

How to deliberate when everything is chaos? The moral dilemmas and ethical decision-making in public management in emergencies

Como deliberar quando tudo é caos? Dilemas morais e decisões éticas na gestão pública de um desastre

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Keywords

Moral dilemma.
Emergency management ethics.
Disaster.
Ethical decision.
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Abstract

In 2008, the Vale do Itajaí region in the state of Santa Catarina was reported nationally and internationally for one of the worst disasters in Brazil. After a period of heavy rainfall, the region suffered from flooding and landslides. Managers of state and local civil defense agencies had to make ethically complex decisions that involved personal and professional moral dilemmas related to rescuing, handling resources, and providing humanitarian aid. The teaching case aims to provide its participants with: familiarity with the theme emergency management ethics in public management; reflexive and argumentative capacity in cases containing moral dilemmas, based on ethical content (moral philosophies) present in the disciplines of philosophy and ethics; potentialize moral reasoning in complex decision-making situations; and developing the ability to recognize ethical issues related to public management for their professional practice. The teaching case's context is based on real moral dilemmas adapted for teaching purposes. The case can be used in undergraduate programs in public administration, especially in courses related to ethics and philosophy. It can also be used in undergraduate and graduate programs in management, in courses that discuss the decision-making process.

Palavras-chave

Dilema moral.
Ética na gestão de emergências
Desastre.
Decisão ética.
Gestão pública.

Resumo

Em 2008, a região do Vale do Itajaí no Estado de Santa Catarina foi noticiada nacional e internacionalmente por passar pelo seu pior desastre e um dos piores da história do Brasil. Após um período de muitas chuvas, a região sofreu com enchentes, inundações e deslizamentos. Os gestores de organizações de Defesa Civil estadual e municipal tiveram que tomar decisões eticamente complexas que envolveram dilemas morais pessoais e profissionais relacionados a resgates, triagem e ajuda humanitária. Este caso para ensino tem como objetivo proporcionar: familiaridade com a temática 'ética da gestão de emergências' na gestão pública; aperfeiçoamento da capacidade reflexiva e argumentativa em casos contendo dilemas morais reais, a partir de conteúdos éticos (filosofias morais) presentes nas disciplinas de filosofia e ética; potencializar o raciocínio moral em situações complexas de tomada de decisão; e desenvolvimento da habilidade de reconhecer questões éticas relacionadas à gestão pública para sua prática profissional. O contexto do caso é baseado em dilemas morais reais, adaptados para fins didáticos. O caso pode ser utilizado em cursos de graduação e pós-graduação da área de Administração Pública, especialmente em disciplinas relacionadas à ética e política pública, bem como na área de gestão em disciplinas que discutem o processo decisório.

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Practical Implications

This case presents three moral dilemmas involving actors – public managers and volunteers – who had to make ethically complex decisions related to rescue, handling resources, and humanitarian aid in the context of public risk and disaster management, that is, in the area of civil defense and protection.

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THE CASE: THE 2008 TRAGEDY IN THE STATE OF SANTA CATARINA – MORAL DILEMMAS AND ETHICAL DECISIONS IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN EMERGENCIES

Santa Catarina is the third state with the most environmental disasters in the last 20 years and the state with the greatest diversity of disasters compared to the other Brazilian states. In addition to being hit by Hurricane Catarina in 2004, the only hurricane ever registered in Brazil, it also suffered a cyclone bomb in 2020, considered the worst wind disaster in the state. Between 1995 and 2014, the total amount of losses resulting from disasters in the state was BRL 17.6 billion (UFSC/CEPED, 2016). These data reveal the importance of public risk and disaster management – also called emergency management – in the state of Santa Catarina, which is currently carried out by the Civil Defense.

The case presents three moral dilemmas involving actors – public managers and volunteers – who had to make ethically complex decisions related to rescue, handling resources, and humanitarian aid in the context of public risk and disaster management, that is, in the area of civil defense and protection.

1 INTRODUCTION

The 2008 tragedy described in this case occurred in the region of Vale do Itajaí, formed by the Itajaí River Basin. It consists of 51 municipalities, has an estimated population of 1,150,000 inhabitants, and its area corresponds to 16.15% of the territory of the state of Santa Catarina (Figure 1). It is also known as the ‘European Valley’ because it is the Brazilian region with the largest colonization of immigrants from European countries: Germans, Italians, Austrians, Poles, and Portuguese. The region is mountainous, with 80% of its area composed of Atlantic Forest (rain forest). It received the name Vale do Itajaí due to the presence of mountains and valleys, as well as the Itajaí river (Avila, 2015). Aumond et al. (2019) explain that the shape of the hydrographic basin and the slope of the watercourses contribute significantly to floods and landslides, which are quite common in the region. In periods of rain, some parts of the river overflow (Figure 2), flooding streets, neighborhoods, and sometimes even entire cities.

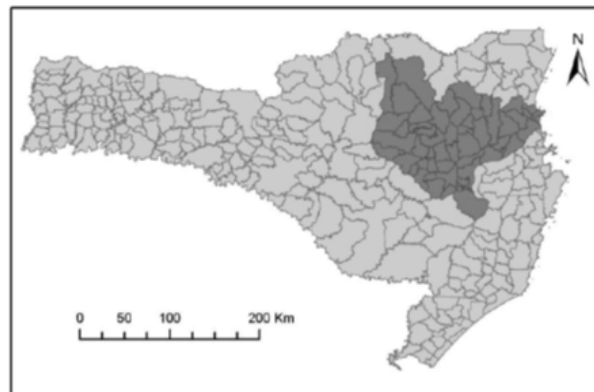


Figure 1. Map of the Vale do Itajaí region

Source: Avila, 2015.



Figure 2. River Itajaí-Açu, in the Vale do Itajaí region

Source: Kássia Dalmagro/Jornal Metas, 2008.

As was customary in the region, the entire month of November 2008 was marked by a period of heavy rain. However, in the last days of that month, the situation of alert became one of the biggest disasters in the state of Santa Catarina. Excessive rainfall in the Vale do Itajaí region had been recorded since September, and the first damage was noted on October 18. But on November 22, the state of Santa Catarina witnessed a true disaster, with a tragic balance of dead, missing, and homeless people, and incalculable public and private material damage (Box 1). The Vale do Itajaí region was reported nationally and internationally for going through its and one of Brazil's worst disasters. After a period of heavy rain, the municipalities in the region – which are located on the banks of the Itajaí-Açu river – suffered from massive floods and landslides.

In Santa Catarina's Civil Defense records, 135 people lost their lives, and two remain missing. About 97% of deaths were caused by landslide burial, resulting from the accumulation of water in the soil. Landslides destroyed houses, schools, hospitals, and roads, ending the stories and dreams of many families [...] Families lost everything that took years to build. Companies had losses. Tourism has been compromised and public and private services paralyzed. The supply of gas and electricity in different municipalities has been interrupted. Entire cities were isolated for days. [Introduction of the book "Reports of a disaster: journalistic narratives of the 2008 tragedy in Santa Catarina", written by Márcio Luiz Alves]

Chart 1. Journalistic Narratives of the 2008 tragedy

Source: Zenatti and Sousa (2009, p. 11).

Various public officials from civil and military organizations in Santa Catarina and many volunteers from all over Brazil contributed to managing the response to this emergency (problem situation in this teaching case). The leading actors involved in the emergency management dilemmas presented below are representative of these groups:

Carlos (dilemma 1): 45 years old mayor at the end of his four-year term in one of the cities hit hard in the Vale do Itajaí region. The city did not have a civil defense structure at the time of the disaster.

Matheus (dilemma 2): 40 years old, official military firefighter for 15 years and coordinator for two years for the municipal civil defense of one of the largest and most prepared municipalities in Vale do Itajaí for disaster management.

Ana (dilemma 3): 38 years old, director of civil defense responses in Santa Catarina for 3 years. She has been an employee of the state's civil defense department since she graduated in Social Work 15 years ago.

Amélia and João (dilemma 3): volunteers, community members, and churchgoers in a Catholic church's parish. The church's facilities were used to store, and handle donations made for those affected by the floods in one of the municipalities in Vale do Itajaí.

Dilemma 1: Rescuing decisions: everyone or no-one

With the clock striking ten to midnight on November 22, 2008, after days of uninterrupted rain that began a flooding process in several cities in the Vale do Itajaí region, Carlos, mayor of one of the cities strongly affected, arranged a mat on the floor of the city hall to rest. Even if he tried to get to his house, three kilometers away, it would be impossible to stay in his own residence. The water was as high as his waist, and his family had sought shelter with relatives. In the past two days, he had worked over 18 hours a day, taking short breaks to eat and trying to rest where and how he could. Because it was a medium-size municipality, without a structure of civil defense or protocols of public management in cases of emergencies (risks and disasters) at the time, the mayor took the responsibility to lead the response to the disaster.

Among the countless urgent demands for assistance, rescue, help, and decisions Carlos had to handle, on November 23, there was a call from the water park located in the interior of his municipality. As it was a weekend, there were more than 600 people in the park and, among them, a group of 80 teenagers who went to celebrate the end of school year. However, they did not expect that they would be completely isolated in the park. All roads to the area were closed due to falling barriers, flooding, or because they were seriously potholed. Among the group, three teenagers with diabetes needed to take insulin, and, fortunately, one of the landlines was still working. After 48 hours of isolation, an emergency call was made to rescue the teenagers who were beginning to feel unwell. The emergency request reached Carlos through two state politicians who knew the water park's owners. Carlos received these requests via unstructured channels, i.e., informal and personal contacts. Many emergency requests arrived through informal ways and others remained unknown for hours or even days.

With land access virtually impossible for most of the rescues and due to low visibility for flight, the helicopter going to the group of students arrived at the water park with great difficulty. The pilot had to fly low, using the riverbanks as a guide and directed by mayor Carlos, who knew the region very well. After landing, Carlos informed the group's guide that the helicopter was not large enough and could only rescue the three teenagers who needed insulin, taking them to a safe place. The guide refused to let the three sick teenagers go alone. She made it clear that all of the 600 people in the park should be saved, and she would not leave any student behind. At this point, Carlos' conflict and dilemma began.

The removal of 600 people would require more aircraft and was not a priority since the park had food, water, and could keep everyone safe. Meanwhile, entire families were buried under landslides in nearby hills that urgently needed rescue. Carlos tried again to convince the guide to let him rescue the three teenagers who needed to take insulin, but again she refused. So, Carlos, not knowing how to convince her and aware that the helicopter was necessary and urgent in other areas, entered the aircraft and left everyone in the park.

As a resident and mayor of the city, Carlos spent days brooding over the decisions he made. Should I have left the three teenagers behind? Could he have convinced the guide to let him take the students? As mayor, was he the right person to handle this occurrence? If he were a civil defense agent or had military authority, would the result have been different? How were the other urgent demands managed while he was absent, dealing with this specific case that was not his total responsibility?

Dilemma 2: The sound of an aircraft taking off, loaded with hope

The next morning, November 24, Carlos was still concerned about the teenagers who needed insulin. In a conversation with one of the state's civil defense managers, the leading agency in disaster management, Carlos reported what had happened. The civil defense organized another attempt at help, taking insulin with them. Matheus, a military firefighter and civil defense coordinator from a neighboring municipality, was assigned the mission. He took the insulin units and prepared for the mission.

In the aircraft, it was possible to transport, in addition to Matheus and the pilot, four more people. With new landslides, rescue via land transport was still impossible, and, in some places, air access was also complicated. On the way to the water park, Matheus and the pilot passed the area of Morro do Baú, one of the most affected by the tragedy, resulting in many deaths. At 819 meters high, the hill was home to several communities, who saw their lives sliding away in a pile of mud. As they flew over the Morro do Baú area, they spotted a group of residents asking for help, writing S.O.S. on the floor (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Message from residents of Morro do Baú asking for help

Source: Adriana Franciosi, 2008.

Matheus asked the pilot to fly lower to check the situation and, when approaching, saw that there were injured people who needed help, and chose to get off the aircraft, although he still had to fulfill his mission of taking the insulin to the teenagers in the park. When asked about his experience that day, Matheus reported: *“We arrived, but we were unable to do anything. Our equipment couldn't handle it; our training couldn't handle it. We were only able to get people out of the place where they were and take them to a safer place”*.

Then the displacement of the injured people started, but soon Matheus noticed that he would not be able to remove all the people who were in the place at once and take them to a safe area nearby. Matheus tried to help them in any way he could, reassuring them, checking those who were injured, talking about the situation, while the pilot took the most injured.

At one point, the weather changed abruptly, it rained again, and the landslides on the hill where they were, began again. Matheus tried to contact the radio, asking for help, but no one heard him: communication was completely interrupted. Despite going to the scene to help, he was unable to help them all, and he became a potential victim. Matheus recalls: *“I didn’t bring the solution. I had to invent some stories to ease the tension. I pretended that I was talking on the radio and that my team was listening, but there was no communication! I was as much at the mercy of the situation as they were”*. It was hours of despair at Morro do Baú until, little by little, the rain reduced and, finally, it was possible to hear the sound of a helicopter approaching. Arriving at the location, the pilot asked Matheus to come over to give him information:

Pilot: *Matheus, get in the helicopter; we need to go back. The weather conditions are terrible!*

Matheus: *I’m not getting in until we get everyone out of here!*

Pilot: *There are at least 100 people here. How long is it going to take?*

Matheus: *I’m staying here!*

Pilot: *And the insulin?* –the pilot reminded him that they should be going to the water park to give insulin to the three youngsters.

Matheus: *It’s in the backpack.* – He gets closer to the pilot to hand over the backpack, and the pilot asks Matheus to put on the headphones so he can talk over the radio system without others hearing.

Pilot: *It has nothing to do with the insulin, I need you to go back now!* – declared the pilot.

Matheus: *I’m not going back, I’m going to stay here with these people.*

Pilot: *Come back now because the people in the city don’t know what’s happening here. All flights to here are being canceled; nothing is going to fly out here!*

Matheus: *But these people need to leave here, urgently!*

Pilot: *No, all the aircraft have been canceled! Either you come back and convince them, or none will return, and they will stay here until who knows when!*

Faced with the pilot’s ultimatum, Matheus climbed into the aircraft, with the feeling that he was abandoning these people who trusted him and experiencing dilemmas and doubts about whom he should help first, which orders to follow, which of the lives were more important, and how he should deal with the conflict between being a military firefighter – with the oath to save lives – and being in the position of a public manager, having other responsibilities. He comments on the moment of takeoff: *“the look on the people’s faces was distressing, destructive, as if they were saying: he is abandoning us”*. Matheus ended his day by going to the water park to deliver the insulin to the teenagers. Later, when reflecting on that day, Matheus says: *“the decision-making was very complex. We went to the place because society expects us, as a public servant, to go. And if we didn’t, who would?”*.

Dilemma 3: Donations - the crisis within the crisis

Ana, director of civil defense response in the state of Santa Catarina for three years, closely followed the management of the 2008 disaster since its beginning at the end of November 2008. Amid the chaos, she saw the emergence of an internal crisis within the crisis: donations. Amid the intense work, Ana rarely had a break. On one of them, on November 27, she turned on the television to watch the news and saw a statement by the state governor informing Brazil what was happening in the Itajaí Valley and communicating that Santa Catarina was in great need of donations: bedding, clothes for adults and children, water, and non-perishable food. In that tragedy, the management of donations was a joint action of the public administration, civil society organizations, and independent volunteers.

The governor’s attitude generated great commotion and national solidarity. In addition to donations that came from within the state itself, the civil defense received donations from all over Brazil and internationally. Problem solved? No! The population heard the governor’s request and responded massively.

Twenty to thirty trucks lined up to unload numerous donations, and the scenario became worrying in just a few days. At first, borrowing warehouses to store and handle the donations and finding the right destinations were the biggest problems.

Ana participated in the initial management of donations, allocating the trucks to the affected municipalities, where municipal coordinators, city hall public servants, and volunteers performed the sorting and delivery of donations to people in public shelters and those who remained in their homes but who had lost everything or almost everything. On November 30, one of the cargoes received surprised volunteers from one of the churches in the region that was receiving donations to sort through:

Volunteer Amélia: *Did you see the pair to this shoe?* – Amélia asked from the middle of a pile of shoes after trying for over five minutes to find it.

Volunteer João: *No, I haven't, Amélia; let me know if you see the other one of these too.*

Volunteer Amélia: *Is it this one, João?*

Volunteer João: *Is it size 36?*

Volunteer Amélia: *39.*

Volunteer João: *At this rate, we'll never finish! Look at this! The sole is falling off! You cannot donate this! People still don't know how to donate.* – As they finish speaking, another load of shoes arrives.

Volunteer Amélia: *It's true, João. Unfortunately, there are still people who think donating is just getting rid of old stuff. And people put them in thin bags that rip. Look over there; they're unloading more bags, I think it's clothes mixed with shoes, and the bags are just ripping open!*

Volunteer João: *Why don't they tie them up? Why don't people put tape around? Oh look, the soleless shoe with a hole...* – João, holding two shoes, or parts of them, shakes his head.

After a few days of receiving many donations, the difficulties became almost greater than the benefits. The Santa Catarina civil defense's team considered ending requests for help. However, there was an impasse: how to stop the donations arriving if the governor publicly asked for donations and the Brazilian population was engaged in this cause?

As a strategy, they initially asked people who called for information to give directly to nearby communities. Subsequently, they started to make a campaign more focused on items that were really necessary. Director Ana reports that in one of these campaigns, water donations were requested and, again, the problem was not the lack of donations but how to handle the large quantities of water received. There was also the element of public cost in managing donations, which few people were aware of: *"We bag up the excess. We spent a few thousand reals on plastic bags because we had to buy them to bag up the excess"*, recalled Ana.

In addition, the civil defense still had to deal with and circumvent the negative repercussions in the media that occurred in mid-December. Some items received were in poor condition, unsuitable for donations. These items were incinerated to make room for others in good condition that kept arriving. Reports were published in the media denouncing what was considered "negligence". Ana mentioned that *"many bags of clothes were incinerated. They were totally rotten clothes, but anyone who saw us doing that thought 'they're setting fire to a good thing. The media ended up making negative reports as if we were doing something cruel"*. Despite the chaos generated by the excessive amount of donations received, the intention of solidarity prevailed: many donations in good condition were received, and hundreds of volunteers made a difference.

2 PUBLIC MANAGEMENT IN EMERGENCIES: LESSONS LEARNED

The end of 2008 arrived, bringing hope. The sun came up again in the sky of Vale do Itajaí, and the rain finally stopped. There was still much work to be done, but the past month's hopelessness started to be replaced by strength, solidarity, perseverance, renewal, and resilience.

Approximately five months after the tragedy, at the end of March 2009, the civil defense of the state of Santa Catarina held a meeting to discuss the events, identify the lessons learned, and prepare the public management for future emergencies. Among the many participants were Carlos, Matheus, and Ana. The public agents discussed some specific cases that happened during the period, sharing what they have learned and what could have been done differently. A common opinion was the need for prevention – through risk management – in partnership with the state's municipalities.

Such a measure requires training public managers at all levels so that they are able to manage emergencies. With the motto, we are all civil defense, public structures designed to manage risk and emergencies have gained importance and recognition in the state and the country.

Just as the public managers in the situations above, now it is our turn to reflect together on the cases presented and the decisions made by each of these agents. What were the moral dilemmas they experienced? Were they personal or professional dilemmas? How is public management prepared to deal with serious ethical issues and, especially, in emergencies? What would you, as a public agent, have done differently in each situation? Is there a right answer when experiencing a moral dilemma?

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TEACHING NOTES

According to Denhardt (1988), the management of public affairs must occur consistently and consciously so that the public manager makes decisions guided by technical skills and legal knowledge, as well as oriented by moral competence. Business schools must provide skills for their students to develop the ability to reflect and evaluate the possible ethical challenges in their professional and/or personal lives (Felton & Sims, 2005).

Zack (2009) argues that the connection between ethics when facing disasters and governmental obligations is an important issue since public organizations are the leading players with the material and administrative capacity to effectively prepare for and respond to contemporary disasters. Discussions on moral dilemmas in this field of activity prepare managers to face the complexity of public ethics (Villoria, 2007) in emergencies, consequentially contributing to making better decisions that meet the public interest.

This teaching case helps to discuss these issues. The case proposes an empirical discussion of the main ethical theories, addressing public management's real moral dilemmas. Ethical theories presented in a course can be visualized in public managers' activities, discussing their conscience and moral judgment.

Sources and data collection methods

The case is based on real moral dilemmas faced during one of the greatest disasters in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina. The authors collected data from primary sources through in-depth interviews with public managers working with the issue of risk and disasters between April and July 2018. The names of the characters were changed to guarantee their anonymity. Secondary sources were also used, such as bibliographic and documentary research on the topics addressed in the moral dilemmas and in the emergency presented. Fictional adaptations were made, and the order of facts was changed so that the case reached its educational objective.

Teaching goal

The case was developed for use in undergraduate and graduate programs encompassing the areas of public administration, public management, social and public administration, public policies, and public policy management. It can be useful in courses related to ethics and philosophy (Ethics and Public Administration; Philosophy and Ethics, Ethics and Citizenship, Ethics and Justice, among others).

According to Santos et al. (2018, pp. 16-17, our translation), ethics education develops and improves as discussing this issue becomes a relevant topic in analyzing organizations and their environment. Therefore, teaching ethics can prepare administrators to be capable of "a more reflective, critical and socially responsible positioning." This case is based on this assumption and aims to provide:

1. Familiarity with the theme of emergency management ethics or ethics in risk and disaster management, still recent in the Brazilian scientific field and in programs involving public management (Santos & Serafim, 2020);
2. Reflective and argumentative capacity in cases of real moral dilemmas, based on ethical content (moral philosophies);
3. Potentialize moral reasoning in complex ethical decision-making situations;
4. Exercise on the recognition of ethical issues related to public management.

Class organization and case application strategy

Prior to the class on this case, the professor should have already discussed with the students the main ethical theories or moral philosophies (such as deontology, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics). One option for using the case is its insertion in the teaching plan as an exercise in the study of moral theories.

Approximately one week before the discussion of the case, it should be made available to students for individual reading, together with the recommended reading of, *Toward a substantive dialogue: The case for an ethical framework in emergency management, Part 2*, Etkin, Feldmann-Jensen, Smith and Jensen (2016). The authors discuss the problem of ethics in emergency management and correlate them with three ethical theories commonly discussed in Public Administration. The purpose of this reading is to rescue the content of the previous classes. It also provides a reflection on ethics in emergency management, highlighting some of its possible moral dilemmas and the performance of the public manager.

With the prior reading of the case, students should bring their assessment of the case's moral dilemmas to the class. The identified cases should be presented in a question format. For example: How should Matheus have reacted to the pilot's request to enter the aircraft? What could Carlos do to help the teenagers who needed insulin? How could the state government solve the problem of excessive donations? Subsequently, the answers to these questions prepared by the students should be discussed in the classroom.

A two-hour class on this case study can be organized as follows:

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- a) At the first moment (approximately 15 minutes), the professor explains the concept of moral dilemma and presents the famous case of the trolley problem. One of the possibilities is to use a short video, available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOpf6KcWYyw>
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- b) Once the concept of moral dilemma is clarified, the professor asks the class to organize in groups of five to seven people (estimated time: 5 minutes)
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- c) In the next 30 minutes, students should share the dilemmatic questions previously elaborated with their colleagues in small groups and discuss whether they are really moral dilemmas
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- d) The group must choose one of the dilemmas identified to discuss and analyze according to the ethical theories addressed in past classes (30-40 minutes). At this point, the suggested texts (suggested bibliography) can be rescued as supporting material. It is recommended that the groups systematize their analyzes, explaining the main points
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- e) Finally, the professor should conduct a discussion and finalize the activity. This can be done by selecting some of the dilemmas the students identified (quantity to be defined according to time) and analyzing on the board according to ethical theories, with the participation of the students (records of the discussions)
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Combining theory and practice: activities for students

Define the moral dilemmas of the case in problem question format:

A moral dilemma is a conflict between possible and correct paths of action, but only one action is possible in a given context. It is also characterized by its difficulty, uncertainty, complexity, or, at times, impossibility to solve (Di Napoli, 2014). A moral dilemma can be circumstantial. The same conflict that is not considered a dilemma in one context may be seen as such in another context with different characteristics and individuals and institutions involved (Santos & Serafim, 2020).

The elaboration of problem questions should consider Elm and Radin (2012) warning that all decisions have dimensions and moral consequences. Therefore, every ethical decision may benefit or harm a person or a group of people (Crossan, Mazutis, & Seijts, 2013). It is also important to consider that ethical analysis can be the result of "beliefs and values through which we look at life" (Morris, 1998, p. 153, our translation), varying from individual to individual. Thus, it occurs from specific lenses to relate the situations experienced by the case managers with the theoretical basis recommended for discussion.

Associate and discuss the possibilities of action available for managers in the moral dilemmas identified with ethical theories (moral philosophies), and find arguments for and against such possibilities of action, as well as other possibilities not considered at the time of the disaster.

For Kidder (2009), solving a moral dilemma begins by collecting crucial information about the context, such as recognizing the values involved. It is also necessary to search for alternatives that point to understanding, discussing, and solving the dilemma. In this perspective, the path may be a moral philosophy.

Utilitarianism is a consequentialist theory based on results. Its central idea is: morality and politics must be centrally concerned with acts considered good due to their results and the promotion of happiness, understood as subjective well-being (Davis, 1997). In this sense, an ethical decision must maximize the benefits for a society and minimize damage (Mulgan, 2012). A utilitarian would address a moral dilemma by systematically identifying stakeholders in a particular situation and alternative actions and their consequences (losses or benefits) (Treviño & Nelson, 2010).

Rule-based thinking is a form of non-consequentialism that offers a statement or assumption – that can be universalized – as support for an action. Philosophers described it as deontological since the action results are not questioned. Rule-based thinking questions the obligations – freely and rationally recognized – at the moment one acts (Treviño & Nelson, 2010). Thus, a major challenge for deontological approaches is to decide which duty, obligation, right, or principle takes precedence when faced with a moral dilemma and, consequentially, determine which is the most important (Kidder, 2009).

In the care-based approach, the recommendation is to do to others what we would like them to do to us. Unlike the previous approaches, it emphasizes that people care about the others involved to the point of putting themselves in their place (Kidder, 2009). This proposal is related to the so-called *virtue ethics*, centered on the moral actor's integrity (the person) more than on the moral act itself (Kidder, 2009; Treviño & Nelson, 2010). However, this does not mean that principles, rules, or consequences should not be considered, but that they are considered in the context of assessing the person's character and integrity (Treviño & Nelson, 2010).

Suggestions for problem questions and discussion

Problem questions that can be used to discuss the moral dilemmas and ethical decisions of the case:

- Whom to rescue first?
- Which areas and groups to prioritize?
- What should Carlos do to help the teenagers who needed insulin?
- How can you deal with people who refuse to be rescued or evacuate?
- How can you deal with special requests from influential people?
- What are the situations in which you could evade the rule and opt for alternative solutions?
- How should Matheus have reacted to the pilot's request to enter the aircraft?
- How could the state government solve the problem of excessive donations?
- What moral skills are needed to deal with the moral dilemmas of the case?
- How can public managers be prepared to ethically deal with difficult decisions?
- Did any character or attitude get your respect? Why?

On several occasions in this case there were multiple obligations arising, generally, from the same moral system – preserving lives – that is, without a clear hierarchy of operationalization of this priority. This situation occurred, for example, when Matheus had to decide between boarding the helicopter to take insulin to the teenagers or continue with the victims who needed rescuing. In this sense, such dilemmas could be seen as unsolvable.

However, these were real-life dramas in which choices were fraught with questions and needed immediate action. The problem questions are based on what Dubnick and Justice (2006) considered 'the real dilemma' for those who work in public positions: choosing what is right 'here and now'. In this sense the guide opted for an equal rescue criterion when considering that the entire group of students should be removed together, as they were under her responsibility.

Regarding Matheus' dilemma on rescuing the affected, Drozenová (2016) considers this operation questionable from an ethical point of view, since it eliminates the deontological perspective and the criterion of equality among all those who need help. However, in the face of a tragedy, the utilitarian strategy of prioritizing ends up being adopted, considering the limitations of resources and real options for action. Thus, although an egalitarian criterion is advocated, in the 2008 tragedy the moral perspective adopted in the risk management – prevention – phase could not be the same as the moral philosophy of the response phase – emergency management – leading to individual and organizational moral dilemmas.

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