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Ethic issues in skin lightening products

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LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

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Submission method:	All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.) Alternative submission method (if applicable): Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark. Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.		
Academic honesty / referencing:	Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.		
Module Learning Outcomes (from module syllabus)			
Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate the ability to:			
• Problem solve and critically analyse the importance of management and ethical decision-making within organisations and their impact on the wider social environment. • Evaluate different approaches to ethical judgment and to apply them to real world dilemmas.			

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1.0 Introduction

This paper explores in depth the destructive impact on the environment of unregulated business practices such as the discharge of untreated sewage in the pursuit of cost-effectiveness, describing the ethical and moral issues involved in the Nitrogen Fertiliser Company in Japan, and what varying degrees of damage such practices have caused to multiple stakeholders. We have analysed corporate social responsibility in detail through the perspectives of purposivism and deontology. It is found that companies need not only to pursue profits, but also have an obligation to protect the environment and safeguard the interests of the community, especially when faced with business decisions that may have a negative impact on the environment and the community. Regarding the need for companies to be greedy, it can be a double-edged sword for companies. On the one hand, greed can motivate a business to be aggressive and drive it to seek greater profits and higher market share. But on the other hand, excessive greed can, make enterprises lose moral restraints, do illegal acts, harm public interests, and may ultimately lead to the bankruptcy of the enterprise. While pursuing profits, enterprises must follow business ethics and morals, and must not resort to any means in order to maximise profits, and a set of framework of social responsibility due to enterprises is proposed on this basis to guide enterprises to give full consideration to environmental protection and social welfare and achieve sustainable development.(TerBush, 2021)

2.0 Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company Case Study

2.1 Background of the Minamata Disease Incident in Japan

In the 1950s and 1960s after the Second World War, Japan's heavy industry developed rapidly, and awareness of and technology for environmental protection were not yet perfect enough to regulate the treatment and discharge of industrial wastewater laxly. Japan Nitrogen Fertilizer Company's Minamata plant in order to save costs, did not take effective wastewater treatment measures, directly discharged wastewater containing toxic substances into the nearby water bodies, Japan's Minamata disease is the earliest emergence of public disease caused by industrial wastewater discharge pollution, the main cause of the accident is that Japan Nitrogen Fertilizer Company discharged wastewater without any treatment to Minamata Bay, resulting in organic mercury, methylmercury, all containing highly toxic substances contaminate a large number of marine organisms were then harvested and consumed, resulting in more than 10,000 people falling ill in the 20 years before and after the accident.(Yorifuji, 2020)

3.0 Business ethics issues involved in Japanese nitrogen fertilizer companies

Business ethics issues are moral and ethical issues in business activities, such as whether business behaviors are legal, ethical and socially responsible, etc. Business ethics advocates that enterprises should uphold honesty, fairness and social responsibility in the

course of their operations, and pursue sustainable development and protection of the environment.(Kolk, 2016)

The indiscriminate discharge of water by the Japanese nitrogen fertiliser company has seriously damaged the environment and posed a serious threat to human health, in violation of the social responsibility that enterprises should follow. This action is not only unethical, but may also lead to serious damage to the image and reputation of the company, which will have a negative impact on its long-term development, in addition to the company's attempt to avoid legal liability by providing some small compensation to the victims.(Daigle, 2020) Japanese nitrogen fertilizer companies first denied that their wastewater discharge was the cause of Minamata disease. The scientists they hired conducted some controversial studies to try to prove that methylmercury was not the cause of Minamata disease.(Sugiyama, 2015)

The government's response also caused controversy. At first, the government did not pay enough attention to the matter and did not conduct timely investigation and intervention. In some cases, the government has even supported the Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company's view that Minamata disease may have been caused by other causes. These actions are considered to be an attempt by companies and governments to evade

responsibility and make victims suffer greater pain. It was not until 1968 that the government officially recognized that Minamata disease was caused by industrial pollution and began to provide compensation to victims.(Aung, no date)

Nowadays, people should reflect on the previous tragedy. By implementing stricter environmental protection wastewater and sewage treatment, factories are operating under the supervision of the government. The government should also introduce relevant environmental protection laws and call on enterprises to pay attention to the ecological environment during the production process and avoid Tragedy strikes again.(Beatley, 2012)

The benefit of ethical business management is that it can help companies establish a good reputation in society. Companies that follow ethical principles can establish an image of trust and integrity, help attract the attention of customers, employees, and investors, and bring more opportunities and benefits to the company. It is also a key element in maintaining good customer relationships. By following ethical principles, companies can provide high-quality products and services that meet customer expectations, increase customer loyalty, and foster the development of long-term relationships. Companies that operate ethically tend to attract and retain good employees. Employees want to work in an environment with ethical integrity, fairness and respect, and are more likely to choose a

company that is ethical and can provide working conditions that are conducive to employee development and consistent with their professional ethics. Complying with business ethics principles helps companies avoid legal and moral risks. If a company fails to adhere to ethical standards, it may face legal action, fines, reputational damage, and other problems. By establishing an ethical corporate culture, companies can reduce legal risks and avoid unnecessary losses.(Trevino & Nelson, 2021)

3.1 Analysis of Teleology and Deontology of Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company

Japan's economic growth was completed with the support of a huge chemical industry. Japan's economy recovered after World War II and its industry developed rapidly. In order to maximize profits, factories discharged sewage and created considerable economic achievements and provided local employment. Therefore, nitrogen fertilizers as a key enterprise, the company has received strong support from the government. From a small company in 1908, it grew into a 4 billion business empire in 1945. From a teleological perspective, the Nitrogen Fertilizer Company is a successful enterprise.(Molony, 1990)

Enterprise teleology includes capitalist teleology According to the capitalist perspective, the main purpose of an enterprise is to maximize profits and maximize shareholder value. According to this view, companies should strive to create the greatest financial returns for shareholders. There is also the stakeholder teleology view, which believes that the purpose

of a company is to satisfy the needs and interests of various stakeholders, including shareholders, employees, customers, suppliers, society and the environment. According to this view, companies should pursue balancing the interests of all parties, not just the interests of shareholders, and the teleology of social responsibility holds that the purpose of a company is to achieve social responsibility and sustainable development. According to this point of view, enterprises should consider social and environmental impacts and actively fulfil social responsibilities in business activities. Finally, the teleology of creating shared value emphasizes that enterprises should achieve their purpose by creating shared value. Shared value refers to creating economic value and social value at the same time through business activities to promote social progress and sustainable development. (Singer & Smith, 1997)

If analysed from a deontological perspective, the primary obligation of Japanese nitrogen fertilizer companies is to meet the needs of agricultural production. High-quality nitrogen fertilizer should have the characteristics of high purity, high nutritional value, and low pollution to ensure good growth and harvest of crops. Protect the environment: Excessive use of nitrogen fertilizers may lead to soil and water pollution and have a negative impact on the ecological environment. Japanese nitrogen fertilizer companies should actively take environmental protection measures, including developing and promoting low-pollution

nitrogen fertilizer products, providing guidance on environmentally friendly use, and reducing the use of nitrogen fertilizers.(Schultz, 2000)

At the same time, waste treatment and discharge should be carried out in compliance with relevant environmental protection laws and regulations. Provide agricultural technical support: As a nitrogen fertilizer manufacturer, Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company should actively provide agricultural technical support to help farmers use nitrogen fertilizer correctly and improve crop yield and quality. This includes providing training, technical guidance, relevant information, etc. to help farmers achieve sustainable agricultural development. Actively participate in social responsibility activities Companies should actively participate in social responsibility activities and contribute to society. This includes funding agricultural research projects, supporting rural education and poverty alleviation, and participating in community environmental protection. Through these activities, companies can give back to society and enhance their corporate reputation.(Janker, 2020)

3.2 Teleological and deontological conclusions of Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company

Before relevant laws and regulations were formulated, everyone had no concept of environmental protection and did not know the ecological damage and diseases that pollution discharge might cause. The Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company operated in

order to maximize economic benefits and was in line with the teleological business philosophy.(Vadastreanu et al., 2015) The business models carried out in different historical stages cannot be viewed from today's perspective. If Japan's nitrogen fertilizer industry in 1960 was to maximize profits and reduce pollution costs, it would be in line with the teleological business philosophy but not in line with the deontology because there was no environmental protection at that time. Concept, after the regulations are in place, factories around the world should follow the concept of environmental protection and be committed to developing and promoting more efficient and environmentally friendly chemical products to reduce the negative impact on the environment.(Baumol & Oates, 1988)

3.3 Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company Stakeholders

Stakeholders include businesses: caused by the emission of mercury pollutants from the chemical plant Nippon Nitrogen Fertiliser. Therefore, Nippon Nitrogen Fertiliser Company and other related companies are one of the stakeholders of Minamata disease.

Government: The Japanese government at that time did not pay enough attention and regulation to Minamata disease and did not take necessary measures to limit and prevent mercury pollution. Therefore, the government is also considered as one of the stakeholders of Minamata disease. Medical organisations: Medical organisations and medical professionals are stakeholders in Minamata disease as people suffering from Minamata

disease need to be treated and rehabilitated. They provide medical services as well as research and education related knowledge. Victims and their families: Victims of Minamata disease and their families are the most direct stakeholders. They have suffered physically and psychologically as a result of Minamata disease and need compensation, treatment and support.(Ui, 1992)

Environmental organisations and activists are stakeholders fighting to protect the environment and human health. They are exposing and protesting against Minamata disease and pushing governments and businesses to take measures to prevent similar events from happening again. Scientific research institutes and scholars: Scientific research institutes and scholars play an important role in studying and understanding the causes, treatment and prevention of Minamata disease. Their research and findings can provide a scientific basis for the treatment, prevention and control of Minamata disease.(Daigle, 2020)

Stakeholders in Minamata disease include businesses, Governments, medical institutions, victims and their families, environmental organisations and activists, as well as scientific research institutions and academics. Each stakeholder has its own role and responsibility and should work together to prevent similar environmental disasters.(Kobayashi, 2018)

4.0 Japanese Nitrogen Fertilizer Company's Corporate Social Responsibility

(CSR)

Corporate social responsibility refers to the fact that while pursuing economic interests, an enterprise takes into account the impact of its behaviour on society and the environment and voluntarily assumes responsibility for society and the environment, including multiple responsibilities such as responsibility to investors, responsibility to employees, responsibility to consumers, and responsibility to the community and society. These responsibilities include not only the obligations stipulated in laws and regulations, but also obligations that enterprises voluntarily undertake beyond the scope of their legal responsibilities in the absence of external pressure. (Schrempf-Stirling et al., 2016)

The goal of CSR is to promote the sustained and balanced development of the enterprise in the three aspects of economy, society and environment, and to achieve the harmonious coexistence of the enterprise, society and the environment. The contents of CSR include: fair employment, protection of employees' rights and interests, environmental protection, community participation, honesty and trustworthiness, protection of consumers' rights and interests, and public welfare and charity, etc. Fulfilment of CSR by the enterprise not only improves the social image of the enterprise and wins the recognition and trust of the

consumers, but also improves the employees' job satisfaction and loyalty, and promotes the long-term development of the enterprise.(Crowther & Seifi, 2018)

Social Responsibility of Nitrogen Fertiliser Companies, the occurrence of Minamata disease has led people to think about the roles and responsibilities of corporations. Organic pollutants emitted from chemical plants directly caused serious harm to the health of citizens, which stimulated a discussion on the ethical issue of corporate social responsibility, whereby companies should not only focus on profitability, but also be responsible for the social, environmental and health impacts of their operations.

Government responsibility the outbreak of Minamata disease has triggered a rethinking of government regulatory responsibilities. Governments play an important role in protecting the public interest and maintaining social stability, and should therefore take the necessary measures to supervise and regulate industrial activities to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents. Government responsibility for environmental protection and public health is indispensable.(Portney, 2016)

The ecological environment invokes moral responsibility and public awareness when the severity of pollution prompts people to realise the importance of individual and societal

responsibility for the environment and public safety. The public should actively participate in and promote environmental protection and health awareness, and at the same time, through the power of monitoring and public opinion, push governments and enterprises to improve environmental management and health safety measures.(Jia et al., 2017) The occurrence of Minamata disease has triggered deep moral and ethical reflection on industrialisation, corporate responsibility, government functions and public awareness. It reminds us that, along with economic development, we must pay attention to environmental protection, social responsibility and public safety. Only with the concerted efforts of all parties can sustainable development be achieved and people's health and well-being safeguarded.

5.0 Conclusion

The aim of this report is to understand the importance of business ethics for business operations, so based on this analysis of the case study, it was concluded that at different stages of history, especially in the period when behaviour was not regulated, it was only after something bad had happened that people tried to avoid the same mistake from happening again, and ultimately it was concluded that businesses, for the sake of maximising profit, should not do anything contrary to the moral and ethical principles.(Kolstad, 2007) While it is true that the ultimate goal of business includes profit

maximisation, this does not mean that businesses can do whatever they want. On the one hand, businesses need to comply with legal requirements and not act against the law. On the other hand, businesses need to follow business ethics and morals and not act to the detriment of their employees, consumers, communities and the environment. The final conclusion is that greed can be used as a driving force for business growth, but it cannot be the sole guide for business behaviour.

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