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Social Responsibility (Extraorganizational Ethics)

Mahrokh Lotfollahi Haghi and Mehrabn Hadi Peikani
Islamic Azad University, Khoorasgan Branch, Khoorasgan, Iran

Abstract: The present study initially represents a definition for social responsibility, performance and success of an organization and ethics along with professional ethics in an organization. Later on, Islamic approach is discussed and the quintet ethical virtues of Socrates are introduced. The study then analyzes ethical issues in management and the balance between socioeconomic performance and social responsibility and ethical theories is investigated. Social responsibility and its universal standards are later dealt with and finally, prominent approaches on social responsibility and environmental (extraorganizational) factors influencing ethical management paradigms are scrutinized together with their positive effects on organizational responsibility and performance.

Key words: Social responsibility, extraorganizational ethics, paradigms, environmental factors, performance

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has reached a much broader sense compared to what it used to have. Social responsibility in its general sense includes the voluntary activities conducted by owners of capital and businesses as useful and efficient members of the society.

In strategic management texts, social responsibilities in its general and specific senses have turned into inseparable parts of compiling and executing strategies. Experts in the field are for or against social responsibility. Those in favor of market economy like Milton and Freedman disagree with social responsibility and find it in contrast with mechanisms of open economy. According to Freedman, reducing prices in order to control inflation, employment to hinder unemployment and any expenditure to reduce environmental pollution is wasting money of shareholders. He believes that social responsibility is basically destructive. For him the only social responsibility a corporation has is to use resources of a society and participate in activities that end in revenue and observe the rules of the game without any deception or cheat. On the other hand, Karl as a supporter of social responsibility believes that managers in a business entity have four economic, legal, ethical and sacrificial responsibilities. Karl prioritizes these responsibilities and presumes that ethical and sacrificial responsibilities now could turn into legal and ethical responsibilities of the future. Both Karl and Freedman state that their theories are based on considering social responsibilities in the revenue of the corporation. Freedman believes that socially responsible activities affect efficiency in a corporation.

Definitions: The term social responsibility has various meanings for experts. Certo and Graff define it as the commitment and obligation of the manager to take measures that promote interests and welfare in an entity. Kent Hutton and Mary Hutton define social responsibility from the point of view of stakeholders and state that social responsibility of entities are discussed when their management is interrupted. An entity ignoring the external beneficiaries induce unpleasant outcomes for the consumers of the products produced by the entity and therefore, the borders is the society breaks and social responsibility becomes a responsibility for a prospective manager.

These two definitions combined will give a novel definition of social responsibility of business entities and their managers: social responsibility of a business entity and its managers is the obligation to be responsible and fulfil the expectations of the external beneficiaries including customers, suppliers, distributors, environmentalists, residents in the site and around the site of manufacturing and service activities and those protecting the rights of beneficiaries like proprietors, staff or the stockholders.

Griffin and Barney define social responsibility as a set of responsibilities and commitments an organization has toward protecting and contributing the society within which it is functioning.

Drek French and Hether Saurd, in their book on social responsibility, stated that social responsibility is the responsibility of private organizations and they have to protect their staff against negative effects on their social lives. These responsibilities generally cover a variety of tasks ranging from not polluting the

Corresponding Author: Mahrokh Lotfollahi Haghi, Islamic Azad University, Khoorasgan Branch, Khoorasgan, Iran

environment, not discriminating in employments, not involving in unethical activities and informing the users on the quality of the products. All these include responsibilities ensuring positive participation in the lives of people in the community.

In conclusion, social responsibility comes from the huge roles organizations play in the social system and therefore their activities ought to safeguard the society from harms and in case of any harm attempt to fix it. To put it more simply, organizations must act as a small part of the larger system for the small subsidiary parts form the large holistic system.

It should be noted that there are differences between management ethics, social responding and commitment and social responsibility. Both terms management ethics and social responsibility refer to the values, norms and ethical principles of the society from the managers' side; yet, social responsibility deals with affairs of the organization in macro level and ethics entail individual relationships between managers and their employees.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TOWARD SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Some of the discussions about maximizing benefits of business entities and full attention toward benefits of stockholders damage public and social interests. Besides, for some, social responsibility is considered as a constraint for efficiency and benefit of the organization and its managers. Therefore, depending on the ideas from different experts, approaches toward social responsibilities of business entities and their managers may vary greatly.

There spectrum of the ideas on the limits of social responsibility of a business entity is an expanded one. On one end, classics believe that no limitations should be set for the entity. For them, the invisible hand of the market forces an entity to produce a product or represent a service needed by the society. The other end of the spectrum is possessed by those who believe the life of the organization is closely related to the life of the society and its incidents. For them, the entity acquires its input from the society and pours the output into the society as well. Thus, social responsibility of a business entity is expansive and they should do their best and participate in tackling social problems. Among these two approaches, Peter Dracker stands as the top moderate expert in the field. According to him, any organization accomplishing what he had to accomplish could not do other activities. For Dracker, the first side of social responsibility of an entity is its high level of responsibility in accomplishing its expectations. The second aspect refers to merit and legibility. He believes that accepting the responsibilities beyond ability is the same irresponsibility for it increases the level of expectations and at the end, turns down the ones having those expectations.

For Dracker, the most important condition for social responsibility is the condition of legitimacy and authority. Responsibility without authority is senseless; therefore, the one claiming responsibility is indeed claiming authority. In fact, authority brings responsibility. He ironically believes that dictatorships and totalitarian systems are the only systems in which authority is in its full form without any responsibility against things or people. Thus, according to Drackcer, when a business entity is asked to tackle a problem in the society, it should carefully analyze and decide if the authority hidden in the responsibility is legitimate. In case the authority is not legitimate, admitting the responsibility of problem solving is mere occupation of the responsibility. Needless to say that even if the organization or a business entity has the authority to do something, the origin of the authority should be investigated and ensured. In his view, social responsibility of business entities are:

- Comprehensive attention to the original responsibility of the entity
- Responsibility toward products and services
- Responsibility toward procedures
- Ethical responsibility

Islamic perspective: When virtues dominate an organization, managers acquire the ability to see the things they could not see. The verse 18 of the Sura Ash-Shuraa and several traditions from Imam Ali (RA) including "the ones who inquire consultancy from the wise" could prove this delicate point. Living in the age of information boom, necessitates the expansion of the potentials of the employees in their function and lets them make decisions that are directly related to efficiency in the organization.

THEORIES OF ETHICS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

As it was already said, social responsibilities are sometimes called extraorganizational ethics and therefore, the concept of social responsibility is derived from theories of ethics. In order to clarify a bit on this, theories of ethics are briefly discussed here. Hesmer (2003) represents one of the most comprehensive categorizations of theories of ethics:

- The eternal law: AKA the golden rule is briefly stated as conducting a behavior which you expect to be conducted against you
- Utilitarianism or the outcome oriented theory is based on a theory developed by the British Scholar Jeremy Bentham and his individual experiences and beliefs. In his point of view, ethicality of a behavior is assessed by its acceptability. In other words, when the benefits of a deed is more than its harms to a society, it is considered as an ethical behavior
- Deontology or consequentialism is in contrast to the utilitarianism point of view. According to Emanuel Kant, the act is not dependent on the consequence but on the intention of the doer of the action
- Distributive justice: this theory was developed by John Rowels and states that if a behavior increases the cooperation among the individuals in a society, it could be called as a moral deed and the deed conducted against this goal is considered unjust, indecent and therefore unethical. In this view, social cooperation provides the ground for social and economic benefit and degrades individual attempts to a very low level or almost nothing
- Individual freedom: according to the theories developed by Robert Nozick freedom is the basic need of any society. Thus, any deed violating individual freedoms is unethical even if it brings justice and benefit for many people

In strategic management textbooks, social responsibility is stated in a general sense and moral principles are stated in a specific way as indispensable parts of compiling the strategy and executing them.

In the context of organization and management, social responsibility is part of professional ethics and are referred to as extraorganizational ethics. Many of the deeds and behaviors conducted by managers and their employees are influenced by their ethical values and their roots are in ethics. Lack of attention to professional ethics in management could induce huge problems for the organization. Moreover, increasing expectations from organizations is rooted in the awareness of communities about environment, women's rights, children, minority groups, the handicapped, equal employment and human resource layoffs. Organization's negligence to these rights and disregarding ethical principles in their interactions with external benefactors cause major problems for the organizations and cast doubt over their legitimacy and actions. Thus, benefit and success of the organization is affected. Poor professional ethics affect people's approach toward their job, organization and managers and eventually weakens individual, group and organizational performance.

It should however be noted that there are major differences between management ethics, communal responsibility and social commitment and social responsibility. Anderson believes that both management ethics and social responsibility refer to the values, norms and ethical values of a society and satisfying the expectations of the organizations by their managers. Nevertheless, social responsibility deals with the affairs in a macro level and ethics refer to interpersonal relationships between managers and their employees.

Stephen Robins on the other hand discusses the concept of social responsibility and its relationship with communal responsibility and social commitment and states that if the concept of social responsibility is compared to those concepts, a better understanding could be reached. Social responsibility is in the middle of the evolution of social participation.

Social commitment→social responsibility→communal responsibility

Karl believes that neglecting social responsibilities increases state interventions and decrease efficiency accordingly. Any corporation observing social and moral responsibilities could certainly reach its desired profit (Hunger and Willen, 2002). In a study titled "social responsibility pyramid of the organization" Carol summarizes the social responsibility to be the result of four indices:

- Economic needs
- Observing public rules and regulations
- Observing business ethics
- Humanitarian responsibilities

In the first index, organizations have to satisfy economic needs of a society, provide it with the goods and services needed and let people of different groups benefit the professional careers. According to the second index, the organization's responsibility is to pay enough attention to health and safety of his employees and consumers. The environment should not be polluted and exclusion should be avoided. Inter-organization interactions are reproached and any form of discrimination whether ethnic or gender discrimination should not be conducted. The third index is the responsibility of the organization toward ethics of business. In this realm, principles like honesty, fairness and respect are regarded. The final index refers to humanitarian responsibilities. Karol puts the final index in other words and believes that being a good citizen necessitates participation of an organization in activities that could decrease problems in a society and improve quality of life.

ETHICS AND BUSINESS ETHICS IN ORGANIZATION

Ethics are closely related to the values and are considered as tools for realizing values into actions. Ethics is defined as observing moral principles and values governing an individual or a group's behavior and the concept of right or wrong (Daft, 1995). Most of the moral standards and rules in a culture may differ from the ones in other cultures or even the same culture in other eras (Hesmer, 2003). Ethics covers a wide range of concepts including honesty, truthfulness, keeping the promise, justice, fairness, citizenship virtues and social services. In its literary sense, ethics refers to recognizing right from wrong; therefore, philosophers have always discussed the issue as part of the philosophy itself. On the other hand, scholars like Hike consider ethics to be the base of civilizations. In other words, ethical relativism makes an action that is morally right in a culture to be wrong in another one and therefore, the ambiguity about values increases.

Business ethics is also defined as recognizing right from wrong in a business context, doing the right one and avoiding the wrong deed. People always believed that corporations use national resources for their own benefit; therefore, they are indebted to the state and have to try to improve social conditions. Business ethics as a branch of the science of management and came to an official existence after social responsibility movements of the 1960s. In this decade, awareness movements about social responsibility increased people's expectations from organizations for people had concluded that organizations must utilize their vast resources and social powers to eliminate social problems like poverty, violence, pollution, equality, hygiene and education (Namara, 1999).

Supporters of business ethics are divided into two major categories: scholars like Chapel believe that observing business ethics increases the value for the stockholders and could be a tool for maximizing the profit (Utilitarian ethics). On the other hand, thinkers like Bernard (1989), Quinn and Jones and Milton Smith had a non-utilitarian approach and believed that an organization must consider business ethics beyond financial considerations (Poesche, 2002).

Modern theories like agency theory, stakeholders, corporate governance and institutionalization emphasize on ethics as well (Seresht, 1998). Although, the history of observing ethical rules goes back to the year 1923 and the founder of the Herman Miller and D.J. De Pree Furniture Company, ethics have also been mentioned in management books like the Functions of the Executive by Bernard (1989) and Max Weber (Schnider and Barsoux, 1959). Bernard believed that an organization could never function without the ethical element for, without it, the organization loses its authority and could not last for a long time (Bernard, 1989).

ENVIRONMENTAL (EXTRAORGANIZATIONAL) FACTORS AFFECTING ETHICAL MANAGEMENT PARADIGM

These factors cover all the ones outside the borders of an organization and affect all or parts of the organization potentially. The external environment generally includes public sector, social, economic and cultural conditions and financial resources. These sectors' influence is gradual or holistic and works through modifying ethical values. For instance, in case the government's policy is to promote welfare in the society and preserving human dignity, this forms an ethical management; however, if the policies are materialistic and neglect spiritual matters, ethical values of the society will be violated. The factors affecting organizational behavior could be represented in Fig. 1 (Soltani, 2012).

THE QUINTET MORAL VIRTUES FOR SOCRATES

Socrates believed that humans have no other choice but acquiring salvation and this could not happen unless they collaborate. Humans could reach salvation through five virtues:

- We humans reach knowledge through wisdom
- We could establish a rational relation between self and soul and call it chastity through knowledge
- We could establish a rational relationship between self and society and call it justice through chastity
- We could become pious through this justice
- We could reach courage through piety

Are not working and trying to create strategic advantages the necessary ingredients of promoting moral principles and spiritual culture in global level? Why unethical and illegal behaviors are formed in relationships?:

- Unethical and illegal behaviors are sometimes not known to the employees
- Inappropriate opportunities exist and employees use them to conduct illegal actions and unethical deeds
- Pressure from influential people and groups exist inside and outside the organization
- Regulations, rules, policies and strategies are ambiguous and interpreted individually

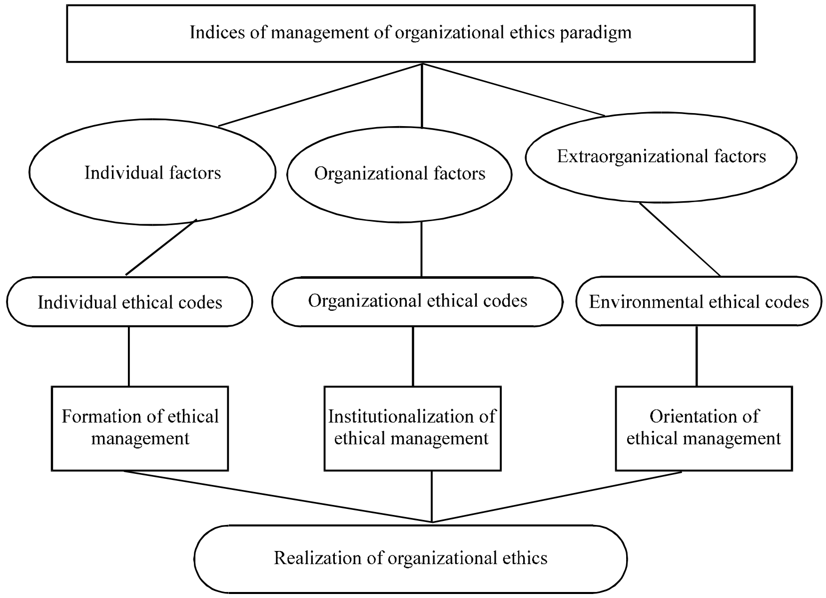

Fig. 1: Factors affecting organizational behavior

Ethics is distinguishing between right and wrong and then doing the right and avoiding the wrong. Distinguishing right from wrong is not always very easy. Scholars in the field of ethics claim that moral principles could represent a single proper solution; however, other believe that the solution may vary according to the situation and the only one who could make the distinction is the individual himself.

Analyzing ethical issues in management and the balance between economic and social performance:

- Economic analysis whose base is maximizing the income and minimizing the costs. (ethics of management and economy)
- Legal analysis whose base is observing law as the representation of judgment. (regulations and ethics of management)
- Applying management techniques
- Philosophical analysis whose base is the rational procedure
- Techniques of dealing with cultural, social and political issues

Economy and management ethics: Micro-economics is a logical arithmetic technique for the market and price of products considering maximum profit. This profit oriented nature ignores everything including environment, staff safety, customer interests and any other ethical point.

Performance and success in an organization: In the present study, parameters like profitability, survival, competitive potential and the level of reaching goals are considered to be the indices of success and cover all the factors affecting performance indirectly such as customer satisfaction, quality improvement, increased cooperation, conflict settlement and cost reduction.

An organization has to have a proper performance if it wants success. Parameters like profitability, survival, reaching goals and competitive potentials could be considered as proper performance. Scholars like Higgins and Vincsze (1993) take organizational performance and organizational success equal. They believe that in general, organizational performance is the outcome for overall organizational behavior. Since, management and organization contexts take social responsibility as a part of business ethics and refer to it as Extraorganizational ethics, elaboration on the literature available on the subject must begin with the concept of ethics and business ethics and then the history of social responsibility should be investigated.

International standard of social responsibility (ISO 26000): The history of compiling an international standard for social responsibility goes back to the Earth Summit in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. In this conference, the relationship between social responsibility and sustainability of organizations was discussed and then were deeply investigated in the world summit on sustainable development in South Africa in 2002.

In April 2001, ISO asked the policy making policy committee of COPOLCO to evaluate the possibility for compiling an international standard for social responsibility and named it the integrated social responsibility.

This committee was founded in May 2001 and concluded that ISO is the best organization from the point of view of customers to manage the subject of social responsibility. In the early 2003, ISO formed a strategic advisor group on social responsibility. This group conducted an excruciating work for 18 months and published a comprehensive report covering measures and innovations of various countries about social responsibility and the role ISO plays in it. This strategic advising group decided that ISO must have the final say on compiling social responsibility standard based on recommendations they received. Thus, the International Conference on Social Responsibility was held by ISO hosted by Swedish Standard Institute on June 21 and 22, 2004 in Stockholm. The suggestions received along with feedbacks and reports of the conference made the board of the directors of ISO form a work group to prepare a draft for an international standard for social responsibility under guidance of ISO. This group was directed by standard institutes of Brazil and Sweden.

Positive effects of social responsibility on an organization's performance and success: Although, governance of business ethics on organization is totally beneficial from various perspectives including improved relationships, atmosphere of understanding and lack of conflicts together with increased commitment and responsibility in employees resulting in reduced control costs, social responsibility, on the other hand, brings success to the organization and increases legitimacy of the organization, ethical obligations to the stakeholders, income, profit, competitive advantage etc. here are some of the positive effects discussed briefly.

Ethical Obligation to the stakeholders: Not only do stockholders benefit from an organization's activities, but also, other groups are also affected and have legitimate interests in its activities. These groups could be the customers, providers, government and society. According to Lester Taro and Ivan and Freeman, positive response to obligations of social ethics increases profit and added value in the long run (Seresht, 1998).

Increased legitimacy of the organization and its activities: Globalization and expanded access to information networks have increased the expectation from an organization to become more concerned about environment, public interests, minority rights etc. Moreover, this expanded network monitors all the activities in an organization and could easily destroy its reputation through NGOs and other associations in a blink of an eye. Therefore, organizations have to take a variety of measures to gain public trust via demonstrating an ethical face for the organization. It should be noted that the bigger an organization is, the more sensitive people and society will be toward their activities. Unethical behavior incenses business behavior and brings failure to the organization (Buckley *et al*., 2001).

Appeals of social responsibility of organizations for stakeholders:

- Governments are interested in social responsibility because it reduces their traditional duties for social security and support and the increase4 in an organization's acceptability brings social and local security. The more the wealth of the organization, the more tax will be paid to the government
- It appeals for the citizens for beside all environmental pollution and sociocultural changes, the presence of an organization could bring better services in the form of their attention to the community. In other words, the organization pays for the environment it is based in
- It appeals for the employees for it promotes their level of civilization in a sense and brings benefit for them as citizens of a society both materialistically and spiritually
- It appeals for the stockholders more than others for their roles as strangers become responsible and respectable citizens and this makes a safer place for making profit. This place inside society is so vital that lack of it confronts the organization with collapse
- It appeals for the environment for as a sacred saint, governments and citizens pay increasing attention to
- For the transnational and international societies for its lack would eliminate the global contract as an educational network participated by major agencies in the United Nations collaborating with governmental, non-governmental and business organizations along with trade unions

INCREASED INCOME, PROFITABILITY AND IMPROVED COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Considering all stakeholder groups and individuals increases the profit in the long run for it motivates the human resources, social good will and interpersonal trust in the society along with decreasing the punishments. David (2003) believes that organizations are becoming stronger in their beliefs in the fact that promoting moral principles and strengthening spiritual culture creates strategic advantages for them. Kei and Popkin assume that analyzing failures of corporations and their disasters demonstrates that considering social ethics and sensations will finally increase profitability through better decisions and strategies. Besides, a report published by the government of Australia in 2005 states that economic growth of the country was on average 3.6% from the year 1998-2005 which is much higher than other developed countries like the US, the UK, Germany, Japan etc. according to this report, the reason for this growth is the positive attitude toward change and well educated and well behaved human resources. According to a report in Fortune, 63% of top executives in high level corporations believe that ethics intensify the positive image and reputation of their organization and creates an excellent source for competitive advantages (Buckley *et al*., 2001). Furthermore Sweenie revealed that 90% of Australians are interested in making purchases from companies with ethical behavior. This study demonstrated that the more the trust between members of an organization is, the less the need will be for direct control.

Reduction of costs induced by control: Promotion of self-control in an organization is one of the major mechanisms of control is a discussion historically based on trust, ethics and individual values. Self-control reduces the costs induced by direct control methods and improves profitability. This requires all employees to be fully committed to the team and its members along with responsibility of all members and presence of respect and trust among them.

Utilizing the benefits of pluralism: Experts predict thathuman resources will become incredibly varied in the near future and the corporations that could understand the needs of these varied individuals and utilize them in a positive way will be successful. Executives will be required to gain the ability to manage individuals from different genders, religions, ages, race, ethnic groups and nationalities. Being just and morale in interactions with these people in work place, facilitates their management and provides the organization with the benefits of a pluralistic work force. A study conducted by Wright on the relationship between pluralism and organizational performance revealed that there is a significant relationship between increased plurality in the work place and financial performance of the organization. Buckly *et al*. (2001) believes that the plurality fitting moral plans and ethical cultures bring credit and reputation for the corporation and improve their performance.

Improving relationships, improving understanding atmosphere and settling conflicts: One of the outcomes of improved business ethics in an organization is better relationships. This in return increases understanding in the organization and reduces the conflicts in it. This enhances team work as a result. The most important effect of moral principles in an organization may be the behavior from human resources. Studies by Trovito and Young Blood on moral decisions are directly affected by selecting and hiring ethical individuals. They showed that rewards and punishments in their normal sense could not have any influence on observing moral rules (Lawson, 2002). Bernard's attention to ethics comes from the role it plays in facilitating cooperation and reducing conflicts together with acting responsibly in the work place.

Increased commitment and responsibility of employees: As it was already said, ethics affects human behavior greatly. The basic requirement for a decent performance are commitment and responsibility in employees. Desler (1998) believes that if the employees acknowledge that the behavior toward them is just and fair, they will have more tendency to take a bigger work load. Donaldson and Davis believe that management of ethical values in work place gives legitimacy to the managerial measures and improves organizational culture. Trust in the relationship between individuals and groups is also increased through ethical values and finally following the standards, quality of products improves and profitability increases. Considering the roles humans play in modern organizations, their judgment about their organization and the field in which it operates has a great influence on their efficiency and as a result efficiency of their organization. Expecting creativity from those who believe in their indecency could not be of any logic.

CONCLUSION

Although, the main goal of organizations is to increase efficiency and profitability, the age of information and globalization necessitates meeting social expectations and ethical rules en route to success. These rules and expectations should be met in the most pleasant way and must be combined with economic goals of the organizations to make reaching higher goals possible. Observing business ethics rules and social responsibility through enhancing legitimacy of actions of the organization and utilizing advantages of plurality greatly influence profitability and create a competitive advantage. Executive's commitment to ethical principles, their attention to legitimacy of activities of the organization from employees' point of view, observing universal moral principles, compiling organization's ethical charter, taking actions based on sensations and interests of the society and training executives to take moral perspective are among major measures that could be taken in the field.

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