



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

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 seemed 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' style of functioning to show him in bad light highlighting his shortcomings and humiliating publicly. It became apparent that though there were 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 realised that his relation with his senior officer was 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 lose 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 suffered 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 with the situation?
- (b) What approach Pawan should adopt for bringing peace, tranquility and congenial environment in the 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 offices?

01 Apr, 2022 GS Paper 4 Case Studies

Answer

The presented case study exhibits the case of abuse of authority, lack of emotional intelligence, poor work culture and inability to demarcate between personal and professional life.

a) Following options are available to Pawan to cope up with the situation

- Address the root cause of the problem and talk with his senior about issues he is facing.
- He may take leave from office, discuss the issue with his colleagues in other services and then rejoin. This will give a short respite to Pawan, but the problem will continue.
- He may seek transfer to another department, which might be an administrative decision, with little

control of Pawan over it.

- Ignore his senior at work, which will affect his coordination and quality of work. This may also show him as incompetent.
- The last resort may be to resign from his current position. This will highlight his attitude of escapism and lack of courage. His personal responsibilities would also suffer.

b) Approach Pawan should adopt

▪ At office:

- He should introspect his behaviour, as to whether his actions are annoying his senior and what is the behaviour of his senior towards other newly transferred colleagues. This will give him a thought clarity.
- Pawan should try talking to his seniors (boss' colleagues) and explain his actions and at the same time understand his boss' temperament. This will give opportunity for course correction to Pawan and his senior.
- If both the above suggestions do not work out, then Pawan should lodge a written complaint to his boss' senior and make the superior boss aware of all the happenings.

▪ At home:

- Pawan should try segregating his professional and personal life. He should evolve his emotional intelligence quotient.
- He should talk to his family members, wife about the issues he is facing at the workplace. The family members should try to understand and support him through his difficulties. This will bring peace, tranquility, and a congenial environment both at his office and at home.

c) As an outsider, my suggestion

▪ To boss:

- One should act and behave as a leader and represent himself/herself as an example. Developing emotional intelligence in this aspect is very necessary.
- Subordinates are the working force behind every organisation. As an authority/senior, one must respect the subordinates or the juniors.
- Constructive criticism goes a long way in shaping an organisation or one's life. Belittling someone to show oneself as superior always gives out a bad example.
- Appreciating good work is not only ethically warranted but also creates positive energy amongst team members.

▪ To subordinates:

- Do not let the professional and personal life merge. Work related issues should not hamper the personal space and vice-versa.
- Nothing comes above self-respect. Constructive criticism is welcomed, but not demeaning. When at workplace, one should work with utmost dedication and commitment.

d) Following types of training can be given to the officers in government offices

- **Sensitivity Training:** Officials should be sensitised about how their actions impact people around them. Mental health issues should be kept in mind.
- **Role-playing Training:** To be a people's officer or a successful bureaucrat, one must investigate the situation from other's perspective and understand their problems and constraints. This will always provide a constructive decision in decision making.
- **Assertiveness Training:** Officials should exercise authority without being condescending to others. They should build team spirit and foster cooperation.
- **Communication Training:** Using verbal and non-verbal cues for effective communication. The motive of this is to increase positivity in outlook, promote inclusiveness and make work culture conducive for performance

