

UPSC Mains GS - 4 (Ethics Case Study)

Questions Analysis

- Prabhat was working as Vice President (Marketing) at Sterling Electric Ltd., a reputed multinational company. But presently the company was passing through the difficult times as the sales were continuously showing downward trend in the last two quarters.
- His division, which hitherto had been a major revenue contributor to the company's financial health, was now desperately trying to procure some big government order for them. But their best efforts did not yield any positive success or breakthrough.
- His was a professional company and his local bosses were under pressure from their London-based HO to show some positive results. In the last performance review meeting taken by the Executive Director (India Head), he was reprimanded for his poor performance.
- He assured them that his division is working on a special contract from the Ministry of Defense for a secret installation near Gwalior and tender is being submitted shortly.

- He was under extreme pressure and he was deeply perturbed. What aggravated the situation further was a warning from the top that if the deal is not clinched in favour of the company, his division might have to be closed and he may have to quit his lucrative job.
- There was another dimension which was causing him deep mental torture and agony. This pertained to his personal precarious financial health. He was a single earner in the family with two school-college going children and his old ailing mother.
- The heavy expenditure on education and medical was causing a big strain to his monthly pay packet. Regular EMI for housing loan taken from bank unavoidable and any default would render him liable for severe legal action.
- In the above backdrop, he was hoping for some miracle to happen. There was sudden turn of events. His Secretary informed that a gentleman Subhas Verma wanted to see him as he was interested in the position of Manager which was to be filled by him in the company. He further brought to his notice that his CV has been received through the office of the Minister of Defence.

- During interview of the candidate - Subhash Verma, he found him technically sound, resourceful and experienced marketeer. He seemed to be well-conversant with tendering procedures and having knack of follow-up and liaising in this regard Prabhat felt that he was better choice than the rest of the candidates who were recently interviewed by him in the last few days.
- Subhash Verma also indicated that he was in possession of the copies of the bid documents that the Unique Electronics Ltd. would be submitting the next day to the Defence Ministry for their tender. He offered to hand over those documents subject to his employment in the company on suitable terms and conditions. He made it clear that in the process, the Sterling Electric Ltd. could outbid their rival company and get the bid and hefty Defence Ministry order. He indicated that it will be win-win situation for both-him and the company.

• Prabhat was absolutely stunned. It was a mixed feeling of shock and thrill. He was uncomfortable and perspiring. If accepted, all his problems would vanish instantly and he may be rewarded for securing the much awaited tender and thereby boosting company's sales and financial health. He was in a fix as to the future course of action. He was wonder-struck at the guts of Subhash Verma in having surreptitiously removing his own company papers and offering to the rival company for a job. Being an experienced person, he was examining the pros and cons of the proposal/situation and he asked him to come the next day.

- a) Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case.
- b) Critically examine the options available to Prabhat in the above situation.
- c) Which of the above would be the most appropriate for Prabhat and why?

(Answer in 250 words) 20

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical Issues involved
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Conclude appropriately

Intro

Case Study deals with – Integrity, business ethics, tough decision – private challenges

Stakeholders

Prabhat, his family, Subhash, boss, both companies, other candidates, Defense project

Ethical issues

1. Private Ethics
2. Professional Ethics
3. Business Ethics
4. Corporate Governance
5. Dilemmas
 - i. Responsibility towards Family vs Integrity
 - ii. Competency vs Honesty
 - iii. Loyalty towards company vs Work Ethics

Options Available

Option 1

Hire Subhash and get bid document

Merit

Better for company, avoid personal financial crisis.

Demerit

Unethical, criminal offence, sensitive and secretive project – against national interest, unreliable employee – risk to company, cognitive-dissonance.

Options Available

Option 2

Not to hire Subhash but not take action against him

Merit

Decision secures - Integrity, honesty, corporate governance, companies reputation

Demerit

May lead to financial loss to company, personal financial crisis, Subhash may not do course correction

Options Available

Option 3

Not to hire Subhash, take action against him, put efforts to win bid

Merit

Fair play, business ethics, responsible action, higher chances of winning bid, employees trust

Demerit

Subhash will loose job, you may end up in litigation, loose focus.

Choose the Option 3

Reasons – Values that it seek

Conclusion

Measures to improve corporate governance, inculcate professionalism, trainings

- Ramesh is State Civil Services Officer who got the opportunity of getting posted to the capital of a border State after rendering 20 years of service. Ramesh's mother has recently been detected cancer and has been admitted in the leading cancer hospital of the city. His two adolescent children have also got admission in one of the best public schools of the town.
- After settling down in his appointment as Director in the Home Department of the State, Ramesh got confidential report through intelligence sources that illegal migrants are infiltrating in the State from the neighbouring country. He decided to personally carry out surprise check of the border posts along with his Home Department team.
- To his surprise, he caught red-handed two families of 12 members infiltrated with the connivance of the security personnel at the border posts.

- On further inquiry and investigation, it was found that after the migrants from neighbouring country infiltrate, their documentation like Aadhaar Card, Ration Card and Voter Card are also forged and they are made to settle down in a particular area of the State.
- Ramesh prepared the detailed and comprehensive report and submitted to the Additional Secretary of the State. However, he has summoned by the Additional Home Secretary after a week and was instructed to withdraw the report.
- The Additional Home Secretary informed Ramesh that the report submitted by him has not been appreciated by the higher authorities. He further cautioned him that if he fails to withdraw the confidential ort, he will not only be posted out from the prestigious appointment from the State capital but his further promotion which is due in near future will also get in jeopardy.

- a) What are the options available to Ramesh as the Director of the Home Department of the bordering State?
- b) What option should Ramesh adopt and why?
- c) Critically evaluate each of the options.
- d) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Ramesh?
- e) What policy measures would you suggest to combat the menace of infiltration of illegal migrants from the neighbouring country?

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical dilemma faced
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Policy measures to combat the menace of infiltration of illegal migrants

Intro

Case Study deals with – Officer faced with dilemma – Public Interest vs Private Interest

Stakeholders

Ramesh, family, illegal migrants, additional secretary, higher ups, border security forces, citizens, society

Ethical Dilemmas

1. Private Interest vs Public Interest
2. Accountability to Citizens vs Responsibility of Family
3. Transparency vs National embarrassment
4. Rule of Law vs Loyalty to Department
5. Practicality vs Uprightness

Options Available

Option 1

Withdraw report and do nothing

Merit

Family future safe, promotion.

Demerit

Unethical, criminal offence, compromise national interest and citizen's rights, cognitive-dissonance.

Options Available

Option 2

Withdraw report and leak it to media and public

Merit

Ensures - check on illegal activities, accountability, transparency, call of conscience answered.

Demerit

Against the code of conduct rules, embarrassment for national-security, international relation soured, political vendetta.

Options Available

Option 3

Refuse to withdraw report and be ready to face consequences

Merit

Report may be actioned further, check on illegal activities, commitment towards duty, psychological gratification and motivation.

Demerit

Inconvenience for self and family, the report may not see the light of the day.

Options Available

Option 4

Politely refuse to withdraw report and talk to Higher officers

Merit

May get support of the Higher officers, and secure accountability at all levels.

Demerit

The report may not see the light of the day

Choose the Option 4

Reasons – Values that it seek

Policy measures to combat the menace of infiltration of illegal migrants

1. Border security Management upgradation
2. Patrolling use of technology such as drones
3. Collaboration with neighboring countries – Bilateral agreement
4. Linkages between Police, BSF, Intelligence, etc.
5. Migration Policy and Strict Implementation

Conclusion

National Security most important, strict implementation of Foreigners Act, 1946.

- The Supreme Court has banned mining in the Aravalli Hills to stop degradation the forest cover and to maintain ecological balance. However, the stone mining is still prevalent in the border district of the affected State with connivance of certain corrupt forest officials and politicians.
- Young and dynamic SP who was recently posted in the affected district promised to himself to stop this menace. In one of his surprise checks with his team, he found loaded truck with stone trying to escape the mining area. He tried to stop the truck but the truck driver overrun the police officer, killing him on the spot and thereafter managed to flee. Police filed FIR but no breakthrough was achieved in the case for almost three months.
- Ashok who was the Investigative Journalist working with leading TV channel, suo moto started investigating the case. Within one month, Ashok got breakthrough by interacting with local people, stone mining mafia and government officials.

- He prepared his investigative story and presented to the CMD of the TV channel. He exposed in his investigative report the complete nexus of stone mafia working with blessing of corrupt police and civil officials and politicians. The politician who was involved in the mafia was no one else but local MLA who was considered to be very close to the Chief Minister. After going through the investigative report, the CMD advised Ashok to drop the idea of making the story public through electronic media.
- He informed that the local MLA was not only the relative of the owner of the TV channel but also had unofficially 20 percent share in the channel. The CMD further informed Ashok that his further promotion and hike in pay will be taken care of in addition the soft loan of 10 lakhs which he has taken from the TV channel for his son's chronic disease will be suitably adjusted if he hands over the investigative report to him.

- a) What are the options available with Ashok to cope up with the situation?
- b) Critically evaluate/examine each of the options identified by Ashok.
- c) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Ashok?
- d) Which of the options, do you think, would be the most appropriate for Ashok to adopt and why?
- e) In the above scenario, what type of training would you suggest for police officers posted to such districts where stone mining illegal activities are rampant?

(Answer in 250 words) 20

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical dilemma faced
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Suggest type of training for police officers posted to such districts

Intro

Case Studies deals with – Ethical Journalism, challenges faced by Journalist

Stakeholders

SP, Ashok, his son, mafia, forest official, police, civil officer, MLA, CMD, owner of TV channel, Citizen

Ethical dilemma faced

1. Responsible Journalism vs Responsibility towards family
2. Public Interest vs Private Interest
3. Justice for the Dead vs Compassion for the ill
4. Commitment to Profession vs Commitment to Organization
5. Duty towards Citizen vs Consequence of Action

Options Available

Option 1

Drop the idea of making the story public through electronic media and hand over the report.

Merit

Save the child, promotion, hike.

Demerit

Unethical, against principle of journalism, waste of sacrifice of the SP, compromise public interest

Options Available

Option 2

Try to convince the CMD regarding the gravity of the situation and remind him the ethics of Journalism

Merit

He might have a change of mind and support

Demerit

He might shot down the suggestion.

Options Available

Option 3

Leak the report and make someone else publish it.

Merit

Stakeholders involved in the crime made accountable to public, no direct responsibility

Demerit

Channel may get suspicious, may be removed from job, vendetta.

Options Available

Option 4

Hand over the report to collector office or state government directly or through an NGO

Merit

The criminals booked for offences, action against all stakeholders involved, may get recognition for the work and job in other Channel.

Demerit

Further investigation may just go on indefinitely

Choose the Option 4

Reasons – Values that it seek

Suggestion on type of training for police officers posted to such districts

1. Protocol with respect to size of support team on inspection
2. Use of Technology – Drone, Robots to check and gather evidence
3. The knowledge of supply chain of Mining activity
4. Advanced combat and weapon training

Conclusion

Ensure accountability in journalism, ownership rules in News agency, social security for journalist, comprehensive plan to tackle illegal mining.

- You have done MBA from a reputed institution three years back but could not get campus placement due to COVID-19 generated recession. However, after a lot of persuasion and series of competitive tests including written and interview, you managed to get a job in a leading shoe company.
- You have ageur parents who are dependent and staying with you. You also recently got married after getting this decent job. You were allotted the Inspection Section which is responsible for clearing the final product. In first one year, you learnt your job well and was appreciated for your performance by the management.
- The company is doing good business for last five years in domestic market and this year it is decided even to export to Europe and Gulf countries. However, one large consignment to Europe was rejected by their Inspecting Team due to certain poor quality and was sent back. The top management ordered that ibid consignment to be cleared for the domestic market.

- As a part of Inspecting Team, you observed the glaring poor quality and brought to the knowledge of the Team Commander. However, the top management advised all the members of the team to overlook these defects as the management cannot bear such a huge loss.
- Rest of the team members except you promptly signed and cleared the consignment for domestic market, overlooking glaring defects. You again brought to the knowledge of the Team Commander that such consignment, if cleared even for domestic market, will tarnish the image and reputation of the company and will be counter-productive in the long run.
- However, you were further advised by the top management that if you do not clear the consignment, the company will not hesitate to terminate your services citing certain innocuous reasons.

- a) Under the given conditions, what are the options available to you as a member of the Inspecting Team?
- b) Critically evaluate each of the options listed by you.
- c) What option would you adopt and why?
- d) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by you?
- e) What can be the consequences of overlooking the observations raised by the Inspecting Team?

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical dilemma faced
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Consequences of overlooking observations raised by Inspecting Team

Intro

Case Studies deals with – Profit making overpower empathy for others.

Stakeholders

MBA Graduate, Family, Shoe company, Team Commander, Management, Team members, Customers, Government.

Ethical dilemma faced

1. Customer Interest vs Private Interest
2. Commitment to ones values vs Commitment to ones Family
3. Corporate social responsibility vs Profitability
4. Following Law vs Following guidelines from Management
5. Companies Revenue vs Companies Reputation
6. Work Ethics vs Team Work

Options Available

Option 1

Follow the instruction/advice of the Team Commander/Management

Merit

Save job, take care of family, company will make up for the loss

Demerit

Unethical, breach trust of customer and harm them, illegal action, may tarnish companies reputation

Options Available

Option 2

Try to convince the top management about litigation and the long term loss for company.
Suggest to upgrade the quality of product.

Merit

Company may rethink on it, you might be seen as a loyal employee genuinely interested, the company may drop the plan.

Demerit

They may reprimand or terminate you

Options Available

Option 3

Decline to comply with the advice given and start looking for another job.

Merit

You will act in public interest and also try to secure your future, you will stick to your values.

Demerit

They might terminate you, you may be unemployed and face financial stress

Options Available

Option 4

Decline to comply with the advice given by management and taking it up with media/civil society

Merit

Company will have to do course correction, public interest secured, you work might be recognized.

Demerit

You might be seen as disloyal to the company and other companies might fear to hire you.

Choose the Option 3 then 4

Reasons – Values that it seek

Consequences of overlooking the observations raised by the Inspecting Team

1. Health impact on the customers
2. Litigations
3. Loss of Brand
4. Reduction in Customer base
5. Attrition

- Rakesh was working as a Joint Commissioner in Transport department of a city. As a part of his job profile, among others, he was entrusted with the task of overseeing the control and functioning of City Transport Department.
- A case strike by drivers' union of City Transport Department over the issue of compensation to a driver who died on duty while driving the bus came up before him for decision in the matter.
- He gathered that the driver (deceased) was plying Bus No. 528 which passed through busy and congested roads of the city. It so happened that near an intersection on the way, there was an accident involving the a middle-aged man. It was found that there was altercation between the driver and the car driver. Heated arguments between them led to fight and the driver gave him a blow. Lot of passerbys had gathered and tried to intervene but without success.

- Eventually, both of them were badly injured and profusely bleeding and were taken to the nearby hospital. The driver succumbed to the injuries and could not be saved. The middle-aged driver's condition was also critical but after a day, he recovered and was discharged.
- Police had immediately come to the spot and FIR was registered. Police investigation revealed that the quarrel in was started by the bus driver and he had resorted to physical violence. There exchange of blows between them.
- The City Transport Department management is considering of not giving any extra compensation to the driver's (deceased) family. The family is very aggrieved. depressed and agitated against the discriminatory and non-sympathetic approach of the City Transport Department management.
- The bus driver (deceased) was 52 years of age, was survived by his wife and two school-college going daughters. He was the sole earner of the family.

- The City Transport Department workers' union took up this case and when found no favourable response from the management, decided to go on strike
 - The union's demand was two fold. First was full extra compensation as given to other drivers who died on duty and secondly employment to one family member. The strike has continued for 10 days and the deadlock remains.
- a) What are the options available to Rakesh to meet the above situation?
 - b) Critically examine each of the options identified by Rakesh
 - c) What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Rakesh?
 - d) What course of action would Rakesh adopt to diffuse the above situation?

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical dilemma faced
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Course of action would Rakesh adopt to diffuse the above situation

Intro

Case Studies deals with – Altercation – challenge of being fair and empathetic at the same time

Stakeholders

Bus driver, Family, middle aged driver, Police, Transport Department, Union,

Ethical dilemma faced

1. Compensation to family vs Rewarding act of Violence
2. Empathy towards family vs Illegitimate demand of Union
3. Conceding to demands for public service vs Creation of precedent
4. Rule of Law vs Practical Wisdom

Options Available

Option 1

Concede to the demands of the union

Merit

Family compensated, Public inconvenience removed.

Demerit

Against rule of law, wrong precedent to other drivers, more rowdy behavior, good driver demotivated harm full for citizens in long run

Options Available

Option 2

Decline the unreasonable demands of the union.

Merit

Not succumbing to the unjust demands

Demerit

Un-empathetic gesture, escalation of the issue, strike causing inconvenience to citizens

Options Available

Option 3

Hold a meeting with the Union, Officials and discuss the ramification if demands were met such as – Put the transport service in bad light, reduction in the passengers, impact on overall profitability of the transport, wrong precedents to other drivers.

Merit

Union may feel being heard, the dialogue may be fruitful.

Demerit

The strike may still continue.

Options Available

Option 4

Hold a meeting with the Union, Officials and discuss the ramification if demands were met and as an exception give a job to family member

Merit

Union may feel satisfied, strike will get over, at the same time future such incidence will not be encouraged

Choose the Option 4

Reasons – Values that it seek

Course of action would Rakesh adopt to diffuse the above situation

1. Hold meeting with all stake holder
2. Give them time to put forth there grievances
3. Convey condolences for the deceased
4. Give them assurance that interest of all stake holder will be ensured
5. Remind them about there duty to the people and the department

Conclusion

Code of conduct for the drivers, grievance mechanism for the drivers, fund for the drivers who are in need

- You are appointed as an officer heading the section in Environment Pollution Control Board to ensure compliance and its follow-up. In that region, there were large number of small and medium industries which had been granted clearance. You learnt that these industries provide employment to many migrant worker.
- Most of the industrial units have got environmental clearance certificate in their possession. The environmental clearance seeks to curb industries and projects that supposedly hamper environment and living species in the region, But in practice most of these units remain to be polluting units in several ways like air, water and soil pollution. As such, local people encountered persistent health problems.
- It was confirmed that majority of the industries were violating environmental compliance. You issued notice to all the industrial units to apply for fresh environmental clearance certificate from the competent authority. However, your action met with hostile response from a section of the industrial units, other vested interest persons and a section of the local politicians.

- The workers also became hostile to you as they felt that your action would lead to the closure of these industrial units, and the resultant unemployment will lead to insecurity uncertainty in their livelihood.
- Many owners of the industries approached you with the plea that you should not initiate harsh action as it would compel them their units, and cause huge financial loss, shortage of their products in the market. These would obviously add to the sufferings of the laborers and the consumers alike. The labour union also sent you representation requesting against the closure of the units.
- You simultaneously started receiving threats from unknown corners. You however received supports from some of your colleagues, who advised you to act freely to ensure environmental compliance. Local NGOs also came to your support and they demanded the closure of the polluting units immediately.

- (a) What are the options available to you under the given situation?
- (b) Critically examine the options listed by you.
- (c) What type of mechanism would you suggest to ensure environmental compliance?
- (d) What are the ethical dilemmas you faced in exercising your option?

Approach:

1. Give a brief outline of the case.
2. List the stakeholders involved.
3. Ethical dilemma faced
4. Mention options available (Merits and Demerits)
5. Option selected - reasons
6. Type of mechanism to ensure environmental compliance

Intro

Case Studies deals with – Polluting industry and the decision of closure of it and impact on the workers along with threat to decision maker.

Stakeholders

Officer in charge, other officials, industry owners, environment, migrant workers, local population, local NGO's, consumers, local politician

Ethical dilemma faced

1. Duty vs Persona safety
2. Environmental consideration vs Economic implications
3. Health of people vs availability of goods to the people
4. Empathy towards migrant worker vs empathy to the local population
5. Adherence to Rule vs Use of discretion

Options Available

Option 1

Withdraw the notice to apply for fresh clearance

Merit

Personal safety ensured, continuity of economic activity, work for migrant, people get the goods.

Demerit

Against the law, impact on health of people, environmental degradation, against the official duty towards the citizens.

Options Available

Option 2

Do not withdraw the notice and continue with the process of seeking fresh clearance certificate

Merit

Arrest environmental degradation and health issues, ensuring the Rule of Law.

Demerit

Personal safety compromised, economic activity arrested, precarious condition for workers.

Options Available

Option 3

Call a meeting for discussion with all stakeholders, advice them to make course correction, suggest some temporary measures, and defer the environmental clearance certification with fixed date in future.

Merit

Reduce environmental degradation and health issues, ensure that economic development not arrested, empathetic decision for the workers.

Demerit

NGO's may not be fully convinced.

Choose the Option 3

Reasons – Values that it seek

Type of mechanism to ensure environmental compliance

1. Online process of environmental clearance – Transparency
2. Regular Audit Mechanism – Accountability
3. Citizen grievance portal for complain
4. Guideline regarding pollution control in public platform
5. Strict implementation of the guidelines with strict action against the deviant.

Conclusion

Emphasis on sustainable economic development, Corporate Social Responsibility

Thank You