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THE IMPORTANCE OF MANDATORY ETHICAL DUTY IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES: EXPLORING STANDARDS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

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Abstract. *The importance of mandatory ethical duty in professional practices cannot be overstated, as it is fundamental in promoting integrity, accountability, and trust across various sectors. Ethical duty refers to the responsibilities that professionals have towards their clients, employers, and society, which are often outlined in established codes of ethics. These codes emphasize essential values such as honesty and fairness, and they play a significant role in shaping an organization's reputation and the trust of its stakeholders. Navigating ethical decision-making can be challenging due to the complexity of moral dilemmas and conflicting interests among stakeholders. Therefore, professionals must rely on a strong ethical framework to guide their choices. Continuous education and fostering a culture that prioritizes ethical duty are vital for upholding professional standards and enhancing the integrity of practices within various fields. Management's commitment to ethical standards is crucial in raising employee awareness and fostering a culture of accountability. When managers exemplify ethical behavior, they reinforce the significance of ethics in decision-making, which helps socialize new employees into this ethical framework. The ethical conduct of leaders has a profound impact on organizational culture, trust, and reputation, with ethical breaches potentially leading to serious repercussions for both the organization and its stakeholders. Ultimately, cultivating an ethical culture is essential for the long-term integrity and success of organizations, highlighting the need for effective communication and negotiation skills in addressing ethical challenges.*

Key words: *ethical duty, professional practices, standard, ethical decision*

Introduction

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the significance of ethical duty within professional practices cannot be overstated, as it serves as a cornerstone for fostering integrity, accountability, and trust across various fields. At its core, ethical duty encompasses the obligations and responsibilities that professionals owe to their clients, employers, and society at large, which are often articulated through established codes of ethics that provide a framework for guiding behavior and decision-making. These professional codes not only delineate the key components of ethical duty, such as honesty, fairness, and respect for others, but also play a crucial role in upholding

professional standards and enhancing the credibility of the profession itself. Furthermore, the standards for ethical decision-making are diverse yet universally essential, impacting the processes by which professionals navigate moral dilemmas and make choices that align with their ethical obligations. Organizations, in turn, are tasked with the enforcement of these standards, ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated into the fabric of their operations and culture. The implications of ethical decision-making extend beyond individual choices; they influence organizational reputation, stakeholder trust, and the overall efficacy of professional practices. However, navigating ethical decision-making is not without its challenges, particularly in complex scenarios where competing interests and ambiguous guidelines may arise. This paper will explore the multifaceted dimensions of mandatory ethical duty in professional practices, examining its standards and implications for ethical decision-making while highlighting the critical need for a robust ethical framework that empowers professionals to act with integrity in the face of moral challenges.

Main text

In professional settings, ethical duty encompasses several core components that ensure the maintenance of trust, responsibility, and integrity within the field. One of the fundamental elements is the concept of informed consent, which requires professionals, particularly in the medical field, to provide clear and comprehensive information to patients, allowing them to make educated decisions regarding their care [9]. This duty extends beyond the patient-doctor relationship, as professionals must also navigate their roles in relation to other institutions, such as maintaining confidentiality while complying with the requirements of insurers and law enforcement agencies when necessary [1]. The ethical framework guiding these interactions is deeply influenced by the interlocking structure of societal institutions, which shape the expectations and responsibilities of professionals like doctors. Furthermore, the ethical landscape in professional settings is supported by strong communication practices that not only foster trust and truthfulness in clinical relationships but also facilitate the ethical handling of sensitive information. To align with these duties, continuous education on ethical and legal issues is imperative, as highlighted by reforms in medical

education that emphasize medical ethics and law as foundational components of the curriculum. In conclusion, professionals must navigate a complex ethical terrain, requiring consistent reflection and adherence to established ethical standards to uphold their duties effectively.

Professional codes of ethics play an essential role in guiding ethical duties by serving as foundational frameworks that clarify the norms governing professional behavior. These codes, by establishing clear ethical standards, help bridge the gap between individual autonomy and public accountability, ensuring professionals act in ways that are just and equitable [3]. Furthermore, they delineate specific guidelines that differ from general ethics, emphasizing the unique ethical duties that professionals owe to their clients, employers, and society at large. For instance, in the context of emerging technologies, these codes are instrumental in ensuring that actions and decisions account for their social impact, which is critical in maintaining public trust and adherence to ethical standards [14]. As such, professional codes of ethics not only set expectations for ethical conduct but also facilitate peaceful and collaborative interactions among professionals, thereby contributing to a more harmonious and ethical professional environment [14]. To uphold these ethical duties effectively, it is crucial for both educational institutions and professional organizations to promote awareness and understanding of these codes among current and future professionals.

While professional codes of ethics provide a foundational framework for guiding behavior, ethical duty goes beyond these codes by embedding a sense of personal responsibility and moral obligation within professionals. Ethical duty is essential in maintaining professional standards, as it is a critical component in guiding behavior within the professions. Relying solely on external regulations and codes may not adequately uphold ethical duties, as these measures often fail to address the nuanced and complex situations that arise in professional settings. A professional culture that prioritizes ethical duty is therefore necessary to cultivate an environment where individuals are motivated by intrinsic values rather than merely adhering to external rules [2]. By understanding and integrating ethical duty into the core of professional culture, organizations can foster a more robust framework for ethical behavior that

transcends mere compliance. This approach not only strengthens the ethical fabric of professional fields but also offers valuable insights for addressing ethical challenges in other types of organizations, thereby raising ethical standards across various domains [5]. In conclusion, nurturing a deep-seated commitment to ethical duty within professional settings is crucial for sustaining and enhancing professional standards, and it demands proactive engagement and advocacy from leadership and organizational culture alike.

Ethical decision-making in various professions is guided by established standards, which often take the form of codes of ethics. These codes serve as foundational frameworks articulating the ideals, responsibilities, and limitations of a profession's collective ethics, thereby guiding ethical behavior across different fields. In the accounting profession, which plays a critical role in maintaining societal trust and financial integrity, adherence to ethical standards is paramount [11]. Accountants must navigate complex ethical landscapes, often facing internal and external pressures that could potentially lead to fraudulent activities. To assist professionals in making ethical decisions, frameworks like the JUCI model have been developed. This model is particularly beneficial for accounting and finance professionals, as it offers a clear and concise decision-making process grounded in the principles of justice, utility, competence, and utility. Such frameworks provide a structured approach to ethical decision-making that is both accessible and practical, ensuring that professionals can uphold their ethical obligations even in challenging situations [11]. Ultimately, these standards and models reinforce the importance of ethical conduct and help maintain the integrity and trust essential to professional practice.

The impact of standards on decision-making processes extends beyond individual responsibility and is deeply entwined with organizational culture and ethical frameworks. In the context of healthcare, the establishment of organizational guidelines for ethical decision-making substantially enhances the capacity of healthcare providers to think and act ethically, directly influencing the quality of medical decisions made within healthcare institutions [6]. The presence of ethical and professional codes serves to guide individuals in their decision-making processes,

which is particularly critical in a field where decisions have profound implications on patient well-being. Furthermore, the organizational culture in healthcare settings can act as a mediating element, shaping how personal values of healthcare professionals translate into ethical decisions, potentially leading to different outcomes than those that might arise from personal values alone. This highlights the necessity for healthcare organizations to not only implement ethical standards but also foster an environment that encourages open dialogue and reflection. Such an environment allows healthcare professionals to engage in "double loop learning," applying lessons learned from past actions to future ethical considerations, thereby continuously improving decision-making processes [6]. Ultimately, the integration of structured ethical frameworks and a supportive organizational culture is vital in ensuring that healthcare providers make decisions that are consistently aligned with both professional and ethical standards, thereby enhancing the overall integrity and trust in healthcare systems.

In addition to professional codes of ethics, organizations enforce ethical standards through various mechanisms that integrate these codes into the fabric of daily operations. One critical method is through managerial adherence to ethical standards, which significantly influences employee awareness and commitment across different organizational levels [4]. By observing managers who consistently exemplify ethical behavior, employees receive a clear message about the importance of such standards, fostering an environment where ethical considerations are central to decision-making processes. Moreover, new employees are socialized into the organization's ethical framework, which not only assures compliance but also instills a sense of responsibility and accountability from the outset. Such socialization processes are vital for making ethical standards both visible and operable, ensuring that they are not just theoretical ideals but practical elements of everyday organizational life. These efforts collectively underscore the necessity for organizations to actively implement and reinforce ethics policies, thereby promoting a culture of compliance and integrity [4]. To maintain and enhance these standards, organizations must continually evaluate and adapt their strategies, ensuring that ethical behavior remains a core component of their operational ethos.

The potential consequences of ethical decision-making in professional environments are multifaceted, influencing not only immediate outcomes but also the broader organizational culture and performance. Ethical decision-making by leaders is pivotal as it sets a precedent for subordinates, guiding their behavior and decision-making processes. Leaders who model ethical behavior can foster an environment of trust and integrity, leading to positive subordinate outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment [13]. However, the complexity of organizational contexts adds layers of pressure and challenges to maintaining ethical standards. Situational variables, such as performance pressure and interpersonal conflicts, can adversely impact leaders' ability to make ethical decisions, thereby influencing the ethical climate of the organization. This underscores the importance of addressing these pressures to uphold ethical standards. Moreover, when ethical decision-making falters, the ramifications can extend beyond the organization, affecting external stakeholders and potentially leading to significant repercussions, as seen in historical cases like Enron and WorldCom [7][13]. Therefore, organizations must prioritize ethical leadership and decision-making to ensure long-term sustainability and prevent ethical breakdowns that could jeopardize their viability.

In the corporate realm, ethical decision-making plays a pivotal role in shaping both organizational reputation and trust, akin to the ethical duties in the medical profession highlighted previously. For organizations, implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, particularly those aimed at advancing employees—referred to as E-CSR—is crucial for cultivating trust and enhancing reputation at the corporate level [15]. When employees observe a significant ratio of E-CSR activities, it conveys that their needs and interests are genuinely valued by the organization, fostering a sense of trust and belief that the company will act ethically in its engagements with them. This trust is foundational, as it serves as a critical link between E-CSR initiatives and the organization's overall reputation. As employees develop faith in their employers through observable positive contributions, they are more likely to view their firms positively, which directly impacts and elevates the organizational reputation [15]. Therefore, ethical decision-making in the form of robust E-CSR

activities not only meets the moral obligations of an organization but also fortifies its reputation and trustworthiness in the eyes of its employees, ultimately supporting sustained corporate success and integrity.

In navigating complex ethical scenarios, one significant challenge arises from the presence of ethical dilemmas, which involve choosing between 'right versus right' or 'wrong versus wrong' alternatives, as opposed to moral temptations that focus on 'right versus wrong' choices [12]. Such dilemmas often lead to difficult decisions, such as determining which employee to lay off during times of organizational restructuring. The intricacies of these decisions are compounded by the interplay of conflicting values, where the interests of various stakeholders must be weighed and prioritized, further complicating the process. Moreover, reciprocal stakeholder influences add another layer of complexity, as each stakeholder's perspective can significantly impact the decision-making process, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of their worldviews [8]. Addressing these challenges requires not only a keen awareness of the emotional and philosophical dimensions involved but also an ability to harmonize diverse ethical perspectives, underscoring the importance of effective communication and negotiation skills in ethical decision-making.

Summary and conclusions

The findings of this research underscore the critical role that mandatory ethical duty plays in professional practices, highlighting that ethical behavior is not merely a set of guidelines but a fundamental aspect of professional identity and responsibility. By emphasizing the necessity for continuous education on ethical and legal issues, particularly in fields like medicine where ethical dilemmas frequently arise, the study aligns with existing literature that advocates for a robust ethical foundation within professional curricula. The integration of informed consent as a cornerstone of ethical duty illustrates the need for transparency and communication in patient relationships, which is essential for fostering trust and ensuring that individuals can make informed choices about their care. Furthermore, the complexities of ethical decision-making in professional settings are compounded by the diverse interests of stakeholders, necessitating frameworks like the JUCI model to guide professionals through these

challenging scenarios. While professional codes of ethics serve as invaluable tools for establishing clear behavioral norms, the research reveals that these codes must be embedded in a broader organizational culture that prioritizes ethical duty, accountability, and personal moral commitment. This dual approach—combining formal guidelines with an emphasis on personal responsibility—can significantly enhance organizational reputation and effectiveness. However, the study also acknowledges the limitations posed by the varying interpretations of ethical standards across different contexts, suggesting that future research might explore how these standards can be harmonized to address the unique challenges faced by various professions. Additionally, the emotional and philosophical dimensions of ethical decision-making warrant further investigation, as understanding these factors could lead to more effective training programs that equip professionals to handle the pressures of their roles. Ultimately, the research calls for a concerted effort among leadership and organizational stakeholders to cultivate an ethical culture that not only adheres to established standards but also promotes a proactive and collaborative approach to ethical challenges, thereby advancing the overall integrity of professional practices across diverse fields.

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