



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are the head of a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that offers palliative care to cancer patients from the poor sections of the society. Since the last few months funding for your noble cause is dwindling due to which you are not able to fulfill the needs of the dependent people. One day, you are contacted by the owner of a big tobacco company who is willing to fund your NGO because he has to meet Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) targets. However, over the years working with cancer patients you have developed a deep hatred for tobacco companies. Now, the owner's offer has put you in a moral dilemma. On the one side, you detest the thought of accepting support from a company that is doling out cancer through its products, and on the other hand, you feel that the company's aid is a godsend opportunity for your NGO to provide better care to patients.

- (a) What are the various ethical issues involved here?
(b) Will it be morally right for you to accept money from the tobacco company? (250 Words)

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Approach

- Write your inference from the case study
- Identify the various ethical issues involved
- Analyze the choices from ethical angles and their implication
- Try to conclude in a balanced way where personal dilemma and need of the NGO are taken care of

Answer

The proposal of financial assistance extended by the tobacco company owner has caused a moral dilemma because of the company's complicity in spreading cancer and personal attitude towards the tobacco manufacturers.

The ethical issues involved in the case are:

- **Personal belief and financial necessity:** Due to the paucity of funds for running NGOs' charity work and personal belief against the tobacco company, a trade-off needs to be made between the two competing values.
- **Owner's benevolence:** The owner is willing to aid an organization that is involved in the treatment of patients who may have been the victims of the product he manufactures.
- **Organizational integrity:** A cancer charity organization receiving funds from a tobacco company may lead to doubts over the NGO's integrity in the public eye. It may also be disheartening for the cancer patients and other NGO members, once they come to know about this.
- **The question of legality and morality:** Tobacco products are carcinogenic and should be banned to save lives but it is a lucrative source of revenue for the government. The sale and purchase of such products are entirely legal but is it ethical for the governments, as it endangers the life of the people?

Accepting/Not Accepting Money

- The decision to accept or reject funds from the owner requires settling a few ethical questions and dilemmas which are overlapping. In case of rejection, the NGO will have to struggle to provide adequate care to the patients. My refusal will also save me from the personal guilt of compromising my beliefs on the face of financial tempt. From a deontological perspective, this would be completely justified.
- On the other hand, my acceptance will endow me with resources to carry out my work more effectively but this will come at the cost of my ethical beliefs. A teleological or utilitarian perspective will suggest resorting to this decision, as the company will be aiding my NGO without violating any law and consequences of its product are beyond my control.
- Since my decision will not only affect me but also the organization. Thus, I should try to discuss the matter with NGO colleagues and beneficiaries for accepting or rejecting the offer.

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