
MODULE 2

WHAT ARE MORAL DILEMMAS

Introduction

This module is focused on moral dilemmas specifically on its definition, situations cases where moral dilemmas are present, and it's three (3) levels namely: individual, organizational, and structural. In the three levels of moral dilemma, common ethical issues in the organization will be highlighted, several factors that an individual is facing such as peer pressure, personal financial position, and economic and social status which cause dilemma to an individual and the concepts to consider in the individual moral dilemma.

Learning Objectives

After studying this module, you should be able to:

1. Define moral dilemmas and set out situations.
2. Explain the three levels of moral dilemmas.
3. Discuss several factors affecting the organization, structure and individual.

Learning Content

2.0 DEFINITION OF MORAL DILEMMAS

Various authors presented their respective definition of moral dilemma or ethical dilemma and these are the following:

In the definition of Kvalnes (2019), a moral dilemma is a situation in which a decision-maker must give preference to one moral principle over another. Dilemmas occur when, confronted with a challenging situation (e.g. equal treatment for some versus job protection for others), two or more of that kind of values disagree with the understanding of the decision-maker, or when one assesses the moral option of another. A person experienced with a dilemma must decide whether the moral duty will be given priority; "whatever action is taken will offend an important moral value."

In addition, Kvalnes explained that (2019) a moral dilemma may arise as a result of a prior personal mistake. It's called a self-inflicted dilemma. In a strict sense, a moral dilemma is a situation in which moral values are of equal importance. In a broader sense, there may be moral dilemmas in which a person has strong moral reasons for acting which are described to be as remarkable, nonetheless, not equally strong moral reasons for acting in another way. (https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.18-3-030-15191-1_2.pdf)

According to Kurie & Albin (2007), a moral dilemma is a situation in which people assume that they should morally do one thing and that they should morally do another thing, and

occasionally a third thing or even a fourth thing, but they're not doing any of these mutually contradictory choices together.

The ethical dilemma or a moral dilemma as expounded by Figar & Dordevic, (2016) is a situation whereby a person has to make a decision. Among competing alternatives, which is the right (ethical) alternative and which is the best? (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/Managing_an_Ethical_Dilemma)

The above definitions characterized moral dilemma or ethical dilemma as:

- (1) Making an option to one moral value over the other;
- (2) A situation where moral values are equally significant;
- (3) A scenario where a person has a strong moral reason in action, but not equally strong moral reason in acting in another way;
- (4) A state where a person should morally do one, two, or more and have difficulty in deciding any of those conflicting choices.

Every human being, experience struggling to make a decision especially if there is an urgency to make a choice. Weighing what is good and moral. Thinking which is the best between and among choices, and perhaps at stake or in a hot sit when choosing. The choice may be favorable to some, however, not favorable to others. It gets individual stress of judging as to whether the decision is good or not in travailing circumstances. A moral dilemma or ethical dilemma applies to our personal life, in a job, in a profession, education, and some others. In any decision, an individual must analyze every aspect, scrutinize the pros and cons, and after several evaluations then finally decide. That is the most challenging part, nonetheless, makes an individual more mature in handling obstinate situations.

The sample photos below exemplify a moral dilemma. The first picture on the left side shows which arrow an individual will go, right or wrong. The second pic on the right side reveals four different arrows: respect, ethics, integrity, and honesty, these are all positive terms and regarded as values. In deciding, consider the aforementioned virtues. The third photo below the left side seems to be ambiguous and the last photo on the right side below with three choices for a decision, right, wrong and it depends which also mean uncertainty.





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<https://www.shutterstock.com/search/moral+dilemma>, <https://www.slaphappylarry.com/moral-dilemmas-childrens-stories/>, <https://medium.com/thrive-global/moral-dilemma-stories-a-great-way-to-educate-entertain-and-inspire-all-at-the-same-time-56ef4615b6ce>

2.1 THREE LEVELS OF MORAL DILEMMAS

1. ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICAL OR MORAL DILEMMA

As discussed by Lamberto et. al(2013), an organizational ethical dilemma refers to a situation that causes an organization to respond negatively or positively to an ethical issue that affects staff, shareholders, and society, as well as corporate ethics and customers. It includes also the leaders' ethical actions in preserving financial reporting integrity.

Based on the article of Michigan State University online.com (2020) and Small Business Chron.com (2019), there are common ethical issues in the organization such as

- (1) Unethical leadership/bad leadership behavior. A leader of the organization must act with candor, be an example to his subordinates, with upright moral values. He or she doesn't engage in abuse of leadership authority, accepting inappropriate gifts and other related unethical leadership.
- (2) Toxic workplace culture. A leader of the organization must focus on the development of work culture. He makes sure that his subordinates have work-life balance, motivated and happy working in the organization, If not then the performance and productivity of the employees will be affected.
- (3) Discrimination and harassment/ Peril of employee favoritism. A leader must treat fairly his or her subordinates and avoid any form of discrimination and harassment.
- (4) Unrealistic and conflicting goals. A leader must have realistic and very clear goals so that his or her subordinates understand what the organization is going through, hence, they can work together thoroughly until they reach the goals of the organization.
- (5) Use of the organization's technology, social media use, technology, and privacy concerns. It is ethical that the technology of the organization must only use for the organization's transactions Social media use while in the office must be avoided as much as possible so that important dealings with the clients must be prioritized.
- (6) Business travel ethics. There are times that a leader and an employee are in official business and in doing that, they have per diem every meal and must use the fund of the organization appropriately.

(<https://www.michiganstateuniversityonline.com/resources/leadership/common-ethical-issues-in-the-workplace/> updated July 15, 2020, <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/common-types-ethical-issues-within-organizations-15238.html>, updated February 4, 2019)

2. INDIVIDUAL MORAL DILEMMA

As mentioned by Smith (2018), individual ethical or moral dilemma pertains to a situation where individuals confront with a number of factors such as peer pressure, personal financial position, an economic and social status which may influence all individual ethical standards. (<https://yourbusiness.azcentral.com/three-levels-ethical-standards-business-organization-15897.html>)

Socialization is part of every individual's life. It is just a query as to whether an individual remains aware of doing what is good and what is right. There are times that due to peer pressure, an individual engages in a certain scenario in which may change their behavior and attitude. For instance, before that young people, A is a responsible and obedient child to his parents. When he met young people B and young people C, young people A tremendously transform as a human being, his character shifted to an irresponsible, hard-headed, and a trouble-maker. The reason is that his friend young people B and young people C taught him to take illegal drugs. Others, however, are affected by the financial standing position, the social and economic status of others that even he is not capable, forcing him or her that he or she is at the same level as them, portrays that he or she belongs to the group, and called to be as social climbers. A human being should bear in mind that living in this world is not easy. He must be strong enough to stand still independently and not be influenced by undesirable pressures. It is alright to enjoy life as long as a person knows his boundaries and limitations and others will not be affected by what he or she does specifically the unwanted acts. Human beings must not be confused nor ambiguous and put himself or herself in a dilemma where he doesn't know what to do and decide to what is good and what is right.

3. STRUCTURAL MORAL DILEMMA

The structural moral dilemma is that selecting a proper system of responsibilities and relationships, which is a continuing universal challenge.

There are five concepts in the structural moral dilemma to consider namely:

(1) Differentiation vs. Integration

The conflict between the distribution of jobs and the organization of numerous activities generates a classic dilemma. The more complicated a task structure, the more difficult it is to sustain a centered, tightly coupled organization. When complexity grows, the company needs more complicated and expensive management techniques. Laws, regulations, and directives need to be balanced by lateral approaches.

(2) Gap vs Overlap

When the main tasks are not explicitly defined, the critical job will slip through gaps. In a similar manner, functions and activities can overlap, causing conflict, wasting time, and unintended duplication of responsibilities.

(3) Lack of Clarity vs. Lack of Creativity

When employees are not clear about what they are expected to do, they often adapt their tasks to personal interests instead of system-wide goals that often lead to problems. Yet when people's duties are over defined, they comply with their positions and procedures in a bureaucratic manner. They specifically follow job requirements as to how much the service or product fails.

(4) Excessive Autonomy vs. Excessive Interdependence

When individuals or groups are too independent, they are always isolated. On the other hand, if the units and responsibilities are too closely connected, people are absentminded from work and waste time or excessive coordination. (http://www.humancapitalreview.org/content/default.asp?Article_ID=528)

Based on the discussion above, to avoid structural moral dilemma then following characteristics must be maintained:

- (1) Must have well-distributed jobs and the laws, policies, rules, and regulations must be balanced through lateral approaches.
- (2) Must have an implicitly defined job description, roles, and duties to evade from gaps and overlaps.
- (3) Must have a clear-cut expectation of the tasks in a wide range of goals
- (4) Must have a well-balanced interdependence and coordination.



ACTIVITY 1

1. As a student, did you encounter some dilemmas in your school? What did you do?. Cite examples of the dilemmas encountered.

ACTIVITY 2

Research a case study in any of the three levels of moral dilemmas: organizational, individual and structural . Find out on how the moral dilemma was solved and if you are on that situation, will you do the same? Explain.



Learning Assessment

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

1. What is your definition of moral dilemma? In your opinion,
2. Differentiate the three levels of moral dilemma and cite an example to each level.
3. Which is difficult to face among three levels of moral dilemma. Why?

Essay Rubrics

Level of Achievement					
Criteria	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Score
Focus and Details	There is one specific, well-focused topic. Main ideas are clear and are well supported by detailed and accurate information.	There is one clear, well-focused topic. Main ideas are clear but are not supported by detailed information or facts.	There is one topic, but main ideas are not especially clear.	The topic and main ideas are not clear.	
Organization	The introduction is inviting, states the main topic, and provides an overview of the argument. Information is relevant and presented in logical order. The conclusion is strong.	The introduction states the main topic and provides an overview of the paper. A conclusion is included, but does not strengthen the argument/position.	The introduction states the main topic. A conclusion is included, but is not especially relevant/supportive.	There is no clear introduction, structure, or conclusion.	
Voice	The author's purpose of writing is very clear, and there is strong evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge of and/or experience with the topic is evident.	The author's purpose of writing is somewhat clear, and there is some evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge of and/or experience with the topic is evident.	The author's purpose of writing is somewhat clear, and there is evidence of attention to audience. The author's knowledge of the topic seems limited.	The author's purpose of writing is unclear.	
Word Choice	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words seems accurate, natural, and appropriate.	The author uses vivid words and phrases. The choice and placement of words is inaccurate at times and/or seems overdone or inappropriate for the subject matter.	The author uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety and seems inappropriate to the subject matter.	The writer uses a limited vocabulary. Jargon or clichés are not used properly and detract from the meaning.	
Sentence Structure, Grammar, Mechanics, & Spelling	All sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes very few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.	Most sentences are well-constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes a few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling, but these mistakes do not interfere with understanding.	Most sentences are well-constructed, but they have a similar structure and/or length. The author makes several errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.	Sentences sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. The author makes numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.	
Scoring	4	3	2	1	



Learning References

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