

CASE STUDIES PYQ

Applied Ethics - Technology, Media, Social Media

1. **[2023] [Social Media]** You hold a responsible position in a ministry in the government. One day in the morning you received a call from the school of your 11-year-old son that you are required to come and meet the Principal. You proceed to the school and find your son in the Principal's office. The Principal informs you that your son had been found wandering aimlessly in the grounds during the time classes were in progress. The class teacher further informs you that your son has lately become a loner and did not respond to questions in the class, he had also been unable to perform well in the football trials held recently. You bring your son back from the school and in the evening, you along with your wife try to find out the reasons for your son's changed behaviour. After repeated cajoling, your son shares that some children had been making fun of him in the class as well as in the WhatsApp group of the students by calling him stunted, duh and a frog. He tells you the names of a few children who are the main culprits but pleads with you to let the matter rest. After a few days, during a sporting event, where you and your wife have gone to watch your son play, one of your colleague's son shows you a video in which students have caricatured your son. Further, he also points out to the perpetrators who were sitting in the stands. You purposefully walk past them with your son and go home. Next day, you find on social media, a video denigrating you, your son and even your wife, stating that you engaged in physical bullying of children on the sports field. The video became viral on social media. Your friends and colleagues began calling you to find out the details. One of your juniors advised you to make a counter video giving the background and explaining that nothing had happened on the field. You, in turn posted a video which you have captured during the sporting event, identifying the likely perpetrators who were responsible for your son's predicament. You have also narrated what has actually happened in the field and made attempts to bring out the adverse effects of the misuse of social media.
- Based on the above case study, discuss the ethical issues involved in the use of social media.
 - Discuss the pros and cons of using social media by you to put across the facts to counter the fake propaganda.

Applied Ethics - Medical Ethics

2. **[2024] [Medical + technology]** Dr. Srinivasan is a senior scientist working for a reputed biotechnology company known for its cutting-edge research in pharmaceuticals. Dr. Srinivasan is heading a research team working on a new drug aimed at treating a rapidly spreading variant of a new viral infectious disease. The disease has been rapidly spreading across the world and the cases reported in the country are increasing. There is huge pressure on Dr. Srinivasan's team to expedite the trials for the drug as there is significant market for it, and the company wants to get the first-mover advantage in the market. During a team meeting, some senior team members suggest some shortcut for expediting the clinical trials for the drug and for getting the requisite approvals. These include manipulating data to exclude some negative outcomes and selectively reporting positive results, foregoing the process of informed consent and using compounds already patented by a rival company, rather than developing one's own component. Dr. Srinivasan is not

comfortable taking such shortcuts, at the same time he realises meeting the targets is impossible without using these means.

- a. What would you do ? Examine your options and consequences in the light of the ethical questions involved.
- b. How can data ethics and drug ethics save humanity at large in such a scenario?

Applied Ethics - Environmental Ethics - Env vs development / Rights vs development / Tribals

3. **[2024] [Technology + Environment]** There is a technological company named ABC Incorporated - the second largest worldwide, situated in the Third World. You are the CEO and the majority shareholder of this company. The fast technological improvements have raised worries among environmental activists, regulatory authorities, and the general public over the sustainability of this scenario. You confront substantial issues about the business's environmental footprint. In 2023, your organization had a significant increase of 48% in greenhouse gas emissions compared to the levels recorded in 2019. The significant rise in energy consumption is mainly due to the surging energy requirements of your data centers, fuelled by the exponential expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI). AI-powered services need much more computational resources and electrical energy compared to conventional online activities, notwithstanding their notable gains. The technology's proliferation has led to a growing concern over the environmental repercussions, resulting in an increase in warnings. AI models, especially those used in extensive machine learning and data processing, exhibit much greater energy consumption than conventional computer tasks, with an exponential increase. Although there is already a commitment and goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2030, the challenge of lowering emissions seems overwhelming as the integration of AI continues to increase. To achieve this goal, substantial investments in renewable energy use would be necessary. The difficulty is exacerbated by the competitive environment of the technology sector, where rapid innovation is essential for preserving market standing and shareholders' worth. To achieve a balance between innovation, profitability and sustainability, a strategic move is necessary that is in line with both business objectives and ethical obligations.
- a. What is your immediate response to the challenges posed in the above case?
 - b. Discuss the ethical issues involved in the above case.
 - c. Your company has been identified to be penalized by technological giants. What logical and ethical arguments will you put forth to convince about its necessity ?
 - d. Being a conscience being, what measures would you adopt to maintain balance between AI innovation and environmental footprint? (Answer in 250 words)

Applied Ethics - Private sector

4. **[2022]** 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 Defence for a secret installation near Gwalior and tender is being submitted shortly. He was under extreme pressure and 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 was 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 a sudden turn of events. His secretary informed that a gentleman—Subhash Verma wanted to see him as he was interested in the position of Manager which was to be filled in 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 the 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. 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?
- d. What can be the consequences of overlooking the observations raised by the Inspecting Team?

Public Sector - Integrity, Courage and Work-life Balance

5. **[2021]** Pawan is working as an officer in the State Government for the last ten years. As a part of routine transfer, he was posted to another department. He joined in a new office along with five other colleagues. The head of the office was a senior officer conversant with the functioning of the office. As a part of general inquiry, Pawan gathered that his senior officer carries the reputation of being difficult and insensitive person having his own disturbed family life. Initially, all seem to go well. However, after some time Pawan felt that the senior officer was belittling him and at times unreasonable. Whatever suggestions given or views expressed by Pawan in the meetings were summarily rejected and the senior officer would express

displeasure in the presence of others. It became a pattern of boss's style of functioning to show him in bad light highlighting his shortcomings and humiliating publically. It became apparent that though there are no serious work-related problems/shortcomings, the senior officer was always on one pretext or the other and would scold and shout at him. The continuous harassment and public criticism of Pawan resulted in loss of confidence, self-esteem and equanimity. Pawan realized that his relations with his senior officer are becoming more toxic and due to this, he felt perpetually tensed, anxious and stressed. His mind was occupied with negativity and caused him mental torture, anguish and agony. Eventually, it badly affected his personal and family life. He was no longer joyous, happy and contented even at home. Rather without any reason he would loose his temper with his wife and other family members. The family environment was no longer pleasant and congenial. His wife who was always supportive to him also became a victim of his negativity and hostile behaviour. Due to harassment and humiliation suffering by him in the office, comfort and happiness virtually vanished from his life. Thus it damaged his physical and mental health.

- a. What are the options available with Pawan to cope up with the situation?
- b. What approach should Pawan adopt to bring peace, tranquillity and congenial environment at office and home?
- c. As an outsider, what are your suggestions for both boss and subordinate to overcome this situation and for improving the work performance, mental and emotional hygiene?
- d. In the above scenario, what type of training would you suggest for officers at various levels in the government?

Public Sector - Project Management, Construction

6. **[2023] [Project+Feminist Ethics]** You have just been appointed as Additional Director General of Central Public Works Department. The Chief Architect of your division, who is to retire in six months, is passionately working on a very important project, the successful completion of which would earn him a lasting reputation for the rest of his life. A new lady architect, Seema, trained at Manchester School of Architecture, UK joined as Senior Architect in your division. During the briefing about the project, Seema made some suggestions which would not only add value to the project, but would also reduce completion time. This has made the Chief Architect insecure and he is constantly worried that all the credit will go to her. Subsequently, he adopted a passive and aggressive behaviour towards her and has become disrespectful to her. Seema felt it embarrassing as the Chief Architect left no chance of humiliating her. He would very often correct her in front of other colleagues and raise his voice while speaking to her. This continuous harassment has resulted in her losing confidence and self-esteem. She felt perpetually tensed, anxious and stressed. She appeared to be in awe of him since he has had a long tenure in the office and has vast experience in the area of her work. You are aware of her outstanding academic credentials and career record in her previous organisations. However, you fear that this harassment may result in compromising her much needed contribution in this important project and may adversely impact her emotional well-being. You have also come to know from her peers that she is contemplating tendering her resignation.
- a. What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?
 - b. What are the options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization?
 - c. What would be your response to Seema's predicament? What measures would you institute to prevent such occurrences from happening in your organization?

National Security/ Naxalism / Terrorism / Mafias / Public order /International Relations

7. **[2024]** With multipronged strategy of the Central and State Governments specially in the last few years, the naxalite problem has been resolved to a large extent in the affected states of the country. However, there are a few pockets in certain states where naxalite problem still persists, mainly due to involvement of foreign countries. Rohit is posted as SP (Special Operations) for the last one year, in one of the districts which is still affected by the naxalite problem. The district administration has taken a lot of developmental works in the recent past in the naxalite affected areas to win the hearts and minds of the people. Over a period of time, Rohit has established an excellent intelligence network to get the real time information regarding the movement of naxalite cadre. To instill confidence in the public and have moral ascendancy over the naxalites, a number of cordons and search operations are being conducted by the police. Rohit, who himself was leading one of the contingents got a message through his intelligence source that about ten hard core naxalites were hiding in a particular village with sophisticated weapons. Without wasting any time, Rohit reached the target village with his team and laid out a foolproof cordon and started carrying out a systematic search. During the search, his team managed to overpower all the naxalites along with their automatic weapons. However, in the meantime, more than five hundred tribal women surrounded the village and started marching towards the target house. They were shouting and demanding the immediate release of insurgents since they are their protectors and saviours. The situation on the ground was becoming very critical as the tribal women were extremely agitated and aggressive. Rohit tried to contact his superior officer, IG (Special Operations) of the state on the radio set and on mobile phone, but failed to do so due to poor connectivity. Rohit was in great dilemma since out of the naxalites apprehended, two were not only hard core top insurgents with prize money of ten lakhs on their heads, but were also involved in a recent ambush on the security forces. However, if he did not release the naxalites, the situation could get out of control since the tribal women were aggressively charging towards them. In that case, to control the situation Rohit might have to resort to firing which may lead to valuable loss of lives of civilians and would further complicate the situation.
- What are the options available with Rohit to cope with the situation?
 - What are the ethical dilemmas being faced by Rohit?
 - Which of the options, do you think, would be more appropriate for Rohit to adopt and why?
 - In the present situation, what are the extra precautionary measures to be taken by the police in dealing with women protesters?
8. **[2020]** The Chairman of Bharat Missiles Ltd (BML) was watching a program on TV wherein the Prime Minister was addressing the nation on the necessity of developing a self-reliant India. He subconsciously nodded in agreement and smiled to himself as he mentally reviewed BML's journey in the past two decades. BML had admirably progressed from producing first generation anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) to designing and producing state of the art ATGM weapon systems that would be the envy of any army. He sighed in reconciliation with his assumptions that the government would probably not alter the status quo of a ban on export of military weaponry. To his surprise, the very next day he got a telephone call from the Director General, Ministry of Defence, asking him to discuss the modalities of increasing BML production of ATGMs as there is a possibility of exporting the same to a friendly foreign country. The Director General wanted the Chairman to discuss the details with his staff at Delhi next week. Two days later, at a press conference, the Defence Minister stated that he aims to double the current weapons export levels within five years. This would give an impetus to financing the development and manufacture of indigenous weapons in

the country. He also stated that all indigenous arms manufacturing nations have a very good record of international arms trade. As Chairman of BML, what are your views on the following points?

- a. As an arms exporter of a responsible nation like India, what are the ethical issues involved in arms trade?
- b. List five ethical factors that would influence the decision to sell arms to foreign governments. (250 words)

Disaster Management

9. [2020] Migrant workers have always remained at the socio-economic margins of our society, silently serving as the instrumental labour force of urban economics. The pandemic has brought them into national focus. On announcement of a countrywide lockdown, a very large number of migrant workers decided to move back from their places of employment to their native villages. The non-availability of transport created its own problems. Added to this was the fear of starvation and inconvenience to their families. This caused the migrant workers to demand wages and transport facilities for returning to their villages. Their mental agony was accentuated by multiple factors such as a sudden loss of livelihood, possibility of lack of food and inability to assist in harvesting their rabi crop due to not being able to reach home in time. Reports of inadequate response of some districts in providing the essential boarding and lodging arrangements along the way multiplied their fears.
- a. You have learnt many lessons from this situation when you were tasked to oversee the functioning of the District Disaster Relief Force in your district. In your opinion what ethical issues arose in the current migrant crisis?
 - b. What do you understand by an ethical care giving state?
 - c. What assistance can the civil society render to mitigate the sufferings of migrants in similar situations?

Feminist Ethics - Women related case studies

10. [2014] You are a no-nonsense, honest officer. You have been transferred to a remote district to head a department that is notorious for its inefficiency and callousness. You find that the main cause of the poor state of affairs is the indiscipline of a section of employees. They do not work themselves and also disrupt the working of others. You first warned the troublemakers to mend their ways or else face disciplinary action. When the warning had little effect, you issued a show cause notice to the ringleaders. As a retaliatory measure, these troublemakers instigated a woman employee amongst them to file a complaint of sexual harassment against you with the Women's Commission. The Commission promptly seeks your explanation. The matter is also publicized in the media to embarrass you further. Some of the options to handle this situation could be as follows : Give your explanation to the Commission and go soft on the disciplinary action. Ignore the Commission and proceed firmly with the disciplinary action. Brief your higher-ups, seek directions from them and act accordingly. Suggest any other possible option(s). Evaluate all of them and suggest the best course of action, giving your reasons for it.