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Why employees and managers engage in unethical practices

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Abstract

The scope of this paper is to investigate the reasons as to why employees and managers in the workplace engage willingly in unethical practices. The paper begins by exploring the concept of ethics in the corporate world. It further highlights the different forms of unethical practices in the various companies in the contemporary world. The various theories that explore the issue of unethical practices in the workplace are highlighted and how they relate to the occurrence of unethical demeanor. The social contract theory and the psychological theories are highlighted in the paper. The study further delves in exploring the various types of reasons as depicted in different forms of literature in the world. The reasons include the pressure for performance at work, the effect of groupthink in the workplace, pressure from management, management control, demographic factors, and psychological traps, broken window theory. The paper also recommends the executive techniques that can be used to curb the psychological traps in the corporations. The paper also explores the broken window theory as a cause for unethical practices in the workplace. In conclusion, the paper comes up with recommendations for corporations.

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WHY EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS ENGAGE IN UNETHICAL PRACTICES

WHY EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS ENGAGE IN UNETHICAL PRACTICES

By

Megan Shea Kopicko

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
INTRODUCTION	4
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	5
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
RESEARCH FINDINGS	6
THEORIES OF MISCONDUCT IN THE WORKPLACE.....	7
Agency Theory.....	7
Personality trait Theory.....	8
Psychological Contract Theory.....	8
GROUPTHINK AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN ORGANIZATIONS	9
PRESSURE FROM THE MANAGEMENT.....	10
MANAGEMENT CONTROL AS A FACTOR.....	15
DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS.....	16
PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS	17
EXECUTIVE TACTICS TO CURB PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAPS	22
BROKEN WINDOW THEORY	25
LIMITATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY	28
CONCLUSION.....	29
REFERENCES	37

Abstract

The scope of this paper is to investigate the reasons as to why employees and managers in the workplace engage willingly in unethical practices. The paper begins by exploring the concept of ethics in the corporate world. It further highlights the different forms of unethical practices in the various companies in the contemporary world. The various theories that explore the issue of unethical practices in the workplace are highlighted and how they relate to the occurrence of unethical demeanor. The social contract theory and the psychological theories are highlighted in the paper. The study further delves in exploring the various types of reasons as depicted in different forms of literature in the world. The reasons include the pressure for performance at work, the effect of groupthink in the workplace, pressure from management, management control, demographic factors, and psychological traps, broken window theory. The paper also recommends the executive techniques that can be used to curb the psychological traps in the corporations. The paper also explores the broken window theory as a cause for unethical practices in the workplace. In conclusion, the paper comes up with recommendations for corporations.

Introduction

In the contemporary business world, many organizations prefer to be publicly known by a good reputation. Establishing and maintaining a good reputation is indeed not an easy task. To establish and maintain a good reputation of a company, a lot of emphasis is usually laid on ethics. The occurrences of corporate scandals and the world financial and economic crisis of 2008/2009 resulted in the breach of morals and ethics that face business organizations. Such ethical violations are normally a product of individual's wrongdoing. Employees who are unethical do things that are against the stipulated rules and regulations of the firm or society they work in (Collins, 2013, p. 12). Such violations can be intentional or unintentional. It is important to acknowledge that unethical doings could be harmful to an organization in various ways including financially and in non-financial terms. Non-financial harm can include the harm that is done to the reputation of the firm and other emotional harm.

Reports and studies have highlighted that many individuals in an organization behave unethically in a variety of ways. Such ways include sexual harassment, covering of misdemeanors, theft, industrial espionage and much more. Such unethical behaviors can be observed in different types of organizations ranging from small sized, medium sized and large organizations in the entire world. Such unethical behaviors place the organizations at risk since they harm their reputation. It must be noticed that when employees are unethical in their practices, the reputation of the

organization goes down and this results in a variety of negative implications. Such implications include the organization being sued, losing customer loyalty and financial loss to the company. There are also several instances whereby employees have been laid off due to unethical demeanors. It is thus the focus of many organizations to ensure that the workers practices are ethical. One of the most popular means that firms use to ensure that the employee's practices are ethical is through placing emphasis on training programs that facilitate ethics and moral awareness and make procedural blueprints in business conduct. The focus of this paper is to explore the core reasons as to why employees and workers commit unethical behaviors in the workplace. Indeed, understanding the reasons as to why employees engage in unethical practices will help to comprehend employee unethical behavior.

Any given behavior that breaches the law or an organizational ethical standard are referred to as an unethical practice. When it relates to ethical management in companies, an employee's misconduct is a kind of negative or unacceptable demeanor by the workers that is destructive to the firm.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to investigate the reasons as to why workers and managers engage in unethical conducts in the workplace.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study covers the need to boost the ethical conduct in firms. There is also the need for the stakeholders and owners of companies to understand the various reasons as to why employees engage in misconduct. A broad literature review depicts that there are conflicting results on the forms of white collar crimes in the work place. The purpose of this paper is to gather appropriate information that can be useful for organizations to come up with methods of curbing employee misconduct. Indeed, conclusively, the study helps organizations to facilitate ethics management.

Methodology

This research paper employed a variety of resources to gather information. First and foremost, the study employed the use of online Library Resources. The main website used was [googlescholar.com](https://scholar.google.com). Indeed, this website was important for the various articles that facilitated the success of this paper. I also used the keywords for my google search and utilized various websites and online articles and magazines that addressed the issue. I also conducted a comprehensive library research of books that have attempted to explore this issue.

Research Findings

After a comprehensive research using the methodology as mentioned above, I came with a variety of findings as explained below.

Monetary Incentives

Indeed, most research has highlighted that monetary incentives are the main factor in triggering unethical practices among the employees. At any given firm, the root of all unethical practices is usually pertaining to monetary transactions for individual gain. The personal gain can range from the direct issuance of cash that can be referred to as corruption or other indirect gain from the stool of power. (In Giacalone & In Promislo, 2015, p. 14). Money is desirable and a worker can be lured to commit a wrong act if he has been in the same position for a long time to comprehend the process.

The Pressure for Performance at the Workplace

Those workers who have managerial positions encounter a lot of challenges. Such employees have a high degree of pressure to fulfill the requirements of his/her job. The tasks are many including meeting the targets for sales, having precise budgetary expenditures and doing almost everything on time. Indeed, research indicates that such pressures for performance can lead to unethical practices (In Giacalone & In Promislo, 2015, p. 17). There are some managers who will do unethical acts to fulfill the job expectations. For instance, there was reported a manager who was interdicted for spending more than the budgeted amount of money on advertising, and there is need to come up with viable mechanisms to curb the problem.

Theories on Misconduct in the Workplace

Researchers from various backgrounds have attempted to comprehend and even predict unethical practices in the business organizations. Research studies have been conducted to comprehend how and why such misdemeanor take place. Studies can be discerned into three prudent subjects from the areas of industrial psychology and organizational science. The three most popular theories that attempt to expound on employee unethical practices in the workplace include Agency Theory, Personality Trait Theory, and Psychological Contracts Theory.

Agency Theory

This theory has been developed from the economic assumptions of personal interest demeanor and utility optimization of the circumstances that impact the workers' behavior. Agency theory hints that the employer as the "principal" desires to get optimum performance from the worker. As the "agent." However, this is opposite to the worker who is presumed to be contributing minimal effort. Therefore, this theory assumes that the agents will behave in an opportunistic manner if allowed (In Giacalone & In Promislo, 2015, p. 19). A good obvious example is that the employees usually shirk or misrepresent their abilities if they can get away with such

acts. Agency studies give managerial implications to establish proper managerial or controlling techniques to decrease misconduct.

However, this theory has been criticized because of its assumptions of ignoring intrinsic human motivations in a desirable manner. Such intrinsic motivations include the workers need for achievement, excessive of accountability and even recognition from fellow workers. From the organization perspective, this theory has two main limitations. The theory underestimates the efficient utilization of incentives such as extrinsic rewards for desirable performance. Secondly, there is a void of any particular consideration of the firm to maintain efficient actions by workers, including availing candid, constant role expectations, empowerment, and even power.

Personality Trait Theory

For this theory, the personal behavior is the consequence of inherited or acquired traits. The theorists here follow the premise that particular traits will be disposed to react to a given instance in a particular manner. Character studies have availed relative constant and predictable results. For instance, a person with the personality traits of conscientiousness depicts the features of accountability, keenness, and reliability (In Giacalone & In Promislo, 2015, p. 18). However, this theory has also been criticized. For instance, critics have found issues on its research design and how it overlooks situational variables. There are also studies that have shown its limitations including its incapacity to predict

behavior, failure to give causal explanations of behavior and also the way it ignores the conditional and contextual nature of the human experience.

Psychological Contract Theory

This theory was developed from the popular social exchange theory. This is explained as the idiosyncratic link of reciprocal expectations held by workers regarding their obligations and subsequent entitlements. For instance, a worker will work for an employer with anticipation that he/she will get something in return. Different from agency theory, psychological contract theory accounts trust in the firm by making the assumption that then workers are ethical and honest. Unethical practices in the firm will thus take place when the psychological contract is breached with viewpoints of unfair treatment at the place of work. This implies that ethical and honest workers might do acts of misconduct when they perceive that the workplace is an unfair environment and that their well-established trust has been breached.

As it relates to criticism, this theory has received its criticism due to its ignorance of differences on situational factors, including moderating the impact of attractive factors to workers. For instance, in any instance there is the breach of justice, the worker can opt to desert the organization for another well-paying job elsewhere. This will be instead of committing misconduct.

Groupthink and Unethical Behavior in Organizations.

Indeed, groupthink has been a focus for many researchers as a precursor to unethical practices. Groupthink has contributed to a lot of unethical behaviors to a variety of organizations in the world. There is a laid down theory of causes and effects of groupthink. It is normally asserted that groupthink pertains a collective pattern of defensive avoidance (Sims, 1992, p. 651). Indeed, there is focus on what guides the demeanor of managers and workers as they cope with ethical dilemmas. Groupthink has been elaborately defined to imply a mode of thinking that individuals take part in when they are intensively engaged in a cohesive in group. It takes place when the members struggling for unanimity surpass their motivation to practically appraise different courses of actions (Sims, 1992, p. 652).

In the event of groupthink, the small groups develop common illusions and associated norms that interrupt with their critical thinking and practical testing. It is thus practical enough to assert that groupthink takes place when a group of people lays higher priority on a firm's counter norms that result in some firms benefits, thus, facilitating unethical practices. It has been illustrated that employees who enter groups are given opportunities to become trained in and committed to the objectives, goals, and ways of doing business (Sims, 1992, p. 653). The employee's commitment is relatively the strength of a person's identification with and

participation in a specific group. There are various factors that result in group characteristics. First, members have a strong group cohesiveness; they believe in the goals and objectives of the group. The members also are willing to use a considerable amount of effort for the group. Members further have a strong desire to maintain their membership with the group. Through this, the employees who are members of a group are thus insulated from ethical opinion and control.

Indeed, such a commitment to a group is not loyalty, but it is rather a continuous process of showing concern for the group and ultimately violating the set standards. The main factor that leads to a group's bad decision making is that for each member, one impediment lies, winning the approval or disapproval of the fellow members. Groupthink can occur in decision making in any given business organization. This can be illustrated with real life examples such as those seen at Beech-Nut and Solomon. The experiences give good instances of how even the famous companies can suffer from unethical practice through groupthink among the employees and poor judgment. It is important to point out that groupthink takes place when arrogance and over commitment and loyalty aids a group to triumph above the ethical practices of a firm.

Pressure from the Management

One of the leading factors that contributes to the unethical practice among employees is the pressure they receive from the management to attain unrealistic objectives and deadline. A survey that was conducted on business ethics showed that employees are under a lot of pressure to perform and this prompts them to act unethically. The research was conducted by the Human Resource Institute as commissioned by the American Management Association. The AMA/HRI study utilized a survey that considered responses from 1121 managers and HR experts globally (Nkundabanyanga, Omagor, Mpamizo, & Ntayi, 2011, p. 48). The survey came up with a variety of conclusions regarding unethical practices among employees. According to this study, when employees work in an environment that is full of cynics and diminished morale, poor training or ignorance that acts are full of misconduct, and the absence of consequences when apprehended are other factors that prompt unethical behavior. Indeed, there are many employees in the world who are extremely stressed to perform. Some companies come up with goals that are higher and practically not attainable. It is human nature to want to perform, but some employees are torn when it comes to attaining the objectives of a firm. Some firms are known to be strict when it comes to employees' output. It is thus their culture to come up with production target for their employees. At times, when the employees are faced with the task of meeting unattainable targets, they are forced to come up with unscrupulous means to reach the target and maintain their jobs. This is

thus a means through which they engage in unethical practices. At other times, companies are so strict on deadlines. Employees are increasingly under pressure to meet the availed targets and thus beat the deadline given. It is through this that the employees opt to come up with the shortcuts to perform and beat the deadline.

Indeed, the pressure to perform propels most employees to engage in unethical practices. The success of any given company relies on its capacity to identify, investigate and assess “SMART” objectives (Memary & Wong, 2009, p. 18). The objectives are popular for being Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound. It is thus important to note that those objectives that are unattainable and unrealistic will have the prospects of putting employees under pressure to perform and will thus make them engage in unethical practices. For instance, in marketing alone, the pressure to perform can be measured by monitoring the level and attainability of the salesperson's deadlines and targets. This is due to the fact that subjecting salespersons under pressure has high chances of making them engage in unethical marketing behaviors. The intensity of fear and pressure linked with attaining numerical objectives has the main role in the availability of fraud.

There are various studies that have highly highlighted that the actual causes of corporate scandals are over-emphasizing shareholder value maximization with decreased consideration of the other existing stakeholders. It is further asserted that most corporations make profit

sharing and compensation programs to be in line with the interests of the management with those of the shareholders, maximization target. Such compensation plans can lead to a big amount of pressure and opportunities for the various managers and are linked with crucial ethical malpractices as was evident in the popular Enron Scandal. (Memary & Wong, 2009, p.17) Indeed, this can be further supported by another study that noted that the pressure to perform is a factor that is depicted to affect ethical behavior in the workplace.

Normally, it is commonly believed that compensation techniques depending on quotas, commissions, and bonuses are likely to increase ethical issues in the sales teams. This is due to the fact that such kinds of remuneration systems transfer the risk to salespeople and also put a lot of financial pressure on them to attain the sales results. Studies further depict that as the salespeople become increasingly established financially and professionally, they go through some particular alleviation of the pressure to take some shortcuts. As a result, they assert that salespeople who have attained such a standing have the skills and knowledge at their disposal to be in the capacity to solve the ethical dilemmas without a compromise.

Many people who are in the sales profession are motivated to take the profession due to its peculiarity and perpetual challenge. Such individuals are deeply attracted by the competition provided by the market and by the thrill that results from selling particularly under pressure of the competition in the market. Despite this, salespeople somewhere on the

way, the love for the work action in the field paved the way to the pressure to perform, the desires, the expectations, the phobia of failure, impatience and anxiety and frustrations associated with the very challenge they initially loved.

According to a comprehensive study that was conducted by the Institute of Business Ethics, the recession was found to have had a big impact on the pressures that employees felt that made them behave unethically. This survey that was carried on 2008 asked the workers about their attitudes regarding ethical issues in the workplace, their views relating to ethical practices in companies and what formal help on ethical issues their corporations availed them. Fascinatingly, most of the Britons (84%) and mainland European workers (77%), asserted that honesty is done “always or frequently” in their corporations (Webley, 2012).

In the study, the proportion of British full-time employees who said that they felt the pressure to breach the established ethical standards of their corporations was 9% and 11% in the two regions (Webley, 2012). The study highlighted that British employees appeared to be highly inclined to go through particular types of pressure to act unethically as compared to earlier years. The most prevalent of these included meeting unrealistic business targets or objectives and being recommended to assume short cuts (14%).

Furthermore, in the study, the need to help the organization was also highlighted for the first time as the reason why employees behave

unethically. This was perceived as a source of pressure, and it compounded to 7%, it was an indication that the recession was indeed having an impact on established ethical standards. Furthermore, the study discovered that a small percentage of the employees who had witnessed unethical practices felt the need to report it, they accounted for 5% (Webley, 2012). It is the destructive attitude of indifference, and the firm belief that no corrective action can be taken deter the workers from reporting any knowledge of misconduct in the organizations they work for. It is thus candid that companies need to work hard at communicating the necessity of speaking up, and also encouraging and motivating the staff members who speak up.

It is important to acknowledge that in business ethics, there is nothing like a lone gunman. The theory asserting that integrity failures are a result of a single person acting badly do not work. For instance, UBS got a fine of £29.7m by the FSA for its failure in system and controls that made its former employee by the name Kweku Adoboli to successfully conduct one of the biggest Bank Fraud (Webley, 2012). Occasionally, integrity crises result from a gradual erosion in behavior over time, which develop to be unethical culture. While it is being celebrated by the majority that the workplace is an environment of honesty, the study indicates that 33% of those in managerial or supervisory position in most organizations feel that "petty fiddling" is inevitable (Webley, 2012).

Normally, in any business environment, there are some losses that are perceived as minimal and negligible. For instance, employees perceive that the company will feel no loss if they take a few biros and A4 pads. Such employees believe that there exist other serious issues such as corruption and bribery.

Management Control as a factor that Prompts Unethical Practices

Management controls are made up of various procedures, policies, and systems associated with the reliability of financial reporting. Such controls can include authorization, approvals, reviews of performance, controls over the flow of information in the firm, segregation of duties among many others. Study and report by the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, the management controls have the chances of being a detective, preventive, directive or even mitigating (Nkundabanyanga, Omagor, Mpamizo, & Ntayi, 2011, p. 43). It is important to not the necessity of corrective actions to ethical demeanor for the purpose of attaining the targets of a company.

Great ethical standards and proper reinforcement of the standards should be the focus of most organizations in the world. In any work environment, whereby the senior management team upholds integrity, the junior employees are likely to emulate them. There are basically six ethical values that can be identified in global firms, and they include integrity, honesty, loyalty, accountability, fairness, and citizenship. At any

given event, whereby the managers act in good faith (honesty), proper corporate governance and shareholder maximization are ascertained. It is in this reason that the management is supposed to conduct itself with honor and self-respect.

Many studies have associated ethical demeanor to the absence of moral leadership. A good instance is the case study of WorldCom's former Chief Executive Officer, Bernie Ebbers. His managerial skills resulted in a quick growth of the firm, and this only was let down and compromised by his lack of moral direction (Nkundabanyanga, Omagor, Mpamizo, & Ntayi, 2011, p. 45). It is thus prudent to note that ethical standards and management controls can impact ethical marketing behaviors as measured by observing the strength and availability of the ethical standards and management controls. Other studies have also emphasized that at any instance of unethical dilemmas, the salespeople have higher prospects of engaging in unethical demeanors when the ethical controls and ethical standards are not adequately managed (Nkundabanyanga, Omagor, Mpamizo, & Ntayi, 2011, p. 47).

It is indeed a sad reality that employees of any given business, will occasionally face their team members who are engaging in unethical behaviors. Various unethical behaviors in the business world as observed include making long-distance calls on the company's lines, duplicating the company's software for personal use at home, giving incorrect time spent at work. There are also other serious malpractices that employees engage

in and they include the embezzlement of funds and the falsifying of business documents. It is important to acknowledge that there is a difference between activities that are illegal and behaviors that are illegal. It is the duty of the business to come up with a decision on how to curb with unethical behavior, be it legal or illegal. Indeed, most employees believe that unethical practices are not perceived as being important by the management of the company. Most of the stakeholders lay emphasis on production and profit. Indeed, an increased focus on profit, production, and image of a company has a higher chance of increasing the prevalence of unethical behaviors in a corporation.

Demographic Factors

Indeed, there is no clear link between demographic factors and unethical behaviors in the extant literature. For example, in one study, it was suggested that researchers and professors should slay prominence on training particularly male students in business ethics. This has the implication that that the male students have higher prospects of engaging in unethical behaviors. This can be further highlighted by other studies that have highlighted that women have more ethical intentions as compared to men. Despite this, it is further prudent to accept and highlight other studies that have had conflicting views on the same. For instance, Rayburn & Rayburn (1996) asserts that sex is not a proper predictor for unethical practices. However, other studies in Uganda have presented a conflicting picture. This is despite the fact that women are

perceived as being less likely to participate in unethical practices as compared to their male counterparts.

Omagor et al. (2009) suggest that where a person lives can be used to predict the tendency to participate in unethical practices. This is despite the fact that sometimes, people can engage in unethical practices because of greed and family responsibility. In their study that involved university students, they found that one's marital status has a moderating impact on the propensity to participate in unethical behaviors. Other studies have concluded that age is an important factor in determining ethical behavior. Research indicates that older sales people are increasingly ethical as compared to the younger counterparts.

Psychological Factors

Indeed, business literature is full of narratives of unethical practices in board rooms and executive suites. Indeed, everyone is capable of falling into the same traps of engaging in unethical behaviors. There is the little insight into the psychological traps that enhance the prospects that people will behave unethically. Indeed, such behavior can be controlled. Psychological traps have also been identified as the root causes of unethical practices at all areas of work and life. Psychological traps are compared to fish traps, and a fish trap is made of a wire cage with an entrance that is shaped like a big funnel that narrows towards the inside. The cages design is that it directs the fish to the inside of the cage and makes it impossible for the fish to find its way outside. In a similar

manner, a person in an organization is motivated to move in a particular way at that instance when a psychological trap is present (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). Later on, such psychological traps become disastrous, and the person finds it almost impossible to reverse.

Due to the fact that such psychological traps are psychological in nature, they have the capacity to distort the perceptions of wrong and right to the extent that one actually perceives her/his unethical practice is right. At that instance when people are not capable of identifying the psychological traps, they have the capacity of acting as illusions or rather webs of deception. At any given time that the traps are identified, it is easy for people to ensnare themselves and thus be free of such unethical practices (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009).

Traps can be benign depending on their context and have the capacity to exert a desirable impact on our lives. For instance, empathy is usually seen as the foundation of good ethics, but in particular instances, such a personality trait can really subdue our sense of fairness. This is due to the fact that traps can trigger tunnel vision; the impetus to act to them is so powerful that individuals can turn blind to alternative behaviors. All the people have the prospects of engaging in an unethical behavior (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). There are basically three types of traps, and they include Primary traps, personality traps, and defensive traps.

a. Primary Traps

These are perceived as being mostly made up of external stimuli. They are regarded as being the major traps that trigger individuals to move in a particular direction disregarding availed ethical principles. A great example of a primary trap is the popular “Obedience to authority” (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009) For instance, children are primed from a young age to obey their parents, the survival of children depends on obedience in school and at home. This type of conditioning progresses at all times, and students are aware that they should depict deference to their instructors. This thus depicts itself later in life when the boss or manager orders a worker to perform an act, and most people obey without thinking twice due to the fact that they are programed to do so

In the work environment, if a superior employee orders a subordinate to perform an act that is unethical, the compelling desire to obey authority acts as a powerful external stimulus that the person will likely obey the given order without focusing on how the act will conflict with his/her ethical standing (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). There are other instances when the employee might be aware that the order is unethical, however, the pull to obey and follow the given orders will override the judgment of an employee. Indeed, the current society has availed a dictatorial work regime, and the subordinate employees are forced to obey without question. There is the need for corporations to give the employees a chance to avoid being forced to engage in practices that are against their

ethical principles. This is the reason why there are so many firms globally that produce substandard items.

b. Personality Traps

These forms of traps are majorly made up of internal stimuli in the form of different personality traps that have the capacity of making individuals increasingly vulnerable to wrongdoing. A good instance for personality trap is the "Need for Closure." This is expounded as the "desire for a definite response to a particular topic, and this answer can be any, it contradicts with confusion and ambiguity" (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). This is further expounded as the prospects to jump on the initial opinion that comes into a man's mind, instead of stomaching a situation of uncertainty and taking the chance to ponder an issue or judgment from various angles.

The desire for closure is cemented under work conditions that result from the processing of information increasingly difficult. It includes fatigue, time pressure, and high background noise, at any instance when such a situation exists, it is increasingly risky to bear a state of ambiguity and confusion.

Despite the fact that the need for closure is impacted by situational factors, it is further a personality trait that particular individuals are increasing of the capacity to bear states of ambiguity as compared to others. The "Need for Closure " Scale has been developed by Arie Kruglanski; this scale is responsible for measuring personality dimension

(Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). Somebody who scores higher on the scale is increasingly prone to remain with developed impressions in the face of conflicting evidence.

In the real world, this has various implications. For instance, when a manager has an increasingly high need for closure. Focusing on the manager's earlier encounters with the employee, he admires and respects him. However, the employee has not been working for the corporation for a long duration. At a particular day, over lunch, the manager learns from a colleague that the employee has taken a bribe. The manager will assert that this is impossible and argue that the employee is not capable of doing such a thing. Due to the managers need for closure, he opts to stay with his established impressions while disregarding the prospects that the employee might have actually engaged in an unethical practice. (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009)

In any given work environment, the colleagues ignore, condone or even justify unethical practices, thereby aiding the perception of the transgressor that he or she did not take part in any wrong doing. And if they did, then it is arguably not a big deal. Colleagues with a great need for closure can potentially lead to developed impressions and in so doing, disregard unethical behavior.

c. Defensive Traps

Indeed, defensive traps are an increasingly different type. Despite the fact that sometimes, some can be categorized as primary traps,

defensive traps are majorly trials to trace means to rewind course after transgressions have been done. Mostly though, defensive traps are perceived as maneuvers that are to avoid guilt and shame, two internal stimuli. Indeed, guilt and shame are perceived as being extremely painful emotions since they call into question the desirable perception that individuals have of themselves (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009).

These forms of traps are insidious since they are usually increasingly successful at curbing or even minimizing guilt and shame. They aid individuals to deny their misdoings, consequently setting them up for recurring unethical behavior. A good instance of a defensive trap is the "Fake consensus effect" (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009)

This can be exemplified by a survey that was initially conducted. A professor of criminology at the University of Ottawa, by the name Thomas Gabor, conducted a survey. He interviewed employees who had illegally stolen materials and equipment from their workplaces. A rationalization that was common among the employees is highlighted by a statement that they gave. They asserted that they are good as management, they engage in employee theft, all people do it and if they opt not to take it, somebody else has the prospect of taking it.

This form of rationalization is referred to as "False consensus effect" by contemporary psychologists. (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009) At any instance when individuals engage in unethical practices, they attempt to appease their guilt by falsely arguing that it is an act that is done by

everyone. Consequently, this serves to minimize their self-transgressions. They argue that it is not a bad act and it is an act that happens at all the time. The worst thing about this form of trap is the fact that every person believes in his own self-deception.

A research was conducted by Gino Agostinelli at the University of New Mexico. This fascinating research served to validate the false consensus effect. In the study, 235 subjects took part in her study, and they were randomly assigned either of the two conditions which are the neutral condition or failure condition.

The researcher administered a test that was explained as being good for helping firms recruit their employees. It served to measure general problem-solving skills at any instance when the employees are under pressure. During the test, the subjects who were relegated to the failure condition were ascribed false feedback. The assertion was that the score was poor and showed that a person was not capable of solving issues under pressure and cannot come up with prudent decisions effectively (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009). The subjects who were in the neutral condition were not given any particular feedback at all. The entire subjects were then provided with a questionnaire that inquired how properly they could estimate the general population could perform on the problem-solving test. Indeed, the magnitude of the false consensus effect was fascinating. In the neutral condition, for instance, 40% of subjects approximated that the public could be successful with the problem-solving test. On the other

hand, in the failure condition, the subjects approximated that just 15% of the public would be successful. Those subjects who were unsuccessful in the test approximated that a big number of individuals would ultimately fail the test. The rationalization here was that "if I fail, then most people would also fail" (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009).

Executive Tactics to Curb Psychological Traps

Indeed, there has been a concern on how corporations can curb psychological traps in the workplace. There is a need for the development of a corporate culture in which there are decreased prospects for the occurrence of psychological traps. To solve such psychological traps, there is the need to identify each trap and then come up with proper techniques on how to handle it.

Psychological Trap to Obey Authority

In that attempt to curb the trap of obedience to authority, the most pertinent issue that can be handled by the executive is to hire a psychologist to be a section of his/her ethics and compliance staff. It has been explained that psychology can expound on the nature of traps and then aid to structure a good approach to avoid or even solve the issue. (Hoyk & Hersey, 2009).

An ethics professor by the name Joseph Badaracco is reported to have conducted 30 comprehensive interviews with MBA graduates who had encountered dilemmas in the business world. This professor from the

Harvard Business School came up with fascinating results. Most of the managers who he interviewed were facing the trap of obedience to authority and had been instructed to act unethically by their superiors. One of the managers had been told to cook data to support the introduction of a new product to the market. On objection, this manager was forced by his superior just to do it.

At the instance of being instructed to act unethical, the entry level managers went through the intense anxiety that paved way to the obedience to authority trap. Indeed, this shows that emotions can make people to be highly submissive and thus engage in the wrongdoing. The managers were in the capacity of coping with their anxiety and attempting to console themselves that they were still young in their careers. They comforted themselves that they could also find employment opportunities in other corporations in case they failed in their stations. In most part, the manager was able to resolve their dilemmas due to such methods of reasoning.

However, the interviewed managers asserted that were they older, and having families and proper investments coming up with alternative employment would not have been likely. Indeed, at any given time when there are middle age managers, a psychologist can help them curb with the anxiety that results from the temptations of such a psychological trap. This is due to the fact that psychologists are properly trained to curb individuals undergoing intense anxiety.

Need for Closure

Indeed, it is crucial to note that psychological traps are mostly insidious due to the fact that they are invisible. A good example is those managers who have a high need for closure, and they are mostly not aware of possessing such a trait or the fact that it can make them act in unethical manners. At that given instance whereby managers are aware that they have the need for closure as a psychological trap, they can easily be helped to avoid such a trap in the workplace.

To increasingly understand and contend with the need for closure, the most crucial step for the executive is to hire a psychologist to administer “The Need for Closure Scale” in the workplace. This will help the managers and the general employees to be aware of whether they possess particular person personality that can make them increasingly inclined to act unethically.

False Consensus Effect

It is prudent to assert that this is easily identifiable due to the fact that it sounds like an argument whereby a person says or argues that everybody is doing such a thing and is thus normal to do it. At any given instance, whereby a firm or corporation is aware of false consensus effect, it should be a signifier that a transgression has occurred. At such instances then, well-established reporting and disciplinary procedures that are

normally a section of the corporation's code of business conduct should be enacted.

However, it is important to point out that there are more than three psychological traps. There is thus the need to come up with more than three tactics to curb the traps. There are basically three techniques that can be used to solve the issues. First and foremost, hiring a psychologist to aid coworkers to contend with the intense emotions that are incited by the traps is regarded as the best move. Secondly, there is the need to ensure that the psychological tests that the employees take make them be aware of prospective personality traps in the workplace. Last but not least, there is need to acknowledge and recognize defensive traps as signs that transgressions have already taken place in the workplace.

It is further prudent to note that a person's behavior can be impacted by more than a single trap at a go. Coming up with tactics to manage the traps is thus an ongoing challenge for any given firm, particularly in the process whereby more traps are being discovered.

Broken Window Theory

There is the need to consider the broken windows theory. Under a particular situation whereby a building is vandalized by people, and as a result, there are a few broken windows. After some time, if the windows are not adequately repaired, the vandals will opt to break some more. Ultimately, the building will be broken into, and then, it will not be surprising to see squatters moving in. Simply put, the theory asserts that if

petty crimes are not solved or addressed, they will create a culture which will lead to increasingly serious crimes and damages.

The broken windows theory was put into practice by Rudy Giuliani, a mayor in New York. He put it in his zero-tolerance of petty crimes including vandalism. The result of his enactment changed the city that was initially perceived as ungovernable, especially as it related to crime. The overall crime rates significantly dropped by 44% to their lowest in recorded history of the city. Furthermore, the murder rate in the city also decreased by 70%. Thus, petty fiddling in the workplace is comparable to those broken windows in the workplace.

In the research entitled "why good people do bad things," Dr. Muel Kapten, from the popular Rotterdam School of management gives an analysis that triggers a lot of concern in the contemporary society. The researcher points out the "acceptance of small theft" as an issue, which may show a culture that is increasingly susceptible to the failure of integrity. At any given time when small thefts are overlooked, then those that are slightly larger will automatically be overlooked. This includes accepting illegal company gifts or even opting to over-quoting business expenses. It will also not take a long time for the employees to cross some limits and then ultimately, there will be a significant ethical failure in the company.

A survey that was conducted at organizations found that almost half of the UK's full-time employees perceived that it was fine to take pens

and pencils from the workplace, they accounted for 44%. Furthermore, 45% found that it was fine to make personal phone calls from the workplace. 33% asserted that it was fine to post personal mail from the workplace. The research further found out that 25% perceived that it was okay to utilize the internet in the workplace and 20% of the employees felt that it was acceptable to "take a sick day" while at work. The study further depicted that there is a negligible difference in attitudes between the managers and the employees.

At any given instance, whereby the tone is set by the managers, that such small ethical breaches are acceptable, then maybe the culture and tone will follow suit. Indeed, most people do not start out intentionally to harm the firm by being malicious, and they are only trying to do their work. However, this study further discovered that any given corporation that provided ethics training to its employees are decreasingly likely to encounter ethical pressure. It is thus up for the corporations to ensure that they train their employees on how to curb "petty crimes."

Other Reasons for Employee Unethical Behavior

It is also pointed out by studies that employees with increasingly Machiavellian traits have high prospects of engaging in unethical practices in the workplace. The Machiavellian traits in this case include the desire for control, distrust in other people and amoral manipulation. At any given instance, whereby a person has distrust towards the other colleagues, then

the worker will be likely to engage in the unethical practice. For instance, if an employee does not trust the corporation he is working in, he will start to believe that the low pay he/she receives is unfair. Consequently, an employee will opt to steal from the company for self-benefit. It is indeed the belief of many employees that some companies are not paying them enough despite the profit that they make. This thus motivates the employees to act unethically in the name of hitting back.

Additionally, there are employees who have an inherent desire to control. Such employees might be in positions that do not bestow any power to them. As a result, such employees will opt to look at means to exercise their power. It is such kinds of employees who will be perceived in the workplace exercising power in wrongful ways. In many companies, there are instances whereby the employees are engaging in sexual harassment, bullying and even fighting. The need for power is indeed an impediment to the ethical standing of any given company. It is thus prudent to ensure that the needs of all the employees are met. The dissemination of education in the form of enlightening them is a prudent step. People usually act unethically if they believe that they do not have the status or responsibility. It should be pointed out to all that responsibility is for all, and we should be accountable.

It has also been suggested that people with higher education are increasingly likely to engage unethically in the workplace. However, there are no empirical research studies to support this. It is normally assumed

that individuals who are educated are proud and when they are given junior positions, they are more likely to rebel and portray unwanted attitudes. Nationality, on the other hand, is portrayed as one of the reasons that propel people to behave unethically in the workplace. Last but not least, age is also pointed out as a factor for the occurrence of unethical practices in the workplace. However, most of these reasons have not been scientifically proven and thus will remain to be disputed.

Limitation and Recommendation for Future Study

This paper was increasingly focused on an elaborate literature review and internet search. It was further added on the use of online library search of academic articles exploring the topic of concern. There is the dire need to put into practice all the findings of this research. Furthermore, for future research, it is highly recommended that the exploration of the perception of ethical practice is done. There is the need to understand circumstances in the workplace that promote the occurrence of unethical practices. Future research should explore how successful companies operate and minimize the occurrence of unethical practices in the workplace. While existing research is extremely inclined in explaining why unethical practice takes place, there is minimal research that explores what motivates workers to engage deeply in ethical practices in the workplace.

Conclusion

Regardless of the size of a corporation or the purpose of its existence, the occurrence of unethical behavior is inevitable. However, it is important to point out that there is disagreement as to what measurement can be used to determine what is ethical and what is not ethical. Individuals are usually inclined to stick with their personal values and views before they confront deeds that are ambiguous. For instance, people might end up doing acts that are unethical regarding a deontology view. Despite this, they may opt, in some instances to focus on other actions that are increasingly ethical. The judgments of workers depend highly on the established standards of the companies they work for. There is thus the need for firms to educate the employees on the various forms of unethical practices. There is then need to recruit psychologists who will guide and counsel the employees on how to curb the various psychological traps. Ethical and unethical acts should be clearly stipulated in any given company as rules and regulations. The employees should also be further informed on how to discern the various acts in the workplace. Understanding the theories of ethics in the workplace is an important move in understanding the psychology of employees and what motivates employees to be inclined in acting unethically.

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