



Mains Practice Question

Q. What is an ethical dilemma? Mention the different types of ethical dilemmas faced in government institutions and also suggest ways to resolve them. (150 Words)

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Approach

- Briefly explain the term ethical dilemma
- Enumerate various types of ethical dilemmas that public officials face in government institutions
- Discuss the ways these dilemmas can be reduced
- Conclude by stressing on the need for public officials to have sound ethical conduct

Introduction

- Ethical Dilemma is a decision-making problem between two moral imperatives neither of which resolves the situation in a morally satisfactory manner. It is a complex situation that often involves an apparent mental conundrum in which obeying one imperative would result in disobeying another.

Body

Some of the most common ethical dilemmas with which public servants are confronted, revolve around aspects such as:

- **Administrative discretion:** Public officials are not merely executors of public policy. They make decisions pertaining to the lives of people, for example, about taxes, survival and the dismissal of people. When faced with alternatives choices, public official face ethical problems.
- **Corruption:** Corruption is an important manifestation of the failure of ethics. There is a colonial legacy of unchallenged authority and propensity to exercise power arbitrarily. In a society that worships power, it is easy for public officials to deviate from ethical conduct.
- **Nepotism:** Appointment of relatives or friends to public positions, thereby ignoring the merit principle leads to the downgrading of the quality of the public service.
- **Public accountability:** Public officials ought to be accountable for their official actions to their superiors, the courts, and the public. It is nevertheless, possible for them to hide behind prescribed procedures, the cloak of professionalism and even political office-bearers
- **Policy dilemmas:** Policymakers are often confronted by conflicting responsibilities. They have the freedom to act on behalf and in the interest of others, but they must also answer to others - their superiors and society - for their actions.

Preventing and managing misconduct as well as enforcing ethical values and standards are very complex issues. However, it is important for public servants to ensure that their official conduct is always guided by the emplaced mechanisms **for improving ethical fitness:**

- Re-Sensitization Program on Ethical Values and Standards can be taken up with a view to halt the decline of the time-honored ethical principles and rules in the public service.
- Promoting Administrative Accountability through strict adherence to Codes of Conduct,

encouraging public servants to adhere to the mandatory and permissible conduct in the public service.

- Laws and rules, which prohibit misconduct and corruption should be strengthened and appropriate punishments for violators should be handed out.
- Demonstrable political commitment at the highest political authority level is critical for the successful promotion of durable sound ethical fitness.
- Peer consultation can also turn out to be valuable in navigating through the labyrinth of ethical dilemmas in public service.

Conclusion

- Indeed any person who is privileged to guide the destiny of the people must not only be ethical but must be seen to practice these values. Respect of public perception is very critical because public functionaries are stewards of public confidence and trust, which can only be gained and maintained by consistent avoidance of not only actual ethical misconduct but very importantly the public perception of it

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