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ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN HRM

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Abstract:	<p>Abstract</p> <p>HR function is the conscience of the organization. HR managers operate within social, structural, political, and economic limitations and are unable to make entirely free ethical choices. In today's high-pressured environment, HR must make it clear for employees that ethics come before deadlines or bottom lines. Many believe that HR plays a tangential role in the ethics debate, but that simply isn't true. Human Resources can help design programs, advise on strategy and consult on investigations, as well as play an ongoing role in educating and training workers about ethics. The basic values of the company must be visible. Human Resources insures they are visible and communicated during the selection process, employee interview, orientation sessions and performance reviews to create a culture that emphasizes ethics.</p> <p>The paper discusses insights garnered from a wide range of disciplines and debates, for example, stakeholder theory, utilitarian philosophies, Aristotelian concepts of virtue and capabilities, human rights and also the determinants and its affect on Ethics in HRM. Ethical HRM is a complex and multifaceted matters in which there are no easy solutions and few evidently correct answers. There is substantial complexity of the ethical choices that arise with respect to HRM, the difficulty of determining the morally best HRM strategies. Cultivating ethical sensitivity and ethical reasoning amongst HR managers would go a long way to achieve Ethical practices in HRM. Procedural justice and Heller's framework could be used as moral compass to the HR managers towards Ethical Human Resources Management.</p> <p>Concluding, achieving Ethical HRM is not a destination, it is a continuous journey It's an elusive moving target.</p>

Title

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN HRM

Author Profile

Dr. Farida Virani is a Professor for Human Resources Management and Behavioral Sciences. She has a Ph.D in Management with a Master's in Human Resources Management. She has worked as a Director in charge of an upcoming Management institute in Mumbai and has actively contributed to its institution building process. She has a rich experience of more than 15 years, ranging in various areas like research and teaching, consulting, corporate training, business and public service activities. Her areas of interest are Ethics, OB, HRM and Life Skills.

ETHICAL PERSPECTIVES IN HRM

'All HR practices have an ethical foundation. HR deals with the practical consequences of human behavior'. (Johnson, 2003)

Business ethics has emerged as a field of study and as an issue of critical importance in the business world, in recent years. This interest has been increased; it can be suggested, by a series of corporate and government scandals resulting in an explosion in academic publications. An extremely important component of making business more ethical is to take seriously the ethical aspects of managing people (Winstanley and Woodall 2000a). A review of the literature reveals a modest growth of interest in the subject too. Over the last decade there have been a number of books, edited collections (Parker 1988a; Winstanley and Woodall 2000b; Woodall and Winstanley 2001), and articles published on ethics in academic journals (e.g. *Personnel Review* Vol 25, No 6 1996) and elsewhere (e.g. Schumann 2001; Shultz and Brender-Ilan 2004; Weaver 2001). Nevertheless, Ethics in HRM, has not really kept pace with developments in the broader field of business ethics.

In the past, the employment relations practices of employers were more open to scrutiny by other powerful parties such as trade unions and industrial tribunals. These collectivist systems of industrial relations (IR) helped to maintain some checks on employers who sought to exploit their employees. The decline of collectivist arrangements has left many employees potentially more vulnerable to opportunistic and unethical behavior (Watson et al. 2003). In the recent times, the 'enterprising individual', with its connotations of personal initiative, independence, self-reliance and the willingness to take risks, and accept responsibility for one's actions, celebrates individualism at the expense of collectivist solidarity. This turn towards individualism in employment has questionably placed the integrity of HRM increasingly in the hands of business managers and HR managers in particular. Except in occupations where market conditions overwhelmingly favor the employee, employers are in an increasingly powerful position to govern and dominate the employment relationship (Smith 1997). This opens the doors to question about the morality of contemporary HRM and increases the significance of engaging in moral evaluation of the behavior of directors, managers, and HR practitioners.

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4 Ethical challenges thrive in HRM. Each day, in the course of executing and communicating HR
5 decisions, managers have the potential to change, shape, redirect, and fundamentally alter the
6 course of other people's lives. For each HR practice, there are winners and there are losers.
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8 Furthermore, HRM is not a consistent and unitary set of principles and practices. It varies from
9 organization to organization, from culture to culture, and can be diverse both within and between
10 industries and sectors. HRM has evolved in multifaceted historical, economic and social
11 contexts. While it is argued (Winstanley and Woodall, 2000) that HRM holds the moral
12 'stewardship' of organizations, standards, values, morals and ethics have become increasingly
13 complex in a postmodern society where absolutes have given way to tolerance and ambiguity.
14 This particularly affects managers in HR, where decisions will affect people's jobs and their
15 future employment. In this current context, it becomes most relevant to examine the ethical
16 dimension of HRM practice.
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28 **Philosophy of Ethics**

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32 Philosophy presents some propositions about the nature of morality and ethics. Some of the main
33 approaches are discussed briefly.
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37 **Relativism and Absolutism**

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39 The main distinction when analyzing morality is the issue of *relativism* – the idea that morality
40 varies with culture, time and circumstances. The opposite position is that of *absolutism*, the
41 notion that there are universal truths in morality that apply at all times and in all circumstances.
42 In a global business world, this aspect becomes significant. When businesses operate globally,
43 how far should HR adapt company policies and rules to local circumstances? Would the absolute
44 universal truths help businesses who believe the business of business is to generate profits?
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52 **Consequentialist Approaches (utilitarianism)**

53 This approach was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806–
54 1873). Its main premise suggests that the morality of an act is determined by its consequences:
55 people should do that which will bring the greatest *utility* (which is generally understood to mean
56 whatever the group sees as good) to the greatest number affected by a given situation. HR
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4 practitioners, argue that in practice it is very difficult to accurately determine what the maximal
5 *utility* would be for all affected by a situation. What is the ‘majority’? Can we accept a situation
6 where the benefits of the majority might mean the exploitation, and suffering, of the minority?
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8 HR Mangers may not always have all the necessary information. The notion of utility is also
9 very vague. Is the vision short or long term? These perspectives may lead to different
10 conclusions.
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15 16 17 **Non-consequentialist Approaches (deontological or ‘duty’ ethics)**

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19 This approach, associated with Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), is sometimes referred to as ‘duty
20 ethics’. Kant’s aim was to establish a set of absolute moral rules, developed through the
21 application of *reason*. The defining characteristics of this approach are the universal *applicability*
22 of principles to all humanity, and basic respect for humans. A key notion for Kant was that of
23 *intentionality*. It might well be that the outcome of an act leads to very bad consequences for
24 people – for example, the closure of a site and subsequent job losses – but if one’s aims and
25 intentions are good, then the act is a moral one. It’s all about motivation and meaning.
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34 Practically, this harvests a lot of questions from the HRM perspectives that requires answers.
35 First, how is the organization to establish the interests of the employees? Second, why should
36 one employee’s interests be the same as another employee’s interests or be the same as the
37 employee’s interest in the coming years as the mindset , skill sets and the attitudes of the
38 employees and employers rapidly change with the changing business context . Moreover, the
39 assumption of homogeneity is a perpetual problem facing research in the HRM (Wright and
40 Boswell 2002) areas.
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48 **The Ethics of Human Rights**

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50 John Locke (1632–1704) was one philosopher who emphasized and elaborated an ethics based
51 upon human rights. He argued that it is not so much the application of reason to acts that is
52 important to morality, but an *appreciation* of the fair and equal treatment of all people, enshrined
53 in the recognition of basic human rights. For Locke, the key rights included freedom, and rights
54 to property. Wooten (2001) examined the ethical dilemmas faced by HR managers in key HR
55 activity areas such as economic justice, employee honesty, discrimination and workers rights and
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4 safety. He suggested that without a clear set of ethical guidelines for HR decision making, these
5 areas will remain problematic for the individual HR manager.
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10 There are a lot of occasions when HRM and Human Rights have been at cross roads. Instances
11 like employee surveillance and electronic monitoring are argued as being necessary by the
12 employers to curb unproductively and protect data security whereas, the privacy-rights advocates
13 and employees say electronic monitoring may be warranted in specific cases if there is suspected
14 wrongdoing, but that monitoring should always be used as narrowly as possible to prevent abuse
15 and misuse of human rights.
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24 **Virtue Ethics**

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26 Virtue ethics is an approach that is seen to originate with Aristotle (384–322 BC). It has recently
27 regained prominence through the work of the philosopher Alasdair Macintyre (1981). Aristotle
28 was not concerned to identify the qualities of good acts, or principles, but of good people. Acting
29 as a ‘good person,’ Macintyre suggests, ‘is the state of being well and doing well . . . a complete
30 human life lived at its best’ (pp. 148–149). This is not just the simple application of rules. The
31 virtues include both intellectual and character virtues. Macintyre includes the need to *feel* that
32 what one is doing is good and right; to have an *emotional* as well as a *cognitive* appreciation of
33 morality is an essential component of virtue. A key distinction between this approach and others
34 is that it focuses on the issue of *agency* in ethical conduct. It suggests that neither good intentions
35 nor outcomes, codes and the recognition of basic rights will necessarily ensure ‘goodness’. In the
36 final analysis, the effectiveness of an ethical system depends on the nature of the people who
37 employ it.
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50 Practically even if virtuous behavior is desirable, there is haziness and ambiguity on which
51 virtues are desirable and functional in the ever changing dynamic business context. From a HR
52 managerial perspective, the end of a business enterprise is not a virtuous life but economic
53 efficiency and profit, where using virtue at work as a means to good business. But, according to
54 Aristotle’s virtue ethics the end is not economic efficiency and profit, but a virtuous life, using
55 economy as a means to eudemonistic (living and acting well) happiness.
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6 **The Stakeholder Approach**
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8 This approach has emerged from the area of applied business ethics, and proponents include
9 Freeman (1998) and Weiss (1994). Stakeholder analysis sees morality as evolving within a
10 community of equals, where rights and needs are recognized as residing within all individuals
11 and groups that partake in business life. Organizations consist of many interwoven webs of
12 relationships, rights and responsibilities. Many individuals and groups have a 'stake' in how an
13 organization performs, apart from just the shareholders and members of the board. Employees,
14 customers, suppliers and the wider community should all be considered when decisions are
15 made, and they should be consulted accordingly. Stakeholder theory offers potential to
16 conceptualize the organization recognizes employee relationship as a moral relationship, and the
17 employee as a moral 'claimant' of the organization. They therefore have the right to pursue their
18 own interests and to be engaged in decisions affecting their interests.
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30 Today's economy thrives on knowledge workers. They are recognized as an integral partner to
31 organizational effectiveness. They give the organization its unique value, inimitable uniqueness
32 competency (Barney 1991). In order for the stakeholder theory to expound the ethicality of the
33 management of Human resources, it will need to make distinctions between meting '*moral*'
34 treatment of employees as stakeholders and meting '*strategic*' treatment of employees as a
35 resource to be maximized by the organization.
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42 **Determinants of Ethical Decision making by HR managers**
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44 The role of the HR manager is still far from clear in most organizations (Gibb 2000). In fact,
45 there has been a continuing apprehension about the role and perception of HR staff (Eisenstat
46 1996). Most appear to have a poor perception of HR (Gibb 2000). Seldom have HR decisions
47 been viewed as a source of value creation (Becker and Gerhart 1996), although, controversially,
48 Hart (1993) argued that HRM is concerned with adding value but often in the ways that are
49 managerial and amoral! HR managers are often described as inflexible and focused on rules,
50 policies, and procedures (Church and Waclawski 2001), so it is not surprising that we often hear
51 calls in the literature for more flexible HRM systems. But does this mean that HR should have
52 flexible Ethics and not worry or only worry about compliance with the law?
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6 Research shows that there are a number of demands on HR managers which influence their
7 ability to act ethically. This section explores the sorts of conflicts that HR managers face when
8 making decisions: the conflicting nature of the HR role, pressures from their supervisors,
9 influence of corporate culture, gender and the individual's own values and interests.
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15 **The Conflicting Nature of the HR Manager's Role**

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17 Some researchers suggest that HR managers have conflicting demands made on them and their
18 position requires the delicate balancing of paradoxical roles (Warnick 1993). Consider, for
19 example the roles of 'administrative expert', 'employee champion', 'change agent', and
20 'strategic business partner' (Ulrich 1997). Each of these roles represent embedded conflicting
21 interests for example, the "strategic business partner" and "administrative expert", would see the
22 HR manager act within the interests of the organization, but not necessarily to promote ethical
23 interests or the rights of employees. Carey (1999) concurred with this view point and stated that
24 the HR manager as a business partner embraces a unitarist perspective; one which concurs with
25 the best interests of the organization (rather than its employees). In contrast, the employee
26 champion role would see that HR managers act within the interests of employees, and be a
27 champion of their rights, which is perhaps more consistent with the rights based ethical justice
28 framework espoused by Rawls (1971). Carey (1999) highlighted that HR managers have a
29 double agency problem and this may lead to confusion about whether their primary role should
30 focus on the employer or employees. She acknowledged that HR's role should be about
31 managing the multiple interests of employers and employees. Again, in managing multiple
32 interests managers may be well served by a professional code of conduct, which they can consult
33 for assistance in making decisions.
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50 **Cultural Influences on Ethical Standards**

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52 The ethical climate of the organization can also influence the behaviors of individuals within it
53 (Soutar, McNeil, & Molster 1996). Further, the ethical values of an organization promote types
54 of behavior and practices deemed acceptable (Trevino 1986). Lovell (2002) argued that
55 callousness, cynicism, hypocrisy and malpractice often spread like a cancer within organizations
56 and were key influences on the ethical behavior of HR managers in organizations. Bartels et al.
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4 (1998) carried out a study examining the relationship between the strength of an organization's
5 ethical climate and the problems with its human resource management considerations. The
6 research concluding thus, 'the strength of an organization's ethical climate determines how much
7 control it has over its employees, i.e. how strongly employees are attached to its norms. In a
8 strong ethical climate, the expected behavior is clear and unambiguous; "the organization sends
9 clear messages about what behaviors are expected and the rewards and punishments within the
10 organization reinforce those messages"' (Bartels et al., 1998). Since it clarifies what kind of
11 ethical behavior is expected from employees, individuals within organizations with a strong
12 ethical climate are more likely to choose ethical behaviors when confronted with a dilemma.
13 Organizations with stronger ethical climates were more likely to be successful in dealing with
14 ethical issues. HR managers in such organizations also have a clear reference points and codes to
15 help steer organizations through ethical dilemmas.
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29 **Pressures from Managers and Superiors**

30 Senior managers' influence on ethical behavior was explored by Soutar et al. (1996) who found
31 that senior managers need to be ethical proponents in the organization for the rest of the
32 organization to develop an ethical stance. The pressures that come from superiors to make
33 decisions that are perhaps within the interests of the business and profitability, but not within
34 ethical interests of other stakeholders such as employees play a role in affecting ethical HR
35 decision making. From another perspective, Weiss (1994) argued that HR managers often
36 straddle the fine line between the individual rights of employees and corporate interests.
37 Research by SHRM/ERC (2003) explored the possible reasons for compromising one's ethical
38 standards which included: following the boss's directives, meeting overly aggressive business
39 objectives, helping the organization survive, wanting to be a team player, saving jobs, advancing
40 the career interests of a boss, others do it, peer pressure, and competitive threats. Decisions
41 influenced by these factors would be considered ethical from the perspective of restricted
42 egoism, consistent with Friedman's (1971) doctrine that the only responsibility of businesses is
43 to increase profits.
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4 **Pressures from Career and Individual Maximization**
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6 The SHRM/ERC (2003) survey on ethical HR decision making found that 73 per cent of HR
7 manager respondents claimed they would report ethical misconduct occurring in their
8 organization. Whilst this implies a high rate of ethical monitoring, the survey also shed some
9 light on the instances where ethical misconduct goes unreported. Briefly, these instances include:
10 when HR managers believe that corrective action would not be taken (by others) and so there
11 was no point in reporting; when retaliation was perceived as being linked to potentially
12 disastrous effects on their career; when they did not trust the organization to protect them; and
13 when they were fearful that they would not be seen as a team player (SHRM/ERC 2003). An
14 Australian study of 35 whistleblowers found that 90 per cent of respondents reported that they
15 would fear losing their jobs or being demoted (Lennane 1996) if they reported unethical
16 practices. Lovell (2002) supported this argument in his suggestion that HR managers feared that
17 disclosure of ethical misconduct would be suppressed by senior managers and would impair their
18 future promotional opportunities. Therefore, HR managers would feel reluctant to report
19 unethical behavior, for the sake of their career.
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33 In Lovell's (2002) study it was found that HR managers had difficulty in raising ethical issues to
34 a formal level within their organizations, let alone revealing any of the incidents to an external
35 agency. Lovell (2002) proposed that managers were loyal to their organizations, colleagues and
36 superiors but were fearful of their own positions and therefore chose not to disclose unethical
37 behavior. He concluded that moral agency remains at best an aspiration and at worst an illusion
38 or fabrication of the mind as in situations of ethical importance. He found that there was
39 interplay between moral agency and the pragmatics at work. Pragmatism applied to sorting out
40 the ethical issues carrying the least angst, rather than any notion of doing the right thing. He
41 found that when one pursued a business case when making decisions, people did not often
42 recognize arguments based on moral principles.
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53 **Gender, Tenure and Ethics**
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55 Gender and ethics are perhaps the most confounding. Forte (2004) finds that women managers
56 are more principled (using moral reasoning). Serap and Tezmozmez (1999) find in their study of
57 Turkish managers that ethics scores differ significantly in terms of gender – female managers
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4 have higher scores. However, Weait (2001) suggests that women are more liberal/lax in their
5 ethical views than men. In 1996, Mason and Mudrack find evidence that women appeared to be
6 more ethical. Examining ethical behavior more finely, Kinicki and Kreitner (2005) cite research
7 findings suggesting that women might behave more ethically themselves, but would take less
8 responsibility for others' ethical behavior.
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15 Pennino (2002) comments that although research on the relationship of tenure of managers to
16 ethical behavior is contradictory (some report higher ethical behavior with longer tenure, other
17 report the opposite); she found (using moral reasoning) that more tenured managers
18 demonstrated lower principled reasoning than their less tenured counterparts. As the number of
19 years of tenure increased, principles reasoning declined. Zabid and Alsagoff (1993) indicate only
20 a slight variation among managers in terms of ethical values by virtue of job position, job
21 specialization, type of business activity, or size of business. Weait's (2001) findings suggest
22 private sector workers are less disapproving of unethical behavior than those in the public sector.
23 Most of the times, HR managers made decisions that were less to do with fairness and more to
24 do with practical goal achievement
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34 35 **The Individual Altruist Responsibility**

36 Ethical system of an individual consists of his /her ethical philosophy and ethical decision
37 ideology. The ethical decision ideology is concerned with how different individuals apply their
38 ethical philosophies in decision-making when faced with ethical dilemmas.
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44 Three studies stand out from the others in their findings that HR managers are intrinsically
45 ethical. The survey by SHRM/ERC (2003) found that advancing one's career interests rated last
46 in the range of pressures influencing HR managers to compromise the organization's ethical
47 standards. This finding appears to be at odds with our argument that HR managers tend to make
48 decisions that will benefit their own careers and self-interest as ethical egoists. However, we
49 question the extent to which such surveys prompt respondents to provide socially desirable
50 responses rather than describe what they actually think, believe or do (Phillips & Clancy 1972).
51 Wiley's (1998) study found that HR professionals are bound by an altruistic norm of service and
52 a code of ethics that directs them to honestly represent the welfare and interests of all parties
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4 including management, employees, the community and society. Finally, Danley et al (1996)
5 examined the ethical perceptions of 1078 human resource professionals, and found that the so
6 called ethical crisis in business is largely overstated. The authors reported that only one in ten
7 HR professionals felt the need to compromise their own personal principles in their business
8 decision making. Whilst comprising a small group of researchers, these findings which confirm
9 the normative expectations of the HR managers deserve further probing – particularly in the
10 development of an ethical code of practice.
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19 The framework for ethical behavior brings out the links between all the different factors – ethical
20 philosophy, ethical decision ideology, individual factors, organizational factors, and the other
21 factors affecting and influencing ethical decision making in the HR world.
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26 **Ethical Human Resource Management**

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28 Ethical contemplation and concern as established are critical issues on HRM agenda. The HRM
29 practitioners and academicians need to develop a professional ‘ethical sensitivity ‘and ‘ethical
30 reasoning’ (Winstanley and Woodall 2000a). This section discusses some guidelines and
31 interventions that could be used to exercise Ethical Human Resources Management in
32 organizations.
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39 One set of framework provided by research is procedural justice, a term that refers to people’s
40 perceptions of how fair decision-making processes and interactions are (Brockner 2002). A
41 central premise of procedural justice is that people must be treated in a consistent and equitable
42 manner. That manner has been operationalized in at least three ways: (a) granting voice: giving
43 those affected by a practice or outcome the opportunity to offer input (Folger 1977; Lind and
44 Tyler 1988); (b) providing justifiable explanations to those affected by a practice or outcome, as
45 well as information that the decisions and actions which brought about the practice or outcome
46 were fair and unbiased (Bies and Shapiro 1988; Brockner, et al. 1990); and (c) interpersonal
47 treatment that shows concern or compassion for those affected by a practice (Frost et al. 2000),
48 which is sometimes deemed interactional justice (Bies and Moag 1986). Research has shown that
49 when accorded procedural justice, employees are more willing to accept negative outcomes and
50 less likely to respond in a destructive manner (e.g. Greenberg 1990, 1993; Sheppard, Lewicki,
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4 and Minton 1992; Tyler 1999). Procedural justice would appear to be an important ethical
5 standard for guiding the practice for ethically challenging tasks in HRM, such as firing someone,
6 delivering negative feedback, and denying bonuses—tasks in which an HR manager must cause
7 pain or discomfort to another person in the name of a greater good (Molinsky and Margolis
8 2005). However, treating the recipient well is only one of the ethical challenges elicited by these
9 tasks.

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17 HR managers face crucial internal ethical challenges and there is a need to recognize the realistic
18 psychological challenges confronting the practitioners. The ‘will’ and ‘skill’ of HR managers is
19 very important to their capacity to achieve moral outcomes and processes. The overpowering
20 concoction of emotions experienced by those who deny the opportunity or impose the cost can
21 drive the most conscientious HR practitioner either to dodge the task altogether or to do it in a
22 manner that reduces his or her own anxiety (Molinsky and Margolis 2005).

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30 Sourcing through the literature, one of the most user friendly frameworks that could be imbibed
31 is that of Agnes Heller. She seeks to provide a framework that allows for diversity and
32 pluralism, recognizes the socially embedded nature of morality and still affords a basis for
33 critique. The guidelines include an orientative principle of care, a constitutive moral principle
34 (the means–ends formula), a maxim of justice, norms of giving and receiving, moral maxims,
35 ultimate values, and a selection of virtues and vices, and values. The framework could act as a
36 moral compass to the HR managers towards Ethical Human Resources Management. The table
37 provides an insight to the adaptation of Heller’s norms and maxims as adapted for the HR
38 Managers. The norms, principles, and maxims are primarily adapted from, A Philosophy of
39 Morals (1990), Chapter 2

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50 Table 1. Sample of Heller’s norms and maxims adapted for the HR manager’s context

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52 **The Universal Orientate Principle of Care in Organizations**

- 53
54 1. Have a proper regard for employees’ vulnerability.
55 (a) Do not offend employees in their person and in anything they hold dear.
56 (b) Be civil and urbane, and learn to appropriately express your feelings towards employees.
57 (c) Help employees to save face.
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6 2. Have a proper regard for employees' autonomy.

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8 (a) Do not violate an employee's body.

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10 (b) Do not violate an employee's soul.

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12 (c) Do not manipulate employees.

13
14 (d) Do not keep employees in tutelage.

15
16 (e) Help employees achieve greater autonomy.

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19 3. Have a proper regard for employees' morality.

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21 (a) If your opinion holds weight in the deliberations of employees you must warn them every
22 time they embark on a wrong, bad, criminal, or evil course of action. Moreover every time the
23 application of norms is flawed, you should stand up to protect the cause of justice.

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26 (b) Pay attention to the moral merit of employees.

27
28 (c) Learn how and when to pass moral judgments on employees.

29
30 (d) Learn when to forget and when to remember.

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33 4. Have a proper regard for employees' suffering.

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35 (a) A decent manager notices the suffering of others.

36
37 (b) A decent manager does his or her best to alleviate another person's sufferings.

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41 5. Have a proper regard for the value of each employee

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43 (a) Give credit to each employee for his or her contributions and opinions.

44
45 (b) Foster each employee's sense of self-worth and esteem.

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48 **The 'Maxim of Justice'**

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50 Consistently and continuously apply the same norms and values to each and every employee
51 member of the (organizational, divisional, departmental, occupational, professional, trade, or
52 other) cluster to which the rules and norms apply.

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54
55 ***Moral Maxims***

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57 *The categorical and orientative universal maxim*—never treat an employee as a mere means but
58 also as an end in himself or herself.
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4 1. *Categorical* (prohibitive): never commit acts, follow norms and values, join/remain in
5 organizations that by definition or in principle use employees as mere means.
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8 2. *Orientative*: never treat an employee as a mere means but also as an end in himself or herself.
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10 ***First-order Maxims***

11 *Prohibitive Maxims*

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13 1. Do not choose maxims (or norms) which cannot be made public.
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15 2. Do not choose values (or norms) the observance of which involves in principle the use of
16 employees as mere means.
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18 3. Do not choose moral norms (binding norms) the observance of which is not an end-in-itself.
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20 *Imperative Maxims*

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22 1. Give equal recognition to all employees as free and rational beings.
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24 2. Recognize all human needs except those the satisfaction of which in principle involves the use
25 of employees as mere means.
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27 3. Respect (give esteem to, admire) employees only according to their (moral) merits and virtues.
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32 Agnes Heller provides an approach that addresses important debates in moral philosophy and is
33 of potential use to HR managers who want to be decent and who wish to defend or advocate
34 ethical decision-making. Heller provides an approach that is committed to taking into account the
35 situation and context that people face in contemporary societies. It is a framework that allows for
36 diversity and critique, while also recognizing the embedded nature of morality.
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43 **Conclusions**

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45 HR function is the conscience of the organization. HR managers operate within social, structural,
46 political, and economic limitations and are unable to make entirely free ethical choices. In
47 today's high-pressured environment, HR must make it clear for employees that ethics come
48 before deadlines or bottom lines. Many believe that HR plays a tangential role in the ethics
49 debate, but that simply isn't true. Human Resources can help design programs, advise on strategy
50 and consult on investigations, as well as play an ongoing role in educating and training workers
51 about ethics. The basic values of the company must be visible. Human Resources insures they
52 are visible and communicated during the selection process, employee interview, orientation
53 sessions and performance reviews to create a culture that emphasizes ethics.
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The paper discusses insights garnered from a wide range of disciplines and debates, for example, stakeholder theory, utilitarian philosophies, Aristotelian concepts of virtue and capabilities, human rights and also the determinants and its affect on Ethics in HRM. Ethical HRM is a complex and multifaceted matters in which there are no easy solutions and few evidently correct answers. There is substantial complexity of the ethical choices that arise with respect to HRM, the difficulty of determining the morally best HRM strategies. Cultivating ethical sensitivity and ethical reasoning amongst HR managers would go a long way to achieve Ethical practices in HRM. Procedural justice and Heller’s framework could be used as moral compass to the HR managers towards Ethical Human Resources Management. Summarizing, achieving Ethical HRM is not a destination, it is a continuous journey
It’s an elusive moving target.

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