



Mains Practice Question

Case Studies

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.

(a) Based on the above case study, discuss the ethical issues involved in the use of social media.

(b) Discuss the pros and cons of using social media by you to put across the facts to counter the fake propaganda against your family. (Answer in 250 words, UPSC Mains 2023)

15 Dec, 2023 GS Paper 4 Case Studies

Approach

- Begin with a brief introduction to the case.
- Discuss ethical issues involved in the case and pros and cons of using social media to counter false propaganda.
- Conclude by highlighting using social media is a double edged sword and should be used cautiously.

Introduction

In an age dominated by social media, a government official grapples with ethical challenges as his 11-year-old son becomes a victim of bullying, both offline and online. To counter, the official uses social media to share evidence and expose the culprits.

Body

(a) Ethical Issues involved in the case:

- **Privacy and Consent:** Sharing someone's image without consent violates their privacy.
- **Cyberbullying and Harassment:** Posting derogatory content online constitutes cyberbullying and harassment.
- **Disinformation and False Accusations:** Spreading false information can harm reputations and needs responsible sharing.
- **Online Accountability:** Publicly shaming individuals without proper evidence raises concerns about fairness.
- **Misuse of Technology:** Misuse of technology and social media platforms to perpetuate harm, disseminate false information, and engage in cyberbullying.
- **Impact on Relationships:** Negative online content can strain real-life relationships, highlighting the need for ethical online behavior and digital literacy.

(b) Using social media to counter false propaganda against your family has both pros and cons.

Pros:

- **Immediate Response:** Quickly address false allegations or misinformation to prevent their spread.
- **Wide Reach:** Reach a diverse audience to correct the narrative effectively.
- **Transparency:** Demonstrate authenticity with evidence on social media.
- **Engagement:** Interact directly with the audience, providing context.
- **Mobilization of Support:** Gain support from friends, colleagues, and strangers.
- **Educational Opportunity:** Raise awareness about online behavior's consequences.

Cons:

- **Escalation:** Risk of exacerbating the situation and facing online harassment.
- **Privacy Concerns:** Compromising family privacy and inviting threats.
- **Misinterpretation:** Efforts to clarify may still lead to confusion.
- **Negative Backlash:** Unpredictable public opinion can result in backlash.
- **Emotional Toll:** Dealing with online harassment can be emotionally draining.
- **Legal Implications:** Depending on what you share on social media, there could be legal consequences.

Conclusion

Using social media to counter false propaganda can be a double-edged sword. It can be an effective way to set the record straight and raise awareness, but it also comes with risks and potential negative consequences. It's crucial to approach such situations thoughtfully, seeking legal advice if necessary, and considering the well-being and privacy of your family above all else.