



Mains Practice Question

At 9 pm on Saturday evening, Rashika, a Joint Secretary, was still engrossed in her work in her office. Her husband, Vikram, is an executive in an MNC and frequently out of town in connection with his work. Their two children aged 5 and 3 are looked after by their domestic helper. At 9.30 pm her superior, Mr. Suresh calls her and asks her to prepare a detailed note on an important matter to be discussed in a meeting in the Ministry. She realises that she will have to work on Sunday to finish the additional task given by her superior. She reflects on how she had looked forward to this posting and had worked long hours for months to achieve it. She had kept the welfare of people uppermost in discharging her duties. She feels that she has not done enough justice to her family and she has not fulfilled her duties in discharging essential social obligations. Even as recently as last month she had to leave her sick child in the nanny's care as she had to work in the office. Now she feels that she must draw a line, beyond which her personal life should take precedence over her professional responsibilities- She thinks that there should be reasonable limits to the work ethics such as punctuality, hard work, dedication to duty and selfless service.

- A. Discuss the ethical issues involved in this case.
- B. Briefly describe at least four laws that have been enacted by the Government with respect to providing a healthy, safe and equitable working environment for women.
- C. Imagine you are in a similar situation. What suggestions would you make to mitigate such working conditions? (Answer in 250 words, UPSC Mains 2023)

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Approach

- Begin with a short introduction to the case.
- Discuss ethical issues involved in the case, describe laws that have been enacted by the Government with respect to providing a healthy, safe and equitable working environment for women (min. 4) and provide suggestions to mitigate such working conditions.
- Conclude with a balanced approach.

Introduction

- Rashika, a committed Joint Secretary, faces ethical dilemmas as her demanding job clashes with family responsibilities. Her story prompts reflection on the delicate balance between career aspirations and personal obligations in the modern workplace. Examining societal expectations, work ethics, and legal frameworks, Rashika's situation calls for a nuanced exploration of the ethical considerations surrounding professional ambitions and personal responsibilities.

Body

- **Ethical Issues:**
 - **Work-Life Balance:** The central ethical issue is Rashika's struggle to balance her demanding professional responsibilities with her role as a mother and spouse.
 - **Compromising Social Obligation:** Rashika reflects on her inability to fulfill her family duties and social obligations, indicating a moral conflict.
 - **Impaired Emotional Development of the Child:** Leaving young children in the care of domestic helpers while working long hours raises ethical concerns about their well-being

and upbringing.

- **Health and Well-being:** Rashika's readiness to work on weekends and sacrifice personal life for her job also raises concerns regarding her physical and mental well-being.

▪ **Laws for Women's Work Environment:**

- **Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** This law mandates maternity leave and benefits for women employees, ensuring their well-being during and after pregnancy.
- **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition, and Redressal) Act, 2013:** It aims to create a safe and harassment-free work environment for women by preventing and addressing workplace harassment.
- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976:** This act ensures that women receive equal pay for equal work, promoting gender equity in the workplace.
- **Factories Act, 1948:** The Act includes provisions related to the safety, health, and welfare of women workers, including regulating their working hours, ensuring proper ventilation, and providing childcare facilities.

▪ **Suggestions to Mitigate Working Conditions:**

- **Establishing Boundaries:** Clearly define boundaries between work and personal life.
- **Delegate and Prioritize:** Delegate tasks at work when possible, and prioritize critical responsibilities to manage workload effectively.
- **Support Systems:** Seek the support of family, friends, and colleagues to share caregiving responsibilities.
- **Self-Care:** Prioritize self-care, including physical exercise, relaxation, and seeking professional help when dealing with stress or work-related pressures.
- **Advocate for Work life balance Policies:** Advocate for workplace policies that promote work-life balance and support employees' well-being.

Conclusion

Addressing the ethical concerns in this case requires a thoughtful balance between professional ambitions and personal responsibilities, with a focus on promoting employee well-being and fostering a supportive work environment.

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