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# UNPACKING ETHICAL CONFLICT IN HR DECISION- MAKING: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING HR ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*This study explores the diverse ethical challenges that influence HR decision-making, aiming to provide insights into the factors affecting HR managers' decisions, define their ethical responsibilities across organizational contexts, and identify strategies they use to navigate dilemmas while balancing employee well-being and organizational goals. Despite the crucial role HR departments play, there is a noticeable gap in research on Filipino HR practices, particularly in understanding the ethical dilemmas HR managers face across various industries in the Philippines. Using a grounded theory approach, the study employed semi-structured interviews with eight HR managers – each with at least two years of experience – selected from various retail companies in General Santos City. The data collected were transcribed, reviewed by an expert for accuracy, and analysed using NVivo software through coding and categorization to identify emerging themes and patterns. The results highlight the ethical dilemmas HR managers encounter, the strategies they employ, and the responsibility they bear in shaping organizational ethics. The findings culminate in the development of a substantive theory – Ethical Balancing in HR Practice – which explains how HR managers navigate the complexities of ethical decision-making through a continuous negotiation between organizational demands and employee well-being, positioning them as both enforcers of policies and caretakers of ethical standards. The study identifies three key strategies HR practitioners use: engagement and coordination, integrity-driven approaches, and people-centered practices – each shaped by institutional support and relational dynamics, ultimately influencing organizational trust, employee morale, and the effectiveness of ethical governance in HR practice.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ethical dilemma, Ethical Balancing in HR Practice, Grounded Theory Approach, HR Managers.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the inherent tensions that modern organizations encounter between the objectives of profit maximization and social responsibility, ethics has gained importance in recent years (Vickers 2005 cited in Van Gramberg & Menzies, 2006). Ethics can be characterized as a set of moral standards or values that people or society hold dear and that guide them in determining what is right and wrong as well as good and bad. According to Petrick and Quinn (1997), ethics is the study of moral consciousness, judgment, character, and conduct on both an individual and a societal level. They contend that ethics necessitates pausing to think critically about these guiding concepts, choices, and issues. Ethics can also be described as a set of standards of behaviour which must be applied to a particular profession (Francis 2000 cited in Van Gramberg & Menzies, 2006).

The role of human resources in fostering a moral workplace culture and ethical awareness is growing in importance within organizations. Brewster et al. (2003, cited in Erasmus & Wordsworth, 2006) argues that this is not unexpected given that people are usually at the center of ethical dilemmas in favor of HR's contribution to fostering an ethical environment. As a result, they should be viewed as collaborators in fostering an ethical culture inside an organization, Buckley et al. (2001, cited in Erasmus & Wordsworth, 2006) states that moral environments are sustained by means of efficient recruitment, selection, and retention techniques. Considering the aforementioned mechanisms are under the responsibility of the HR function and include things like employee handbooks, merit compensation, performance assessments, disciplinary processes, and reward systems, the HR roles and responsibilities are crucial in this regard.

The exploration of ethical dilemmas in human resource decision-making necessitates an in-depth examination of the multifaceted roles and responsibilities of HR managers. This research delves into the intricate interplay between various variables, including ethical considerations, decision-making processes, and the overarching responsibilities inherent in HR management. By scrutinizing the ethical dimensions of HR practices, this study aims to uncover the complexities faced by HR managers when navigating issues such as hiring, promotion, termination, and organizational culture, thereby shedding light on the intricate balance between ethical principles and operational imperatives within the realm of human resources.

According to Philippine Management Review,

Philippines' growing prominence in the global market demands a strong emphasis on ethical HR practices. In a dynamic city like General Santos City (GenSan), ethical HR is crucial to attract and retain top talent, a key factor for local businesses to thrive (PSA, 2023). Unethical practices can damage a company's reputation in GenSan's close-knit community, hindering its ability to compete. With a diverse workforce and evolving legal landscape, HR professionals in GenSan must navigate ethical dilemmas to ensure compliance and cultural sensitivity. Ethical HR practices are essential for fostering a positive work environment that fuels GenSan's economic and social growth.

### 1.1. Research Objectives

**Based on the background of the research problem, the objective of this research is to provide insight on the following views:**

1. To determine the factors affecting the decision-making processes of HR Managers.
2. To define specific responsibilities assigned to HR managers and explore the intersection of these responsibilities with ethical considerations in various organizational context
3. To identify strategies HR managers, employ to navigate ethical dilemmas arising from their core responsibilities, considering the potential impact on both employee well-being and organizational objectives.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The role of human resource management (HRM) and its capacity to adapt to demands from the competition have been extensively covered in literature (Foote, 2001). HR managers deal with a variety of ethical dilemmas at work, such as delicate matters that come up during hiring, recruiting, training, salary, promotions, and job assignment, job classification, guidance, monitoring for substance misuse, rehabilitation, discipline, benefits, layoffs or terminations, or retirement (Van Gramberg & Menzies, 2006).

Wiley (1998) observed the frequency and seriousness of misconduct in HR functional areas. What she discovered is that the most common settings for ethical wrongdoing in the workplace are those related to hiring, selection, and staff punishment, followed by remuneration and health, safety, and security. Employment negotiations and labor disputes are two previous important areas of ethical decision-making

Ekuma et al. (2015) discussed the various,

dynamic types of ethics issues that are continually coming up everywhere, and where HR should be strongly and aggressively represented. The researchers believed that there was a gap in the development of suitable frameworks to address this ethical HR dilemma, and their work fills that gap.

Treviño et al. (2000) assert that ethical leaders influence their followers by fostering a moral climate, establishing clear ethical standards, and promoting open communication. In the HR context, this leadership style helps guide employees to align with organizational values and ethical guidelines, creating an environment where ethical practices are prioritized. Additionally, ethical leadership is crucial in decision-making, ensuring that fairness and transparency are at the core of HR activities (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed Grounded Theory Approach to explore various roles and responsibilities that contribute to ethical dilemmas in human resource decision-making. Glaser and Strauss (1967) define grounded theory as a systematic methodology in social science research that involves constructing theories through methodical gathering and analysis of data. Unlike other research methodologies that start with a hypothesis, grounded theory is inductive, meaning it allows the theory to emerge from the data itself.

#### 3.2. Theoretical Framework

Ethical decision-making in human resource management is primarily governed by a number of basic ethical ideas. Jeremy Bentham proposed utilitarianism, which holds that the best decision is one that optimizes total happiness or well-being. In human resources, this frequently means balancing organizational goals with employee welfare, with the goal of doing the best for the largest number of people (Bentham, 1789). Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics emphasizes commitment to duties and principles, arguing that HR decisions should be guided by norms and obligations regardless of the consequences (Kant, 1785). Furthermore, Virtue Ethics, based on Aristotle's philosophy, emphasizes the relevance of the decision-maker's character, arguing for qualities like integrity, honesty, and empathy in HR decision-making (Aristotle, 350 BCE).

HR managers frequently encounter ethical dilemmas such as confidentiality against transparency and fairness versus favoritism. These

issues are important for understanding how HR professionals negotiate complicated ethical landscapes, as they must balance organizational interests with individual rights and ethical standards (DeGeorge, 2010; Greenberg, 1990). HR managers serve as strategic partners integrating HR practices with organizational goals (Ulrich, 1997), change agents supporting organizational adaptability (Kotter, 1996), and employee advocates ensuring fair treatment of employees (Pfeffer, 1998). These professions naturally require navigating and resolving ethical difficulties, emphasizing the importance of a thorough understanding of ethical concepts and practical decision-making issues.

#### 3.3. Participants of the Study

The participants of this study are 8 HR managers with at least 2 years' experience selected from various retail companies in General Santos City. These HR managers were chosen based on their occupation and expertise in human resource management, ensuring a diverse representation of professionals with commonality in profession. By gathering insights from these HR managers, the study aimed to explore and understand the roles, responsibilities, and ethical dilemmas encountered in human resource decision-making within the retail sector of General Santos City.

The use of eight participants in qualitative research can be effectively supported by several existing studies that emphasize depth over breadth in data collection. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) recommend a sample size of six to ten participants for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), arguing that this range enables a detailed and idiographic exploration of lived experiences. Eatough and Smith (2006) followed this guidance in their study on emotional experiences, employing eight participants to produce rich, in-depth narratives. Similarly, Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) emphasize that smaller samples in IPA – often between three and ten – are not only acceptable but preferred for facilitating rigorous and meaningful analysis. These studies demonstrate that a sample of eight participants is well within the accepted range for qualitative research, particularly when the aim is to provide a deep understanding of individual perspectives.

#### 3.4. Data Gathering

The researchers engaged key informants via semi-structured interviews. Particularly semi-structured interviews are frequently employed since it is anticipated that the subject will be more willing to

discuss his experiences and opinions than in a standardized interview or through a questionnaire (Flick 2009). Key informants were envisioned as Human Resources (HR) managers. These HR managers were identified as influential stakeholders in shaping organizational policies and practices related to ethical decision-making within HR departments. Moreover, they were expected to demonstrate willingness and capability to engage in meaningful discussions regarding the ethical dilemmas in human resource decision making.

The researchers began collecting data from December 2024 to February 2025, which included sending letters of communication to various participants. One company was hoped to be interviewed, but despite three visits, the researchers were unable to secure an interview due to the company's busy schedules and other commitments. Fortunately, other participants from different companies were kind enough to agree to interviews at their preferred dates and times. In fact, four out of the eight participants opted to conduct their interviews online, given the constraints of their work schedules. Additionally, the researchers also reached out to HR managers through Facebook, initiating conversations via chat to connect with potential participants. The researchers also extended efforts to retail stores on Santiago Blvd, sending letters in the hopes of gathering more data, but unfortunately, no responses came through.

Prior to beginning data collection, a pilot interview was conducted to identify, prevent, and eliminate weaknesses, allowing for revisions to the interview questions. Each interview lasted at least 20 minutes and up to 30 minutes. Participants were given an explanation of the subject and the purpose of the study. HR managers were also informed that the interviews would be audio recorded and transcribed.

### 3.5. Instrument

This study reused a semi-structured questionnaire as an interview guide. The questionnaire is a set of arranged questions carefully prepared to answer by the respondents designed to collect facts and information.

In order to gather accurate data, the researchers looked for a set of questions that is related to the study. The questionnaire came from the study of Bc. Markéta Venyšová last 2015 about "Ethical Dilemmas of Human Resource Managers in London.

The interview guide was validated by three experts: two from academia and one business owner. The validation process involved reviewing the

questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness, ensuring that it aligned with the study's objectives.

### 3.6. Data Analysis

Interviews were used to gather data, and the spoken words were recorded before being transcribed. In order to enhance the data collection process, researchers were also keeping notes while performing the conversations.

In addition, NVivo software was utilized to analyze themes and patterns within the gathered data, enabling a comprehensive examination of individual responses and group-level dynamics.

As part of the Grounded Theory approach, the analysis began with **open coding**, where researchers conducted a meticulous, line-by-line examination of the transcribed interviews. Each segment of data was fractured into discrete parts and labeled with codes that represented significant ideas, actions, meanings, or experiences expressed by participants. Codes were kept as close as possible to the participants' own words (in vivo coding) to preserve authenticity and minimize researcher bias. Throughout this phase, analytic memos were written to capture emerging insights, reflections, and preliminary interpretations.

Following open coding, the researchers employed the constant comparative method, systematically comparing incidents within the same interview and across different interviews. This process allowed for the identification of similarities, differences, and patterns in the data. Codes that shared conceptual similarities were grouped together and refined into more abstract **categories**. During this stage, redundant or overlapping codes were collapsed, while distinct concepts were retained to ensure analytical precision.

The analysis then progressed to **axial coding**, where relationships among categories and subcategories were explored. Researchers examined conditions, contexts, interactions, and consequences associated with each category, thereby reassembling the data in a more coherent and structured manner. This step enabled the identification of core dimensions and properties of each category.

Subsequently, selective coding was undertaken to integrate and refine the emerging theory. A central or core category was identified, and all other categories were systematically related to it. Themes and sub-themes were developed to represent overarching patterns, explaining how different categories interconnect within the studied phenomenon.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, several strategies were employed.

Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data and, where applicable, member checking, wherein participants were invited to review and validate the interpretations. Dependability was addressed by maintaining an audit trail documenting coding decisions, category development, and analytic procedures. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling, allowing researchers to acknowledge and bracket personal biases. Additionally, peer debriefing and intercoder agreement were utilized, wherein multiple researchers independently coded portions of the data and discussed discrepancies until consensus was achieved. Finally, theoretical saturation was reached when no new codes or categories emerged from the data, indicating sufficient depth and completeness of analysis.

Each identified theme was assigned a specific code in NVivo. As analysis progressed, axial coding was used to explore the interconnections among categories, which helped explain the underlying structure of the data. Eventually, through selective coding, core themes were identified that integrated the major categories and provided the foundation for developing a grounded theory. This emerging theory was rooted in the data itself, rather than imposed beforehand.

To ensure accuracy and rigor, the researchers had the transcripts reviewed by an expert before coding and analysis. Data interpretation involved identifying both recurring themes and contrasts across responses. Finally, a process of data verification was conducted, reviewing both the transcripts and codes to validate interpretations and allow for necessary adjustments, thereby strengthening the credibility of the developed theory.

### 3.7. Ethical Consideration

It is also crucial to include a subchapter on the ethics of qualitative research because the data gathered from this type of study offers more contextual information about the individual than does quantitative research. Miller et al. (2012) in their work presented following ethical dilemmas that researchers may run into when conducting qualitative research are discussed in their work: sharing and gaining access to data, determining the appropriate amount of information to reveal and to whom, privacy boundaries, and many more. The importance of ethics has increased over the past few years due to controversies in qualitative research, and various standards of ethics have been formed (Flick 2009).

In compliance with ethical guidelines and data

protection regulations, the researchers filed a request for an ethics certificate to the Institutional Ethics Review Committee last October 2024, and was granted the result after a month.

The researcher clearly communicated to all participants that their involvement in the study was entirely voluntary, and they were free to withdraw at any time. Throughout the study, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants. Participants were also informed that they were under no obligation to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with. Before the interview, participants were given advance notice of the general topics to be discussed, the type of information required, the purpose of the research, and how their responses would be used. Additionally, prior to the interview, participants were informed about the expected duration, and ample time was provided before and after the interview for them to ask any questions related to the research. This relates to the issue of privacy and anonymity. In order to prevent their use, interview data must also be safeguarded and kept in a secure location (Flick 2009).

To uphold confidentiality, certain data collected during the research will be kept confidential, with access authorized to limited person only such as personal identifiers or confidential information, will be strictly protected. Access to this data will be limited to authorized personnel only.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, the researchers adhered to the four established criteria for rigor in qualitative research:

**Credibility:** This was established through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and triangulation of data sources to accurately capture the participants' experiences and perspectives.

**Transferability:** The study provided thick descriptions of the context, participants, and research process to enable readers to determine the applicability of findings to other contexts or settings.

**Dependability:** An audit trail was maintained throughout the research process, documenting methodological decisions and changes to ensure consistency and traceability.

**Confirmability:** To reduce researcher bias, data interpretations were supported by direct quotations and evidence, and reflective journaling was used to track the researcher's positionality and influence on the research process.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This paper discusses the results of the in-depth interviews with the participants pertaining to their

views, feelings, and perceptions in response to the questions presented. The researcher made use of open-ended questions to describe the factors, responsibilities, and strategies of HR Personnel to examine factors influencing HR managers' decision-making process

#### **4.1. Factors That Affect HR Decision-Making Processes**

This table illustrates the key factors influencing HR decision-making, aligning with the study's objective of identifying the ethical challenges that shape HR processes. Two major components emerge: Organizational Structure and Compliance and Workforce Dynamics and External Impact—demonstrate how internal policies and external pressures shape HR decisions

Organizational structure and compliance shape workplace decision-making by establishing policies and regulatory frameworks. However, a key challenge within this area is misunderstood information, which can lead to misinterpretations of policies, inconsistencies in implementation, and ethical dilemmas in enforcing workplace rules. One participant justified this by stating, *"So of course, we have company rules and regulations, that's what they should follow"* (Participant 1).

As stipulated by Dana et al. (2013), HR managers have two responsibilities: first, they have an active sense of responsibility (responsibility as a virtue) and second, they have an active role in developing the HRM model that makes it easier for employees to exercise their rights. This supports the idea that HR managers must balance organizational compliance with ethical responsibility. Köster (2007) emphasizes that ethics has to be integrated into HRM duties, reinforcing the need for HR departments to uphold moral standards in managing policies and compliance. However, Van Gramberg & Teicher (2005) argue that HR managers cannot make ethical decisions when dealing with workplace conflict due to the fact that it challenges the very nature of what HRM is about, demonstrating the struggles HR professionals face in ethical decision-making.

#### **4.2. Responsibilities Assigned to HR Managers and Intersection of Responsibilities with Ethical Considerations**

The result illustrates the specific responsibilities of HR managers and their intersection with ethical considerations in various organizational contexts. Leadership and Management Responsibilities involve tasks such as discipline enforcement, conflict resolution, role organization, and promoting

fairness. One participant highlighted difficulty in fostering culture, noting, *"Fostering a culture that aligns with the organization's principles"*. One participant expressed the difficulty of enforcing discipline within labor relations, stating, *"The hardest part of HR is the labor relation side. That's where you discipline people"* (Participant 1). Another participant emphasized compliance and interpersonal conflict, noting, *"Training, compliance, and handling conflicts"* (Participant 7). The broad scope of HR leadership duties was conveyed in the statement, *"HR Managers have a range of responsibilities let's say that they directly relate to ethical functioning of an organization so the role encompasses managing manager relations"* (Participant 4). Another highlighted the importance of fairness in decision-making, saying, *"Fairness, transparency, and equity"* (Participant 1).

Conflict resolution within an organization requires HR managers to act impartially, addressing issues between employees or between employees and management. This task is inherently tied to ethical decision-making, as HR managers must ensure that conflicts are resolved in a way that adheres to the organization's ethical standards. Van Gramberg and Menzies (2006) observed that HR managers often face ethical dilemmas when mediating disputes, necessitating adherence to fairness and transparency.

According to Garner (2022), the shift to hybrid and remote work models has made it harder for employees to feel connected to their organization's culture. A Gartner survey revealed that 76% of HR leaders find it challenging to adapt their current culture to support a hybrid workforce. Notably, only 24% of hybrid and remote knowledge workers reported feeling connected to their organization's culture.

The emphasis on fairness and inclusion in recruitment aligns with the findings of Saiyadain (2009), who discussed how the fairness of the selection process could directly impact the ethical behavior employees expect from others. HR departments can implement specific procedures to ensure transparency, such as defining clear selection criteria and ensuring panel members have the necessary training and tools to execute the process effectively.

Compliance under training is another critical ethical responsibility within HR, especially in handling conflicts and ensuring that all employees adhere to organizational and legal standards. HR managers must ensure that employees are informed of their rights and the organization's ethical

standards. This aligns with the work of Köster (2007), who suggested that ethics must be integrated into HR duties, particularly during hiring and throughout an employee's tenure.

### 4.3. *Strategies HR Manager Employed to Navigate Ethical Dilemmas*

Engagement & Coordination Strategy plays a vital role in fostering communication and ethical collaboration. To achieve this, it integrates Communication & Collaboration Strategy, Ethical Leadership Strategy, and Policy Compliance Strategy, ensuring that HR managers align ethical considerations with organizational objectives. One participant described the multi-tiered support system in their organization, stating, *"We also have an admin manager and we have a corporate HR, head is RA corp. Those are really top."* (Participant 1). Another emphasized reliance on leadership and formal rules when handling dilemmas, explaining, *"Oftentimes, whenever ethical dilemmas occur in the agency or problems, HR or me, I rely on company policies, rely on the management."* (Participant 3). To further stress the importance of open dialogue in promoting ethics, another participant shared, *"Transparent communication between supervisors, management, and HR is essential for the successful implementation of these ethical policies."* (Participant 2).

Brown and Treviño (2006) emphasize that ethical leadership relies heavily on open and effective communication channels, enabling the consistent reinforcement of ethical behavior across organizational levels. According to Treviño et al. (2000), ethical leaders influence their followers' ethical behavior by promoting a moral climate, establishing clear ethical standards, and encouraging open communication. In HR contexts, this leadership style can guide employees to adhere to organizational values and ethical guidelines, thereby fostering an environment where ethical practices are prioritized. According to Greenberg (1990), perceived fairness in decision-making processes not only enhances organizational justice but also mitigates potential ethical dilemmas by creating a transparent environment where employees feel respected and valued.

According to Quick et al. (2013), organizations that prioritize employee well-being tend to see improvements in job satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational performance. The well-being of employees is intrinsically linked to the ethical climate of an organization, as workers who feel supported and valued are more likely to act ethically and contribute positively to the organizational

culture.

## 5. SYNTHESIS

The findings of this study offer important implications for HR policy and organizational practice. They reveal that HR managers' decision-making is shaped not only by formal policies but also by organizational culture, leadership expectations, and situational demands. This suggests the need for HR policies that balance standardization with flexibility, allowing managers to exercise professional judgment while maintaining consistency and fairness. The study also highlights the evolving role of HR as a strategic partner. Organizations should therefore institutionalize HR involvement in planning and decision-making processes, ensuring alignment between workforce strategies and organizational goals. Additionally, the results emphasize the importance of continuous capability development. HR personnel must be equipped with competencies in ethical decision-making, conflict management, and data-driven analysis, which can be supported through training and professional development programs.

Moreover, the findings point to the influence of subjectivity in HR decisions, underscoring the need for evidence-based practices. Integrating analytics, clear documentation, and standardized tools can enhance transparency and accountability. Finally, organizations should strengthen policies that promote employee well-being and ethical governance, ensuring that HR decisions are both people-centered and aligned with organizational values and legal standards. The culmination of this grounded theory research is the emergence of a substantive theory that encapsulates the ethical complexities encountered by HR managers in decision-making processes. This theory, termed Ethical Balancing in HR Practice, captures the dynamic and continuous negotiation HR practitioners undertake as they align ethical considerations with both organizational demands and employee well-being. Rooted in the rich, contextual data gathered from practitioners themselves, the theory demonstrates that ethical decision-making in HR is not merely a matter of rule adherence but a multifaceted, value-laden process that requires deliberate judgment, emotional sensitivity, and institutional support.

The emerging theory of Ethical Balancing in HR Practice offers both distinctions and complementarities when compared to classical ethical frameworks such as Utilitarianism, Deontology, and Virtue Ethics. Utilitarianism, as

proposed by Jeremy Bentham, emphasizes decisions that maximize overall happiness or well-being. Similarly, the theory recognizes the importance of promoting employee morale, organizational trust, and ethical alignment—reflecting the utilitarian aim of achieving the greatest good for the greatest number. However, unlike classical utilitarianism, which focuses primarily on outcomes, Ethical Balancing in HR Practice underscores the importance of the decision-making process itself, which involves negotiation, emotional sensitivity, and institutional support.

Deontological ethics, derived from the work of Immanuel Kant, prioritizes adherence to moral duties and principles, regardless of the consequences. This is mirrored in the integrity-driven strategies outlined in the emerging theory, such as fairness, accountability, and respect for confidentiality. While Kantian ethics relies on universal rules, the grounded theory reveals that HR practitioners often interpret and apply these principles flexibly within complex organizational contexts, highlighting the necessity of judgment and situational responsiveness.

Virtue Ethics, inspired by Aristotle, places emphasis on the moral character of the decision-

maker, advocating for traits like honesty, empathy, and integrity. Ethical Balancing in HR Practice similarly foregrounds the personal values and emotional intelligence of HR practitioners, particularly through people-centered strategies that involve empathetic listening, conflict mediation, and relational care. However, while Virtue Ethics focuses on individual moral development, the emerging theory expands this by incorporating structural and institutional dimensions, recognizing that ethical behavior is shaped not only by character but also by organizational culture and support systems.

Overall, Ethical Balancing in HR Practice builds upon these classical theories by integrating their core principles into a dynamic, practice-based model. It shifts the focus from rigid rule-following or abstract moral reasoning to the lived realities of HR decision-making, where practitioners must constantly reconcile competing ethical demands in fluid and often ambiguous environments. This theoretical framework provides a nuanced understanding of ethics in HR, illustrating that ethical decision-making is both relational and systemic—anchored in character, guided by principles, and shaped by contextual realities.

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