

**UPSC GS Mains**

# Ethics Case Studies

By  
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# Case Study Themes

<b>Animal Rights and Ethics</b>
<b>Corporate Governance and Ethics in Private Organizations</b>
<b>Crisis and Disaster Management</b>
<b>Education and Ethics</b>
<b>Environmental Ethics</b>
<b>Ethical Dilemmas and Personal Integrity</b>
<b>Ethics in Administration and Governance</b>
<b>Health and Medical Ethics</b>
<b>International Relations and Ethics</b>
<b>Media and Journalism Ethics</b>
<b>Public Service Delivery</b>
<b>Social and Community Issues</b>
<b>Sports and Ethics</b>
<b>Technology and Ethics</b>

# Case Study

*As the Head of the Municipal Corporation, you are faced with a challenging situation wherein two groups of concerned citizens have approached you. One, expressing their frustrations and concerns regarding the menace caused by street dogs in the city and other, taking steps towards encouraging compassion and humane treatment to these silent beings.*

*The first plea highlights the rising incidents of stray dogs' attacking or killing the vulnerable members of society especially children. They point to inadequate sterilisation and vaccination of dogs as exacerbating the situation. They demand the immediate removal of street dogs and their relocation elsewhere.*

*The second plea however points to ineffective animal healthcare and control, illegal breeding centres, pet owners abandoning their pets on the streets as root of the problem. They argue that the system or the people responsible for the situation should be punished, not the animals.*

*Furthermore, India has laws in place that make it illegal to remove a dog from the streets. This means that once a dog is on the streets, it has a "right" to stay there unless adopted. Balancing the animals' right to life with human safety concerns is proving to be a difficult task.*

- (a) What are the ethical dilemmas involved in the case?*
- (b) Evaluate the implications of favouring one plea over the other.*
- (c) What course of action would resolve the situation in the immediate as well as long term?*

# Approach

- Give a brief introduction of the case study.
- Highlight the ethical dilemmas involved in the case.
- Evaluate the implications of favouring one plea over the other.
- Give a course of action that would resolve the situation in the immediate as well as long term.
- Give a brief conclusion.

# Answer

**Introduction:** Two groups with conflicting views on handling street dogs: one seeks removal due to safety concerns, the other advocates humane treatment.

## Ethical Dilemmas:

- **Animal vs. Human Rights:** Balancing legal animal rights with public safety.
- **Safety vs. Harmony:** Protecting humans while respecting animal welfare.
- **Comparing Sufferings:** Weighing human suffering against animal welfare.
- **Human Responsibility:** Duty to protect other living beings.

## Implications of Favoring One Plea Over the Other:

### Favoring the First Plea:

- **Pros:** Protects human life, creates safer environment, addresses public concerns.
- **Cons:** Violates animal rights, potential inhumane treatment, ignores root causes.

### Favoring the Second Plea:

- **Pros:** Upholds animal rights, legally compliant, addresses root causes.
- **Cons:** Immediate safety concerns remain, potential public frustration.

# Answer

## Course of Action:

### Immediate Term:

- **Vaccination:** Vaccinate stray dogs.
- **Designated Feeding Areas:** Establish feeding areas.
- **Animal Helplines:** Set up helplines for reporting issues.
- **Mass Sterilization:** Reduce stray population.

### Long-Term:

- **Animal Shelters:** Create more shelters.
- **Public Education:** Promote responsible pet ownership.
- **Implement Laws:** Enhance spaying/neutering funding, enforce cruelty laws.
- **Community Involvement:** Foster partnerships for adoption and foster programs.

**Conclusion:** Balanced approach prioritizing human safety and animal welfare, with immediate and long-term strategies for harmonious resolution.

# Case Study

*You are working as a Divisional Forest Officer in an area which is home to tigers. Recently, there have been reports of a tiger venturing into agricultural fields and also killing livestock of villagers. Unfortunately, 2-3 villagers have been killed by some wild animals in last few weeks. Villagers claim that the tiger has killed their fellow villagers and request you to protect their lives and property by either relocating or killing the man-eater tiger. They also obstructed investigation of forest officials to ascertain whether it was the work of tiger or some other animals. Your attempts to trap the tiger have not been successful. Concerned over the delay in killing or relocating the tiger, villagers hire a private hunter to kill the tiger on their own and argue that they have a right to defend themselves and their property. In this context, answer the following questions:*

- (a) Identify the issues involved in this scenario.*
- (b) What steps would you take as the Divisional Forest Officer to ensure villagers' safety along with protection of tigers?*

# Approach

- Give a brief summary of the case at hand.
- Identify various stakeholders and issues in the case.
- List down the steps you would take to ensure villagers' safety along with protection of tigers.



# Answer

**Introduction:** In this case, a tiger has ventured into agricultural fields, killing livestock and possibly villagers. The villagers demand protection, while some have hired a private hunter to kill the tiger.

## **(a) Issues Involved:**

- Right to life, property, and livelihood of villagers.
- Protection of tigers under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- Obstruction of investigation by villagers.
- Illegal hiring of private hunters.

# Answer

## (b) Steps as Divisional Forest Officer:

### 1. Investigation:

- **Persuasion:** Convince villagers to allow investigation.
- **Legal Action:** Against obstruction.
- **Identification:** Use camera traps to identify the tiger.

### 2. Villager Safety:

- **Awareness:** Educate on tiger sightings.
- **Restricted Entry:** Encourage avoiding forests; find safe sites for livestock.
- **Supervised Entry:** Groups with forest guards.
- **Collaboration:** Form a villager group for reporting sightings.
- **Compensation:** Ensure compensation for losses.

# Answer

## 3. Addressing Private Hunters:

- **Legal Warning:** Inform hiring hunters is illegal.
- **Legal Action:** If hunter remains, take action under WPA, 1972.

## 4. Protecting Wildlife:

- **Monitoring:** Daily with veterinarian, NGO, and Panchayat member.
- **Trapping:** Deploy resources to trap the tiger.
- **Chemical Immobilization:** If trapping fails.
- **Relocation:** If tiger confirmed as a man-eater.
- **Other Animals:** Minimize conflict, capture, and relocate if another animal is responsible.

**Conclusion:** Balancing protection of villagers and wildlife requires thorough investigation, legal enforcement, public awareness, and proactive conflict management.

# Case Study

***You are the District Magistrate of a district, which is the hub of coaching centres for engineering as well as medical entrance exams. Recently, around 5 students have committed suicide owing to academic and social pressure. Students in the age group 15-18 years from across the country come to the district with the dream of getting admission into prestigious institutions like the IITs and AIIMS. However, the coaching institutes are business-minded and want to have toppers from their institute so that they can attract more students. They create a lot of pressure on students to perform, with differential treatment like forming different category of batches depending on students' performance. These students live as Paying Guests and in hostels away from their families and many cannot tackle the huge burden of competition and the associated mental stress.***

***The recent spate of suicide by 5 students has been highlighted by the national media and you have been asked by the Chief Minister to present a report of the situation and take steps on the matter. The Chief Minister has also asked you to keep the matter away from limelight so that the coaching centres continue with their business and generate revenue for themselves as well as the state. Upon investigation, you find out that 2-3 of the most famous coaching institutions are run by political leaders of the ruling party. They are involved in false advertisements in order to lure students. They also create undue pressure on the students to perform. Also, there is an emerging black market for performance enhancing drugs, which have become common among the students.***

***Given the situation:***

- (a) Highlight the stakeholders involved and discuss the associated ethical issues in the given case.***
- (b) Given the situation, what will be your course of action?***
- (c) Discussing the various reasons for increased cases of suicides among students, suggest measures to address the issue in the long-run.***

# Approach

- State the facts of the case in the introduction.
- Bring out various stakeholders and ethical issues involved.
- Discuss the course of action that can be taken in this case.
- Highlight the reasons for increased cases of suicides among students.
- Suggest measures to address the issue in the long run and conclude accordingly.

# Answer

**Introduction:** Teenage students in a district known for its coaching centers face immense pressure, leading to recent suicides. The coaching institutes prioritize commercial gains over student well-being, while political leaders and the administration show a lack of effective regulation.

## (a) Stakeholders and Ethical Issues:

### Stakeholders:

- **Students:** Undue academic and social pressure.
- **Parents/Family:** Focus on marks over well-being.
- **Society:** Labels students as failures, neglecting mental health.
- **Coaching Institutes:** False claims, undue pressure, and unethical practices.
- **District Administration:** Failure to regulate institutes and curb drug use.
- **Government:** Revenue-focused leadership; political leaders involved in coaching businesses.

### Ethical Issues:

- Student welfare vs. commercial interests.
- Mental health neglect.
- Unethical business practices.
- Government and administrative accountability.

# Answer

## (b) Course of Action: Immediate Actions:

- **Enquiry Committee:** Investigate coaching institutes' practices.
- **Police Action:** Curb performance-enhancing drug market.
- **Counseling Hotline:** Immediate psychological support for students.
- **Sensitization Meeting:** Engage coaching institutes to mandate counseling centers.
- **Workshops/Meetings:** Assurance of support through local workshops.
- **PG Owners Sensitization:** Instructions to report unusual activities and support students.

## (c) Reasons for Increased Student Suicides:

- **Family/Peer Pressure:** Intense pressure to perform.
- **Isolation:** Staying away from families, leading to depression.
- **Lack of Career Awareness:** Limited knowledge of alternative career opportunities.
- **Exam-Oriented System:** High stakes attached to single exams.

## Long-Term Measures:

- **Educational System Overhaul:** Shift from rote learning to analytical thinking, integration of co-curricular activities, and vocational education.
- **Reformed Entrance System:** Inclusive assessments considering multi-year performance.
- **Career Awareness:** Early career guidance and involvement in community work.

**Conclusion:** An overhaul of the education system is crucial to shift from rote learning to comprehensive learning, focusing on critical and analytical thinking. This change will reduce the burden on students and promote mental well-being.

# Case Study

*You have recently been posted as a Nodal Education Officer in one of the districts, where mass cheating in examinations is a regular phenomenon. Media reports have shown parents and relatives scaling school walls and buildings to pass answer chits to students taking secondary school examinations in the district. Moreover, with the advent of new technological devices, cheating in examinations has become more sophisticated and exam rules are flouted openly. On investigation, it has come to your notice that these rackets are run by many school authorities, including exam invigilators who are mostly teachers, and they are hand in glove for profits. With a shortage of staff, invigilators threaten go on mass strikes if any action is taken. Conducting the exams, cancelling them on account of cheating and having re-exams are a loss of time and money for the government and this vicious cycle goes on.*

*As the Nodal Education Officer of the district, address the following questions:*

- (a) What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?*
- (b) How will you resolve the issues in the given case?*
- (c) What long-term strategy needs to be adopted to deal with the menace of cheating in various examinations?*



# Approach

- Give a brief overview of the case.
- Discuss the various ethical issues involved in the case.
- State the measures that you would adopt to deal with the situation.
- Delineate a long-term strategy to be adopted to deal with the menace of cheating.

# Answer

**Introduction:** Mass cheating in examinations, aided by parents and teachers, has become a regular phenomenon. This has led to a loss of trust in the education system and an erosion of moral values.

**(a) Ethical Issues Involved:**

- **Lack of Conscience:** Parents and teachers supporting unethical means.
- **Promotion of Unethical Practices:** Affecting the moral compass of future generations.
- **Injustice:** Disadvantages honest students.
- **Distrust in the Education System:** Erosion of faith in the system.
- **Affects Social Fabric:** Promotes shortcuts over hard work.
- **Breeding Incompetence:** Results in an incompetent workforce.

## (b) Steps to Resolve the Issues: Immediate Actions:

- **Preliminary Enquiry:** Set up a high-level committee to investigate the cheating racket.
- **Strict Action:** Fast-track police interrogation and register cases against the guilty.
- **Re-Exam:** Conduct re-exams with full security measures.
- **Surprise Supervision:** Senior department members to oversee exams randomly.
- **Punitive Measures:** Terminate corrupt staff; hire temporary staff from nearby areas.
- **Issue Warnings:** Warn parents about rustication of wards if caught cheating.

## (c) Long-Term Strategy:

### Strengthening the Examination System:

- **Improved Security:** Randomize question papers, install CCTV cameras, use technology jammers.
- **Teacher Pool:** Create a backup pool of well-trained teachers for emergencies.
- **Inter-School Exchange:** Randomly allocate invigilation duties to prevent networks.
- **Reward Honesty:** Incentivize honest staff and recognize honest students.

### Ethics Education:

- **Curriculum Inclusion:** Include ethical principles in the curriculum to develop moral thinking.
- **Teacher and Parent Training:** Impart ethics training to teachers and parents to discourage unethical acts.

**Conclusion:** Corruption in the education system must be addressed urgently. An ethical code of conduct from teachers and parents is fundamental to the ethical conditioning of children and society at large.

# Case Study

*You are the Chairperson of Staff Selection Commission of a state. Recently, an exam for recruitment to the position of sub-inspectors was conducted by the Commission. But a video of some students using hi-tech devices like spy-mics, and placing “solvers” to cheat in the exam by hiding bluetooth devices in wig, has been surfacing on the internet. Also, this is not an isolated incident; many instances of organized cheating scandals have shocked the state in recent years. Students are agitated and demanding cancellation of the exam and there is pressure on you to resign. However, your daughter had also appeared in this exam and is confident of clearing it. There are many other students who had waited for this exam for a long time and are hopeful of clearing it with honest efforts. Whatever decision the Commission takes is bound to affect the career of a large number of candidates who appeared in the exam, including your own daughter.*

- (a) Highlight the ethical issues concerned in the case.*
- (b) Why is cheating in examinations prevalent in many states across India?*
- (c) What measures would you take to make sure that a similar situation does not arise in future?*

# Approach

- Introduce the answer by briefly highlighting the facts of the case.
- Mention various ethical issues concerned in the above case.
- Discuss various reasons, which spurs/perpetuates cheating in the examination across states in India.
- Suggest measures to ensure that such instances do not arise in future.

# Answer

**Introduction:** The recent exam for sub-inspectors by the Staff Selection Commission faced organized cheating using high-tech devices. This has led to demands for cancellation of the exam and resignation pressures on the Chairperson.

## (a) Ethical Issues Involved:

- **Credibility and Integrity:** Repetitive cheating incidents damage the commission's credibility.
- **Equality of Opportunity:** Cheating provides unfair advantage, breeding social injustice.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** Encourages moral corruption and inefficiency.
- **Ethical Conduct:** Balancing fairness in exams and personal interests, including the Chairperson's daughter's participation.
- **Deontological Ethics:** Using unfair means for favorable ends.
- **Public Exchequer:** Scams and postponements increase costs.
- **Non-Recognition of Efforts:** Diminishes genuine accomplishments.

# Answer

## (b) Reasons for Cheating in Examinations:

- **Performance Pressure:** Critical importance of exam results in competitive systems.
- **Societal Values:** Cheating normalized from primary school, condoned by parents and teachers.
- **Positive Attitude:** Belief that "everyone is doing it" excuses personal responsibility.
- **Immunity and Patronage:** Corrupt officials and politicians protect cheaters.
- **Delayed Justice:** Slow judicial processes encourage illicit means.
- **Unmonitored Environments:** Lack of adequate mechanisms for fair exams.
- **High-End Technology:** Easy access to spy mics and Bluetooth devices.
- **Other Factors:** Peer pressure, competition, fear of failure.

# Answer

## (c) Measures to Prevent Future Cheating:

### Immediate Actions:

- **Strict Punitive Action:** Punish those involved in cheating and cancel their candidatures. Punish organized syndicates.
- **Vigilance Committees:** Establish committees in districts, led by district collectors, to monitor cheating and ensure “zero tolerance.”
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Share exam scores digitally, seek feedback, and maintain transparency.
- **Biometric Authentication:** Use Aadhaar-linked biometrics to verify candidates during exams.
- **Data Analytics:** Utilize advanced analytics to detect cheating-prone centers.
- **Use of Technology:** Install scanners, CCTVs, and network jammers at exam centers.
- **Flying Squads:** Conduct surprise checks with independent academicians and commission members.
- **Social Stigma:** Promote value-based education and role models to build negative attitudes toward cheating.

### Long-Term Strategy:

- **Value-Based Education:** Integrate ethics and integrity into the curriculum.
- **Role Models:** Use influencers to promote honesty and hard work.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve parents and society in fostering ethical behavior.
- **Continuous Monitoring:** Regular audits and updates to examination procedures.

**Conclusion:** Implementing these measures will enhance the integrity of the examination process, restore trust in the Staff Selection Commission, and curb the menace of cheating in examinations.



# Case Study

*You are a single mother and work as a school counsellor for the psychological well-being of primary and secondary school children at a reputed school. Recently, you have found through your interactions that several students have been facing emotional trauma and mental health issues. Realising the gravity of the situation you want to discuss this with the school authorities and the board of trustees and come up with an advanced plan that can help parents get better involved. However, during the meeting, concerns are raised regarding your findings and the lack of supporting evidence is also cited by some. Moreover, senior members who are present express a sense of displeasure at what this might mean for the reputation of the school.*

*You are thoroughly appalled with this approach of the school authorities, yet you are mired down in your own financial circumstances.*

*On the basis of the above situation, answer the following:*

- (a) Identify the most relevant stakeholders in the case.*
- (b) What are the dilemmas in the case?*
- (c) Discuss how stigmatisation of mental health issues can be addressed in schools.*

# Approach

- Briefly explain the case study.
- Mention the most relevant stakeholders in the case study.
- Explain the ethical dilemmas involved in the case.
- Explain how mental health issues can be de-stigmatised in schools.
- Conclude briefly.

# Answer

**Introduction:** The case involves a school counselor discovering significant mental health issues among students. The school authorities are skeptical and concerned about the school's reputation, while the counselor faces ethical and financial dilemmas.

## (a) Relevant Stakeholders:

- **Students:** Facing emotional trauma and mental health issues.
- **Parents:** Trusting the school to ensure their children's well-being.
- **Teachers:** Responsible for students' growth and development.
- **School Authorities:** Concerned about the school's reputation and skeptical of the findings.
- **School Counselor:** Facing ethical challenges and financial concerns.

## (b) Ethical Dilemmas:

- **Personal vs. Professional Ethics:** Balancing financial security and ethical responsibility to the students.
- **Validation of Findings:** Doubts raised by authorities may cause self-doubt.
- **Reputation vs. Welfare:** School authorities must choose between protecting reputation and addressing student welfare.

# Answer

## (c) Addressing Stigmatization of Mental Health:

- **Mental Health Programs:** Implement comprehensive programs promoting positive mental health.
- **Parent Education:** Conduct sessions on the importance of mental health and early intervention.
- **Mindfulness Activities:** Include meditation, storytelling, and nature activities to help students reflect and calm down.
- **Parent-Teacher Meetings:** Strengthen parent-child relationships through regular PTMs.
- **Creative Counseling:** Use audio-visual tools and toys to help children express their concerns.
- **Bullying Prevention:** Address bullying and avoid academic overburdening.
- **Peer Discussions:** Encourage peer-to-peer discussions and introduce a happiness curriculum.

**Conclusion:** Addressing mental health issues in schools requires a multifaceted approach involving awareness, support, and proactive measures to create a nurturing environment for students' psychological well-being.

# Case Study

*You, the chairperson of a State Public Service Commission (SPSC), come to know that there were instances of rampant cheating in a competitive exam conducted recently by the SPSC. Your daughter, who also appeared in this exam and is confident of clearing it corroborates the same. However, she denies engaging in any such activity herself. Whatever decision the Commission takes is bound to affect the career of a large number of candidates who appeared in the exam, including your own daughter.*

- (a) Identify the different stakeholders and their interests in the case above.*
- (b) Enumerate the options you have to handle the current situation. What will be your choice and why?*
- (c) Suggest measures that you would take to make sure that a similar situation does not arise in future.*

# Approach

- Identify the different stakeholders and their interests.
- Discuss the options available and give reasons for the most suitable option.
- Enumerate measures that can make sure that similar situation can be avoided in future.

# Answer

**Introduction:** A competitive exam conducted by the State Public Service Commission (SPSC) is marred by rampant cheating using high-tech devices. The Chairperson's daughter, who appeared for the exam, corroborates the cheating but denies involvement.

## (a) Stakeholders and Interests:

- **SPSC (Chairperson):** Ensure fairness and integrity in the examination process.
- **Students:** Fair assessment of abilities.
- **Parents:** Trust in the examination process.
- **Administrative Machinery:** Maintain credibility and oversight.
- **General Public:** Trust in the recruitment process.
- **Chairperson's Daughter:** Affected by the decision on exam results.

# Answer

## (b) Options to Handle the Situation:

### Option 1: Ignore Complaints of Cheating

- **Merits:** Maintains status quo, avoids disruption.
- **Demerits:** Compromises integrity, unfair to honest candidates, perpetuates corruption.

### Option 2: Internal Enquiry but Let Exam Process Continue

- **Merits:** Authenticates news of cheating, curbs future malpractices.
- **Demerits:** Time-consuming, potential for sabotage, possible selection of non-meritorious candidates.

### Option 3: Suspend Exam and Demand External Investigation

- **Merits:** Ensures fairness, restores public trust, prevents internal interference.
- **Demerits:** Questions SPSC's capability, causes uncertainty, affects Chairperson's daughter.

### Preferred Option: Course of Action to maintain institutional integrity and ensures a fair outcome.:

- Ascertain extent of cheating quickly.
- Re-conduct exams in affected centers if localized.
- Cancel exams if widespread cheating confirmed.
- Request external investigation, possibly by CBI.
- Strictly deal with those involved.



# Answer

## (c) Measures to Prevent Future Cheating:

- **Transparency and Proactiveness:** Share exam scores and gather feedback.
- **One-time Registration (OTR):** Link to Aadhaar for biometric verification.
- **Use of CCTVs:** Monitor exam centers to gather evidence of malpractice.
- **Security Arrangements:** Deploy state and central forces for frisking candidates.
- **Surprise Squads:** Conduct random checks at exam centers.
- **Strict Punitive Action:** Ban erring candidates for life and punish involved parties.
- **Proper Scrutiny:** Verify private players' backgrounds involved in the process.
- **Sensitization of Invigilators:** Educate on the gravity of their task.

**Conclusion:** Ensuring transparency and integrity in the exam process will restore faith in the SPSC and deter future malpractices. This approach prioritizes fairness and maintains public trust in the recruitment system.

# Case Study

*The promotion of harmful products like liquor, tobacco, etc. through mass media and advertisements have been banned in India. However, many companies are roping in big celebrities to promote these harmful products and brands through surrogate advertisement. In the disguise of another product, surrogate advertising is used to promote regulated products, like cigarettes and alcohol. There have been many debates on this issue, particularly in recent times, with many arguing that such advertisements should be banned altogether.*

*In this context, answer the following:*

- (a) What are the ethical issues involved in surrogate advertising?*
- (b) Suggest steps that can be taken to address these type of advertisements in India.*

# Approach

- Give a brief overview of the case.
- Discuss the ethical issues involved in it.
- Mention the steps to address surrogate advertisements in India.

# Answer

**Introduction:** Surrogate advertising promotes harmful products like liquor and tobacco under the guise of other products, circumventing legal bans on direct advertisements. This practice raises significant ethical concerns and calls for stringent measures to address the issue.

## (a) Ethical Issues in Surrogate Advertising:

- **Deceptive Advertising:** Misleads consumers by promoting banned products under different names.
- **Nudging Harmful Consumption:** Influences vulnerable individuals, especially youth, to consume harmful products by portraying them as trendy.
- **Celebrity Irresponsibility:** Celebrities prioritize monetary gain over public responsibility.
- **Concealment of Information:** Brands hide the true nature of their products, misleading consumers about their health impacts.

# Answer

## (b) Steps to Address Surrogate Advertising:

### Legal and Regulatory Measures:

- **Clear Laws:** Ban surrogate advertisements for different products under a single brand name, penalizing violations.
- **Empower ASCI:** Grant more authority to the Advertising Standards Council of India to act against misleading advertisements.
- **Media Compliance:** Ensure electronic and print media adhere to advertising codes and reject surrogate advertisements.

### Industry and Consumer Actions:

- **Agency Accountability:** Require advertising agencies to fully disclose product information and penalize those involved in surrogate advertising.
- **Consumer Awareness:** Implement programs to educate the public about the negative impacts of surrogate advertisements. Support youth-led campaigns advocating for comprehensive bans on such advertising.

**Conclusion:** A comprehensive legal framework, strict enforcement, and increased consumer awareness are essential to combat surrogate advertising and protect public health from the promotion of harmful products.

# Case Study

***You are one of the producers of a television reality show. The show is very popular in the country and has a wide viewership among all sections of the society and across various regions. However, a controversy has emerged wherein in the latest season of the show, a contestant from the film industry who has been accused of sexual harassment by many of his co-workers has been accepted as a participant. Several media houses have reported it and have criticized the show for giving a national platform to one of the country's most high-profile alleged perpetrators of female harassment. They term it as a denigration of those women who had bravely spoken up about their harassment.***

***In a personal capacity, you also feel the same and are of the view that such a controversial person should not have been invited to the show. However, when you talk to other producers about it, they opine that the controversy is good for the show, as it generates free publicity. Also, they say that a person is not guilty unless the court of law declares so and the career of a person should not be sabotaged due to media trial. Moreover, the person in question is very close to the host of the show, who is an extremely popular public figure in the country. The show commands a huge fandom and success of the show is also contingent on him. None of the producers want to antagonize the host.***

***In the given situation, answer the following questions:***

- (a) What are the ethical issues involved in the case?***
- (b) What are the options available to you and what will be your course of action?***
- (c) Discuss the positive and negative impacts of trial by media in such cases.***

# Approach

- Briefly mention the facts of the case.
- Highlight the ethical issues pertaining to the case.
- Mention the various options available to you and give justification for the course of action that you will adopt.
- Bring out the pros and cons of media trials.
- Conclude accordingly.

# Answer

**Introduction:** A reality show controversy arises when a contestant accused of sexual harassment is accepted as a participant. Producers see it as good publicity, but ethical concerns are raised.

**(a) Ethical Issues Involved:**

- **Disparagement of Victims:** Publicity for the accused disrespects victims of sexual harassment.
- **Public Morality:** Promoting such individuals disillusions advocates for women's rights.
- **Justice Mockery:** Suggests powerful individuals can evade consequences.
- **Patriarchal Society:** Reflects societal impunity for men while women face public scrutiny.
- **Legitimacy:** Legitimizes the accused's actions, undermining the victims.
- **Presumption of Innocence:** A person should not be deemed guilty without a court verdict.
- **Profit Seeking:** Prioritizing controversy for profit over ethical considerations.



# Answer

## (b) Options and Course of Action:

### Options:

- **Stay Silent:** Allow the accused to participate.
- **Express Displeasure:** Raise concerns with higher management.
- **Public Statement:** Advocate for the rule of law to take its course.
- **Persuade Withdrawal:** Convince the host to ask the accused to withdraw voluntarily.

**Course of Action:** Call a meeting with producers and the host to discuss removing the accused or persuading voluntary withdrawal. Emphasize that morality should take precedence over legality in maintaining the show's ethical standards.

## (c) Pros and Cons of Media Trials:

### Pros:

- **Awareness:** Highlights important national issues.
- **Pressure:** Forces authorities to address public concerns.

### Cons:

- **Sensationalism:** Creates a toxic media environment.
- **Bias:** Can lead to biased and premature judgments.
- **Viewership Race:** Prioritizes ratings over facts.
- **Influence:** May affect investigations and judicial outcomes.

**Conclusion:** Media should maintain factual and impartial scrutiny, leaving trials to the judiciary.

# Case Study

*With the advent of 24x7 news and prevalence of an array of news sources across the board, the media is omnipresent in nature. In this competitive environment, many media professionals who are overcome by deadlines, bottom-line imperatives, and corporate interests are losing sight of the ethical implications of their work. Further, there have been several cases of irresponsible reporting where the reportage has interfered with court proceedings, compromised delicate security situations or led to the spread of fake or unverified news. In this context, answer the following questions:*

- (a) Identify the ethical issues prevalent in the profession of media.*
- (b) How does unethical reporting and sensationalization of news impact the society?*
- (c) What can be done to strengthen the role of ethics in media?*

# Approach

- Give a brief introduction about the case.
- Highlight ethical issues involved in the case.
- Highlight the impact of unethical reporting and sensationalization of news on the Indian society.
- Suggest suitable steps to strengthen the role of ethics in media.

# Answer

**Introduction:** The media serves as the fourth pillar of democracy, but recent trends show a decline in ethics with sensationalism and irresponsible reporting becoming prevalent.

## **(a) Ethical Issues in Media:**

- **Commercialization:** Leads to sensationalism, yellow journalism, and paid news.
- **Misuse of Freedom:** Insensitive language, privacy violations, and indecent content.
- **Media Trials:** Impede fair trials, justice, and rule of law.
- **Irresponsible Reporting:** Spreads unverified news, causing communal disharmony and political unrest.

# Answer

## (b) Impact on Society:

- **Misinformed Society:** Fake news and sensationalism create a misinformed citizenry.
- **Crowding Out Real Issues:** Focus on entertainment over significant issues.
- **Indifference:** Frequent corrections degrade media credibility.
- **Fear and Anxiety:** Overhyping content creates unnecessary fear and anxiety.

## (c) Steps to Strengthen Media Ethics:

- **Independent Self-Regulatory Body:** Implement internal mechanisms like ombudsmen, media councils, and watch groups.
- **Civil Society Role:** Involve civil society in regulation, supervision, and content creation.
- **Ethics Discourse:** Rethink media ethics for the digital age and sensitize consumers.
- **Technology Utilization:** Use AI and blockchain to verify facts and prevent fake news.

**Conclusion:** The media must uphold its ethical responsibilities to inform, educate, and serve society. Strengthening ethics in media is crucial to maintaining public trust and ensuring a well-informed citizenry.

# Case Study

*You have joined as a reporter in a newly launched news channel. This choice was based on the assurance given by channel's management that it would emerge as the voice of the downtrodden. While working on various assignments, you reported political incidents and covered national stories as instructed by the organization. But later you come to know that the channel was targeting particular individuals, rather than serving its stated mission. The reporters were also pressurised to go out of the way to accomplish the organisation's wishes. Given the economic slowdown, most reporters complied with these directives. Some who left the job, also did not blow the whistle against the organisation fearing lack of other employment opportunities. Recently, you have also been assigned a similar task by the organisation. In this context,*

*(a) Identify the various ethical issues involved in this case.*

*(b) You tried to convince the management to change its functioning and work as per its assurance given earlier but to no avail. In such a scenario, consider the options given below:*

- 1. Follow the task given by the organisation.*
- 2. Work with other reporters in protest against the organisation's actions.*
- 3. Leave the job*
- 4. Blow the whistle on the organisation's working.*

*Evaluate the merits and demerits of each of these options and suggest your preferred course of action, giving reasons.*

# Approach

- Discuss the ethical issues involved in this case.
- Evaluate each option by highlighting the merits and demerits.
- Suggest the preferred course of action, giving reasons.
- Conclude the answer by suggesting a long-term solution.

# Answer

**Introduction:** A reporter faces ethical dilemmas in a news channel targeting individuals instead of serving its mission to be the voice of the downtrodden. The reporter must decide how to handle this situation while considering personal values and professional ethics.

## (a) Ethical Issues:

- **Breach of Trust:** The channel's deviation from its stated mission.
- **Unbiased Media:** Media targeting individuals undermines democratic values.
- **Public Interest:** Focusing on irrelevant stories distracts from societal issues.
- **Exploitation:** Pressuring reporters during economic slowdown.
- **Courage Deficit:** Reporters fear repercussions, hindering ethical action.



# Answer

## (b) Evaluation of Options:

### 1. Follow the Task:

- **Merits:** Job security, experience, career advancement.
- **Demerits:** Compromises ethics, cognitive dissonance, potential legal consequences.

### 2. Protest with Other Reporters:

- **Merits:** Legitimacy to the cause, pressure on management, potential for change.
- **Demerits:** Risk of job loss, limited immediate impact.

### 3. Leave the Job:

- **Merits:** Upholds ethical standards, personal integrity.
- **Demerits:** Job insecurity, organization continues unethical practices.

### 4. Blow the Whistle:

- **Merits:** Exposes unethical practices, potential for systemic change, encourages others.
- **Demerits:** Risk of unemployment, personal threats, industry backlash.

## Preferred Course of Action:

- **Approach Management:** Collaborate with like-minded coworkers to protest and seek change.
- **Blow the Whistle:** If management refuses to change, expose unethical practices for the greater good.

**Conclusion:** Journalists have a duty to uphold ethical standards and expose corruption. **Long-term solutions** include stronger guidelines from the Press Council of India and institutional protection for whistleblowers to ensure accountability and integrity in media.

# Case Study

***India is one of the biggest fairness product markets in the world. A number of firms produce, advertise and sell fairness creams, marketed mainly as whitening products in the country. At the same time there have been many debates on this issue, particularly in recent times, with many arguing that such advertisements should be banned altogether.***

***In this context, answer the following:***

- (a) What are the ethical issues involved in advertising of fairness products?***
- (b) Highlight the consequences of preference for light-skinned people in a society like India?***
- (c) Do you think such issues are better tackled at the societal level rather than regulating advertisements through legal and administrative measures?***

# Approach

- Briefly mention the facts of the case.
- Highlight the ethical issues pertaining to advertisements related to fairness products.
- Mention the consequences of preference for light-skinned people in a society like India.
- Discuss the advantages of social measures over legal and administrative measures to address the issue.

# Answer

**Introduction:** India's fairness product market is vast, but it faces criticism for promoting discrimination and harmful stereotypes.

## (a) Ethical Issues in Advertising Fairness Products:

- **Discrimination:** Promotes the notion that fair skin is superior, undermining the dignity of those with darker skin.
- **Deception:** Misleading claims that fairer skin leads to success and happiness.
- **Fear Appeal:** Uses negative messaging about darker skin to sell products.
- **Gender Stereotyping:** Targets primarily women, reinforcing harmful beauty standards.

## (b) Consequences of Preference for Light-Skinned People:

- **Mental Health:** Low self-esteem and depression among those with darker skin.
- **Social Hierarchies:** Reinforces casteism and historical prejudices.
- **Matrimony:** Biases in marriage preferences against darker-skinned individuals.
- **Discrimination:** Perpetuates cultural beliefs linking virtue with fair skin.

# Answer

## (c) Tackling the Issue: Societal vs. Legal Measures:

### Advantages of Social Measures:

- **Attitudinal Change:** Social persuasion and positive role models can change perceptions.
- **Campaigns:** Initiatives like #ColourMeRight can highlight and counteract prejudices.
- **Behavior Change Communication:** Social media and public figures can promote acceptance of all skin tones.

### Role of Legal and Administrative Measures:

- **Regulations:** Banning deceptive and discriminatory ads, as done by ASCI.
- **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Enforcement of laws to protect against skin color bias.
- **Education:** Value education in schools to foster acceptance from a young age.

**Conclusion:** A combined approach of social persuasion and legal enforcement is essential to address the deep-rooted biases against skin color in India. By leveraging both societal influence and regulatory frameworks, a more inclusive and fair society can be fostered.

# Any Queries?

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# Thank You

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