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RESEARCH ARTICLE

LEADERSHIP ETHICS PARADOX: ANALYSIS OF PARADOXES IN ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The Leadership ethics paradox highlights the challenges faced by leaders in navigating the complexities of ethical decision-making. Leaders must balance their obligations to deliver results for their organizations and be mindful of the moral and ethical implications of their actions. Paradoxes in ethical leadership include paradoxes of power, transparency, loyalty, growth, integrity, risk and many more. To dissolve the paradoxes in ethical leadership, leaders must be proactive in developing their ethical decision-making skills as well as understanding the ethical implications of their decision and actions by thinking critically and creatively and seeking out diverse perspectives and solutions.

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Introduction:-

The leadership ethics paradox refers to the tension between the conflicting demands and expectations that leaders face when making ethical decisions i.e. evaluating and choosing among alternatives in a manner consistent with ethical principles. The paradox highlights the nuanced nature and challenges faced by leaders in navigating the complexities of ethical decision-making. Leaders must balance their obligations to deliver results for their organizations and be mindful of the moral and ethical implications of their actions.

In an organization, leaders are expected to act in the manner that is best in the interest of their organization as well as organization stakeholders to maximize the financial and other performance outcomes. On the contrary, leaders are expected to behave in a manner that provides the optimal setting for the employees by inspiring, developing, and establishing a culture, consistent with moral and ethical values of trust, honesty, and respect.

Leaders are often faced with situations where the most ethical decisions may not align with the best outcome for their organization leading to the paradox. For example, a leader may be faced with the choice between maximizing profit for their organization and ensuring the well-being of their employees or a leader may be faced with the decision of cost-cutting by reducing the benefits of the employees of the organization or may have to choose between honouring the contract with the supplier or exposing unethical practices such as child labour, environmental degradation, etc., therefore, the leader must find a way to balance the competing ethical considerations and make a decision that aligns with their values and principles.

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Paradoxes in Ethical Leadership:-

Paradoxes in ethical leadership refer to the conflicts and tensions that arise when leaders are faced with competing ethical considerations in their decision-making. Various paradoxes arise in the way of ethical leadership like – a paradox of personal and professional values, a paradox of power, a paradox of growth, a paradox of time, a paradox of transparency, a paradox of loyalty, paradox of integrity and perspectives, a paradox of risk, and many more. A few of the paradoxes have been discussed in this article.

1. Paradox of Personal and Professional Values

Leaders must strike a balance between their values and the values of the organization they lead. They must stay true to their own beliefs and principles, but on the other hand, they must also represent the values and goals of the organization they lead.

2. Paradox of Power

Power in an organization brings along with its authority to control. Leaders who hold power and authority may be tempted to use their position for personal gain, rather than for the benefit of their employees and organization. This creates a tension between the use of power for good and for evil.

3. Paradox of Collaboration

Leaders are often put in situations where they have to make difficult decisions, but they may foster collaboration and teamwork. The paradox requires leaders to balance the need for decisive action with the need for collaboration and cooperation to bring out the best in the organization.

4. Paradox of Loyalty

Leaders always have a strong sense of loyalty for their employees and organization, but also holds a responsibility to act in the best interest of the stakeholders and society.

5. Paradox of Transparency

Leaders may feel pressure to prevent a positive image to the public and stakeholders, but also have a responsibility to be transparent about the challenges and failures of their organization. This creates a paradox between the need for image management and the importance of transparency.

6. Paradox of Risk

Leaders may feel pressure to take risks to drive innovation and growth, but also have a responsibility to protect their employees and stakeholders from harm which results in a paradox between the need for risk-taking and the importance of safety.

7. Paradox of Time

Leaders are required to maintain the balance between short-term goals and long-term goals to have sustainability and success. It requires leaders to make difficult decisions that may not be popular in the short-term but are necessary and beneficial for the long-term success of the organization.

8. Paradox of Integrity and Perspectives

Ethical Leaders must maintain their integrity while taking into consideration the perspectives and opinions of others. It is a challenge as it requires leaders to navigate complex dilemmas and make decisions that are consistent with their values while taking into consideration the opinions of others.

9. Paradox of Growth

Leaders must set an example by leading the path and model of ethical behaviour allowing room for personal growth and development of other. The paradox requires leaders to strike a balance between setting high ethical standards and providing support and guidance for others to grow and develop.

10. Paradox of dilemma between individual right and collective responsibilities

Ethical leaders must balance the rights and needs of the individuals with the responsibilities they have to larger group. This can be specially challenging in situations where individual right may conflict with the well being of the organization or the wider community perspectives.

Ways To Overcome Paradoxes:-

Effective ways for leaders to address the leadership ethics paradox is to engage in ethical decision-making frameworks and processes. These frameworks can help leaders to structure their thinking, consider the impact of their decisions on all stakeholders, and identify potential ethical solutions. For example, leaders can use shareholder assessments and feedbacks to analyse and assess the impact of their decision on employees, customers suppliers, and then the wider community, and to identify areas where they can improve their ethical performance.

Addressing important aspects of the leadership ethics paradox is to foster a positive workplace culture that supports ethical behaviour. Leaders can achieve this by creating a safe and inclusive environment for employees encouraging them for feedback and open communication, and encouraging shared sense of purpose and values. With these leaders can create a culture of trust and collaboration and encourage employees to take an ethical approach to their work in the organization.

Conclusion:-

Ethical leadership involves navigating a complex landscape of competing values and responsibilities, and many paradoxes arise in trying to balance these various demands. To dissolve the paradoxes in ethical leadership, leaders must be proactive in developing their ethical decision-making skills as well as understanding the ethical implications of their decision and actions by thinking critically and creatively and seeking out diverse perspectives and solutions. Also, they must be able to balance their obligations to their organization and stakeholders with ethical obligations. They must also establish clear codes of conduct and values that guide their behaviour and must seek the guidance of trusted advisors, mentors, and stakeholders when faced with complex ethical dilemmas. By doing so, they can ensure their actions align with their values and create positive and sustainable outcomes for their organization and society.

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