



## Mains Practice Question

You are the manager of a reputed firm. One of your employees has just been diagnosed with a treatable form of cancer. He has confided in you about the status of his health. He has also asked you not to say a word to anyone because he considers his health to be a personal matter. Over the next few months, this employee is absent frequently, especially during his radiation treatments. His absences are not a major problem for the company because he can work from home.

However, some of your other employees think that their co-worker is getting special treatment, and they are ready to go to your boss to complain. This would create unnecessary and unhelpful problems for the sick employee if other employees complain about him.

- Identify the stakeholders and the ethical issues involved in the case.
- How would you handle this situation? Suggest most appropriate course of action. (250 words).

22 May, 2020 GS Paper 4 Case Studies

### Approach

- In the introduction give a brief context of the case and highlight the main issue.
- The first part of the body should include the stakeholders and their respective interests followed by the possible ethical issues involved in the case.
- In the second part, suggest the most appropriate course of action to handle the situation.

### Introduction

In the given case the main issues are:

- To enable the ailing employee to work in such a way that doesn't hamper his treatment process.
- Assure the other employees of non discrimination.
- Prevention of complaint to my boss.
- Save my professional credentials as manager and trust of all of my employees..

### Body

Stakeholders Involved	Interests
Ailing Employee	▪
The Manager	▪ ▪
The other employees	▪
Higher management of the firm	▪ ▪

### Ethical issue for the employee undergoing treatment

- Issue of maintaining integrity:** Whether to keep his disease secret (hiding the truth) to avoid being victimised by social stigma or reveal it to other employees for ensuring a positive workplace

culture.

### Ethical issues for the manager

- **Issues of maintaining transparency in his functioning:** To facilitate the ailing employee to work in such a way that it doesn't hamper his ongoing treatment and maintain secrecy about his disease (not reveal it without his consent).
- **Non partisanship:** The manager faces a challenge of ensuring fair treatment to all employees without discriminating among them.

### Ethical issues for other employees

- **Maintain Integrity:** Abstaining from complaining about discrimination without knowing the real reasons behind it.
- **Issue of not following hierarchy and lack of trust in the manager:** To resolve the grievances through proper channels, they should deliberate with the manager first rather than complaining to his boss directly. It is an ethical issue to bypass the proper hierarchy of the management.

	Course Of Action	Merits	Demerits
1	Reveal to the employees and my boss the correct reason for preferential treatment of that cancer patient employee.	Employees and my boss will understand and empathize and cooperate with their ill colleague.  No complaints of discrimination will be made against me.	Breaches trust of employee and professional secrecy, and is morally inappropriate for me.
2	Ignore the employees' suspicion of discrimination	This would enable me to continue helping the ailing employee with leaves and concessions in work enabling his treatment.	Sentiments of favouritism in office shall adversely affect the morale of employees and reduce their productivity.  I shall lose the trust of my employees.  If a complaint is made against me it shall endanger my professional integrity.
3	Convince the employee undergoing treatment for cancer to not be afraid of social stigmas and be transparent about his illness.	All employees will empathize and extend their support to him in such a grave situation.	The employee shall feel I am doing this to resolve my precarious situation.
4	Convene a meeting to address the grievances of employees.	I shall be able to articulate my reasons appropriately before employees.  I would get a chance to deliberate on the problem.	
5	Warn employees to prevent rumour mongering based on unfounded apprehensions of partisanship.	Employees would not like such stern measures.	It can be effective as the last course of action.  The employees still may go to the boss and complain.

### Appropriate course of action based on the viability of the above options

- The first two courses of actions would not be taken by me because the former is morally unsound and latter is professionally inappropriate.

- If from the third course of action, the employee is convinced to reveal his ailment , it shall clear the contentious issues in the office automatically.
- If the employees still want to maintain secrecy, a meeting shall be convened and without revealing the illness of that particular employee, I will ascertain that their colleague is being given preferential treatment on valid reasons.
- If still some employees are found indulging in rumour mongering and disturbing the decorum of office, the fifth course of action would be taken followed by appropriate disciplinary action if needed and inform my boss about the same.
- I might earn ill sentiments of employees for a while with the last course of action, but their trust will be restored in me as soon as our colleague will recover and correct reasons will come to light.

**Conclusion:** Thus, the above plan would help me as a manager to make decisions which are morally sound and rationally appropriate to resolve the issues of the given case.

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