your personal assistant to call the clients and tell them that you are unwell and the meeting can be held tomorrow.

Identify different personal and professional ethical issues present and examine if any values have been compromised in the above case study?

Answer:

Case poses a dilemma between personal interest and professional interest. However, boss has tilted towards family than professional work. personal ethical issues:

1. parent's responsibility towards children: presence of parents boost self-confidence in the children and they would perform better.
2. to give moral support to his ailing child: he wanted to please his child who is suffering from serious mental disorder
3. Responsibility towards family: As elder in the family, he has moral obligation to attend any event related to his family member to boost confidence.

professional ethics involved:

1. responsibility towards company: As a head, boss is always responsible for company's performance and position. So he has to give more importance to business matters equally along with family issues

2. transparency in dealing with clients/stake holders: by asking his secretary to lie before clients, he not only lost the trust of his subordinates but also set a bad precedent in organisation work culture.

3. sense of duty: duty is worship. one should do his duties without looking for any benefit. Even he wants to attend his son's function, the same reason could be told to clients and alter the meeting time convenient to both parties.

values that have been compromised:

1. Honesty: by asking his secretary to lie before clients, he not only lost the trust of his subordinates but also set a bad precedent in organisation work culture.

2. selflessness: he could balance both obligations but he tilted completely towards family interest.

3. Integrity: since he asked his secretary to lie, this case justifies his immoral values.

4. openness: he could have told the real situation to clients and alter the meeting time convenient to both parties at a later date.

Case Study 47:

Your father is persuading your sister to study medicine after her 12th Class results. Your sister wants to study engineering in a famous college. Because of her good ranks in entrance exams she can get admission for both engineering and medicine in top colleges. Your father tells her that he has invested lots of money and time for her education, moreover he and his wife are getting old and are tired of frequent bouts of illness. He tells her that if she becomes doctor she can look after him and your mother when they get old. Your sister, despite your father's persuasion, decides to go for engineering course. Your father is shocked by her decision and has fallen sick, but your sister doesn't want to change her decision.

1. In the above case study, was your father right in persuading your sister against her will? Substantiate. (150 Words)
2. Do you support your sister's decision? Explain why.

Answer:

My father was absolutely right in persuading my sister against her will.

because –

(a) He's father and thus responsible for his children's future.

(b) He can have genuine expectations from his children, as he has surely invested his whole life and money in raising us.

But, he was wrong in

(a) Imposing his will on his children.

(b) Having expectation that his children will definitely follow his planned approach.

He should have worked as a facilitator, in children's future planning rather than imposing his own will. Also, he should have planned his own future rather than depending on children's.

Yes, I support my sister's decision

because –

(a) Its her life to choose what she want's in life.

(b) Even if she agrees with father, and joins medical, later she may not be able to cope up with it due to her aptitude towards engineering and may get depressed.

But, she also has a moral responsibility to take care of her parents. So, instead of defying father she should have opted for persuasion.

Now, in present situation she can rectify her mistake by taking care of fathers illness and showing him that she loves her, and despite her joining medical or engineering, her love for father won't reduce a pinch.

Case Study 48:

DevAnand is working as a clerk in Collector's office. Due to staff shortage, Dev also performs the task of raising flag over the office building every morning and taking it down every evening, although it is not part of his official job description.

One day a criminal turned politician Madan Puri dies. Years ago, Devanand's best friend was murdered during a riot allegedly orchestrated by Madan Puri.

Nonetheless, State secretariat passes an order to all District collectors, to keep National flag at "half-mast" over their offices, to mourn the death of the

Mr.Madan Puri.

DevAnand sees this news on TV, gets angry with such mockery of our national flag. He decides not to go to office next morning and keeps the door key of rooftop with himself. He is confident, "no formal punishment can be given to me, because this was not part of my official duty. At most Collector will reprimand me informally but I don't care because Madan Puri killed my best friend."

Do you think DevAnand has made the right decision? Yes/No/Why?

Answer:

DevAnand made a wrong decision because:

- It prevents other staff members from carrying out the 'official' order from StateHQ.
- It puts his boss in an embarrassing position in front of the StateHQ.
- If Dev's conscience doesn't permit him carrying out a task, he should inform his boss. But running away with keys, without informing anyone = irresponsible.
- Such behavior is not expected from a good team player / a public servant.

Case Study 49:

DevAnand is the inspector in charge of Rampur Police station. The police station building is in dire need of repairs, but hasn't received any grants for years. One day, a cyclone hits a nearby area, damaging most of the houses and shops. Although Dev's police station gets partially damaged, but most of the building remain intact. Government sends a disaster assessment team to ascertain the level of damage and pay relief money. The DSP Mr. Pran, orders DevAnand to do following:

1. Hire some laborers and destroy the remaining parts of your police station building.
2. When disaster assessment team comes, you tell them building collapsed by the cyclone, and ask them to give priority in funding after all police station is one the most important public offices in a town.

Should DevAnand obey his boss's order?

Answer:

The shelf life of lie and deception is very low. Especially when many people are involved. In this case: laborers and any bystanders. Both Dev and Pran are risking themselves to an unnecessary negative publicity and possible departmental inquiry and punishment for professional misconduct. Indeed police building needed repairs and should have been given a grant months ago, but three wrongs don't make a right:

1. Wanton destruction of a public building.
2. Misleading the disaster assessment team.
3. Police officer DevAnand spending his time and energy in such activity rather than doing rescue-relief-patrolling duty after the disaster.

Case Study 50:

DevAnand is working as an under Secretary in the pension department. One day, his friend GuruDutt, an SBI PO, narrates following incident:

1. For last two years, a retired Government employee Mr.Ashok Kumar is giving away 30% of his monthly pension to Mrs.Bindu Chopra every month through cheque.
2. I found Mrs.Bindu Chopra happens to be the wife of Mr.Prem Chopra, a section officer in the pension office under you (DevAnand.)
3. I feel something is fishy- may be this is part of a large bribe scam where senior citizens are forced to pay money to clear their pension files from Prem Chopra, and have to submit bribes in his wife's account.

DevAnand visits Mr.Ashok Kumar's house but he is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, unable to give coherent answers. Frustrated DevAnand directly confronts Prem Chopra. But Prem says *"Mr.Ashok Kumar was a friend of my father. He has no relatives or children and my wife Bindu has been taking care of him like daughter since a long time. Therefore, Mr.Ashok Kumar gives us money out of good will, so we can send our son to an expensive IIT coaching class @Kota, Rajasthan. Besides this is a personal family matter and none of your business."*

Do you think DevAnand made a blunder or was he merely performing an ethical duty?

Answer:

Here, both GuruDutt and DevAnand has failed to act in responsible manner.

Because:

- A banker must keep his clients' data confidential, unless required by the law to disclose it.
- GuruDutt didn't even wait to cross verify who else is giving money to Mrs.Bindu Chopra's account. Because if there was a 'large scale bribe scam' then lot other senior citizens would be making payment to Bindu's account, and not just Mr.Ashok Kumar alone.
- Even in that situation, Gurudutt had to consult his boss within his own bank first. He cannot go around giving informal tips to outsiders. This is an unethical act for a banker.
- DevAnand too acted in hasty manner. First, he starts 'investigation' based on an informal tip from a banker who is not supposed to tip him in the first place. He should have consulted the vigilance department before moving further.
- Second, Dev Anand confronts Prem Chopra, without any hardcore evidence. When you're holding a public office, you can't go around accusing people in such haste. It breaks the office discipline, destroys the staff morale and allows the guilty person to cover his tracks.