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COMMENTARY

Extending the ethical decision-making framework: Introducing the complexities and nuances of diversity and inclusion

Aarti Polavarapu*, Christopher Huynh, and Nicholas P. Salter

Hofstra University
*Corresponding author. Email: aartipolavarapu@gmail.com

Banks et al. (2022) introduce an integrative ethical decision-making framework specifically keeping the perspective and purview of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychologists in mind. We believe that certain nuances and adjustments warranted by incorporating diversity and inclusion can help extend the framework. Diversity refers to whether or not there is representation across different groups in an organization. Is a diverse spectrum of employees present? On the other hand, inclusion refers to whether or not all employees feel connected and as if they belong in the organization. Ensuring that there is diversity and inclusion in the organization is not just a profit issue but an ethical issue as well.

The framework's use of American Psychological Association's Code of Ethics (2017; https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/) mentions that one should be aware, understand, and respect various cultural, individual, and role differences. However, this alone may not capture and consider the complex and fluid nature of how diversity and inclusion can be ethical issues. Considering complexities brought about by diversity and inclusion can help strengthen the framework, especially given how diversity and inclusion influences ethical codes and decision-making frameworks (Tamunomiebi & Ehior, 2019). In this commentary, we introduce diversity and inclusion into each stage of the framework and provide an example to better articulate how this lens could potentially influence the situation. We also provide a table (see Table 1), with questions that could be beneficial for organizational decision makers to ask at each stage in order to determine the best course of action moving forward.

Introducing diversity and inclusion into every stage of the framework

In Stage 1, "Recognize the ethical issue," certain diversity and inclusion issues may be hard to identify due to the subtle and nuanced nature of diversity and inclusion. For example, in the case of a supervisor's performance evaluations discriminating against minority employees, a person using the first stage of the framework would potentially identify ethical issues on the individual level and focus on the supervisor's motivations and actions. With a diversity and inclusion lens, a person can recognize that there may be ethical issues on a broader level. On a group level, a person in Stage 1 could delineate how the discriminatory ratings are perhaps due to macrolevel issues, such as disadvantages employees belonging to certain groups might be facing in the organization, like stereotype threat (Casad & Bryant, 2016). On an organizational level, a person in Stage 1 may recognize issues that can relate to how the performance management system or the culture influences these discriminatory ratings (Anastasiu, 2015). Though on the surface the original issue might look like something just concerning a specific individual in a particular scenario, it could

Table 1. Recommended Questions for Considering Diversity and Inclusion

Stage in ethical decision-making framework	Recommended questions to be asked
1. Recognize the ethical issue	• Is the person's identity influencing the issue? • Is the social/organizational environment influencing the issue? • Are there any institutional barriers or inequalities that could influence the issue?
2. Gather information	• Are the current processes (policies and regulations) adversely affecting diversity and inclusion outcomes? • Are there past precedents of similar issues in the organization/industry? • How have different groups reacted to this issue?
3. Identify proximal and distal stakeholders	• How does this issue affect diverse groups currently in the organization? • How could this issue potentially affect diverse groups in the organization in the future?
4. Identify alternative actions	• What actions can be x the underlying cause of the ethical issue to promote diversity and inclusion? • How would these actions influence diversity and inclusion at the individual, group, and organizational level?
5. Compare alternative actions	• Can input be gathered from people/experts from diverse groups? • Will the solution be received appropriately by diverse groups? • Will the solution have long term effects on diversity and inclusion in the organization?
6. Implement action(s) and monitor outcomes	• How do different groups respond to the execution of the solution? • How does the solution affect diversity and inclusion in the organization? • Does the solution address the original ethical situation identified?

encroach on other wider issues and affect how the individual experiences inclusion in the organization; this would have been missed without a diversity and inclusion lens.

Not identifying such broad ethical issues could potentially affect Stage 2 of the framework, "Gather information." Without consideration for such issues, it may hurt the person's ability to look for information relating to those broader issues. Continuing the example about discriminatory performance ratings, there are many things decision makers could do from a diversity and inclusion lens. For instance, instead of only considering the isolated ethical situation and outcome, decision makers should shift the focus to also consider information pertaining to the processes (rules and regulations) within the organization that led to these outcomes. Decision makers could also collect relevant information about the past precedent of such incidents within the organization and the industry at large and whether there are commonalities about how the ethical issues were caused.

When considering the third stage of the framework, "Identify proximal and distal stakeholders," the authors rightfully discuss that proximal stakeholders are more easily recognizable and may influence ethical decisions more than distal stakeholders; we argue that this is especially true in the context of diversity and inclusion. Therefore, organizational decision makers should always be sure to consider distal stakeholders from a diversity and inclusion standpoint when they are responding to ethical situations. For example, in the case of discriminatory performance ratings, one would consider the individuals involved, such as the supervisor and employees being rated, as the proximal stakeholders. One may also consider how these ratings could affect the team or the organization and other administrative decisions in the organization as distal stakeholders. However, it might be relevant to consider how these issues could have an effect at a larger level, such as influencing the diversity climate of the organization or how employees experience inclusivity in such an environment as well as have other adverse implications and consequences beyond

the ethical situation at hand (Holmes et al., 2021). Even though it might not be implicitly clear, this situation could have a broad effect on diverse groups and inclusivity in the organization as a whole.

In Stage 4, "Identify alternative actions," not considering diversity and inclusion could potentially create additional ethical issues in the future, so there are multiple actions decision makers could take. For instance, in the case of discriminatory ratings, if the cause of the discriminatory ratings is determined to be stereotype threat, then alternate actions could range anywhere from delivering a workshop about the topic to training raters to be sensitive to such nuances. If the cause is determined to be at an organizational level concerning the performance management system, the system could be adjusted and modified to take a broader approach while making the ratings or increasing the number of raters to minimize such errors. Without using a diversity and inclusion lens, the alternative actions identified could have been limited to just rectifying the ratings or assessing their appropriateness. This would have resolved the current issue but perhaps would not be efficient in tackling the core problem—likely resulting in it happening again in the future.

Furthermore, the fifth stage of "Compare alternative actions" would also require expanding to take additional factors into consideration when using a diversity and inclusion lens. For example, it would help to gather more input and take the opinions of different groups of people and experts who are more sensitive to diversity and inclusion issues to select the most appropriate plan of action. Once decision makers have consulted with diversity and inclusion stakeholders throughout the organization to compare the alternative actions, they will have to take into consideration the feasibility of implementing the actions as well as how each would be received. Diversity and inclusion can be a sensitive topic to people and employees who are not privy to the original situation; they may need an explanation as to why these new changes are occurring.

Finally, in the sixth stage of the framework "Implement action(s) and monitor outcomes," such a lens could help in outlining how subtly unnoticed issues will affect people in different groups, pushing practitioners to engage in big-picture thinking. For instance, with discriminatory ratings, the effects would go beyond the individual in consideration to influence bigger things such as the diversity climate and experienced inclusivity in the organization as well as perceptions of organizational justice. This could have wider consequences and would need to be monitored to understand the effects of the actions. For example, it might help to track employees' attitudes and behaviors following implemented changes by organizing focus group discussions and noticing any changes in the usual flow of work. It is imperative to do so because even though using the suggested framework is essential to guiding the process of ethical decision making, using a diversity and inclusion lens makes it more likely to resolve the bigger issue at hand that might be going unnoticed. Subtleties and nuances are complicated when considering ethics; using a diversity and inclusion lens makes it more integrative and effective.

Conclusion

We believe that the focal article's framework has a lot of potential in improving and ensuring that decisions made by I-O psychologists take ethics into account. As discussed, we argue that there are more complex considerations necessary when discussing diversity and inclusion in the context of ethical decision making. Considerations of ethics, diversity, and inclusion are intertwined and cannot be considered in isolation, especially for I-O psychologists. In this commentary, we focused on one particular example, but the intersection of ethics, diversity, and inclusion is much broader. Unethical situations related to diversity and inclusion could result in higher minority turnover, and those who do stay could feel less included and comfortable because of the negative culture that develops. By embedding diversity and inclusion in this framework and considering it along every stage of the framework, we can extend the framework to help make it better for all employees.

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