Case Study: Ethical Dilemma In Different Theories

Ethical dilemma

Ethical dilemma or paradox refers to decisions making issues involving two different moral imperatives, neither of which strives to resolve the situation as obedience to either would mean transgressing another (Fisher, 2008). Every ethical dilemma involves two alternatives; obeying one would result in the avoidance of the other, thereby compromising a certain ethical principle (Levin, Furlong & O'Neil, 2014).

In the given case, Blair working as a data analyst in a casino logged into his colleague's computer system in her absence in order to retrieve certain missing data that he needed in a professional capacity. Accessing another employee's computer system is strictly prohibited by every modern company by way of its information technology regulations stating that data protection and data security is one of the topmost priorities of the company that is expected from the employees (Levin, Furlong & O'Neil, 2014). In this regard, Blair would be held guilty of violating the data protection and information technology regulations as per the company rules.

While retrieving the missing data from Sam's computer system, Blair found out that Sam indulged into gambling bets over the last few days with the local sports bookmaker. Here it is to be noted that the employees of the casino was forbidden from indulging into any kinds of gambling bets. Even being aware of this restriction, Sam indulged into gambling bets. In this matter Blair is supposed to report such an incident of the violation of company rules, however, he is unable to do so for he would be questioned regarding the source of his information. Accessing Sam's computer by Blair in her absence would make Blair guilty of a violation of information technology regulation of the company even though if he provides the information of Sam's gambling bets to the company.

This is the ethical dilemma that Blair is facing at the moment for he can neither report the fact that Sam has violated company rules by placing bets on gambling nor can he admit the fact that he accessed Sam's computer, for it would attract him penalty.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is one of the most significant moral theories that judge the morality of an action of an individual, whether right or wrong (Mulgan, 2014). Utilitarianism depends on the notion that the purpose of morality is how to make the quality of life better by enhancing the 'greatest happiness of the greater number' around the world. It strives to increase the volume of good things like happiness and pleasure in the world thereby decreasing the volume of bad things like and unhappiness and pain (Mill, 2016). Jeremy Bentham being one of the most important theorists of utilitarianism makes an impact on philosophical, social, economic and political policies in society (Mulgan, 2014).

Therefore applying the theory of utilitarianism in this case, it could be deduced that an action should be taken which would bring a satisfactory result to the greatest number or stakeholders in this matter. Blair, Sam and the company are the three stakeholders in this matter and

therefore it should be emphasized on the point that the ultimate decision should strive to bring happiness or satisfaction to the majority number of stakeholders. Therefore it could be recommended by following the utilitarian ethics that Blair should keep away from disclosing the fact that he accessed Sam's computer in her absence for it may get him expelled from the company. On the other hand, Blair is suggested not to point out Sam’s unethical conduct of placing a bet over gambling for such information could get her expelled from the company as well. Therefore it would be wise for her to avoid disclosing, the entire episode to anyone in order to secure greater happiness for the greater number of stakeholders in this matter.

Kantian ethics

The Kantian ethics emphasize the Goodwill of a person and regard it is an unconditionally good factor that marks the good nature of a person along with such person's outlook towards ethics and morality (Baron, 2018). A person who has goodwill shall form his intentions based on a perspective with moral values. Therefore it is projected that Kantian ethics directs a person not to pay attention to the consequences of his actions, guided by goodwill and good intention. This is the exact theory of Immanuel Kant about the ‘unconditional goodness of a goodwill' (O'Neill, 2013).

The Kantian ethics could be applied in the given case scenario that involves an ethical dilemma of Blair which involves him disclosing the fact that he violated the information technology regulations of the company by accessing Sam’s computer in her absence along with finding out from Samsung computer that she was indulging in gambling bets. Applying the theory of Kantian ethics, it is extremely important for Blair to retain his is unconditional goodness of goodwill by disclosing the fact to the company that he accessed to Sam's computer system in her absence. By confessing his guilt, Blair would be free from all kinds of malice which would otherwise defeat his goodwill. Therefore it is recommended under this theory that Blair should disclose about his own guilty action of accessing Sam’s computer in her absence, there by preserving his own goodwill for retaining the unconditional goodness.

Aristotle's virtue ethics

As per Aristotle’s virtue ethics a person having ideal traits and characteristics is virtuous of all. Virtue ethics identifies a virtuous person as someone who shows kindness in different situations of his life for that is what his character is (Van Hooft, 2014). Such person is not driven by the madness or competition to gain favours or utility or to simply perform his is duty. Virtue ethics is often criticized as a self-centered conception, as it does not consider the effect of the action of a person. It does not provide guidance pertaining to the conduct of life, apart from the direction to ‘act as a virtuous person (Hutchinson, 2015). Broadly, it focuses on the role of character and virtue in terms of moral philosophy rather than focusing on performing one’s duty or bringing about good consequences around oneself (Hutchinson, 2015).

By applying Aristotle’s virtue ethics in the given case scenario, it is recommended that Blair may keep both the information about his own violation of the information technology regulation as well as Sam’s violation of the Company rules to indulge in gambling, in order to be kind to one another and extend forgiving hands towards his colleague. By showing kindness and mercy to Sam, Blair would be exhibiting characteristics of kindness and virtue. As per this theory laid down by Aristotle; Blair would not strive to guide Sam on the way of righteousness, but only a

direction to act as a virtuous person in any given situation. Therefore it is recommended that Blair could keep the fact about Sam to himself, thereby preserving is virtue of kindness and save Sam from being expelled from the company.

Recommended course action

Deviating from the above-mentioned theories, it is recommended that Blair should communicate about his own guilt of accessing Sam's computer in her absence to the management. This would help Blair to learn a lesson about maintaining data security and data protection in his profession, which would take him a long way, without committing any further unethical errors. In addition, it is also recommended that Blair should disclose about the unethical approach of Sam to the management, for he indulged in gambling bets even being aware that the company does not allow its employees to gamble. Disclosure of such breach of professional duty is vital, for it may amount to certain penalty if the defaulter admits his own guilt himself before being held liable by the official authority. If the person is held guilty for the breach of information technology regulation, it may lead to his termination. On the other hand, the breach of professional regulation by Sam for placing bets in gambling even though it is prohibited in her profession would amount to a serious action taken by the office authority, which may even lead to her termination.

Conclusion

Therefore, to conclude, it could be held that ethical dilemmas divide the attention of a person in two variables, taking the person to two different directions. It is evident that it becomes difficult for the person to choose between the two variables, for both of them are critical and doubtful. The above-discussed case also so give a picture of two variables in one of which Blair is himself guilty and on the other he found out the guilt of another yet feels helpless for being unable to report it as it would disclose his own guilt as well. Most often theory and models lay down by philosophers and social thinkers are used to resolve such ethical dilemmas, however, sometimes critical situations are beyond the purview of the age-old theories of the ancient philosophers. In such cases it is the best to follow inner instinct to achieve the best result.

References

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