



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are the challenges of upholding ethical standards in public service? (150 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by briefly introducing public service.
- Discuss challenges of upholding ethical standards in public service.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- Public service is the **backbone of any democratic society, and ethical conduct is crucial for the effectiveness and integrity of public service delivery.** Ethical standards ensure that public officials act in the best interest of the public, with transparency, accountability, and integrity.
 - However, upholding ethical standards in public service is a daunting task, especially in developing countries such as India, where corruption and political interference are rampant.

Body

- **Challenges of Upholding Ethical Standards in Public Service:**
 - **Political Interference:**
 - Political interference is one of the major challenges of upholding ethical standards in public service in India.
 - Political leaders **often interfere with the functioning of public institutions**, including the bureaucracy, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies, for personal or political gains.
 - This interference **undermines the independence and impartiality of public officials** and erodes public trust in public institutions.
 - For instance, in the **2011 Commonwealth Games scam, political leaders allegedly interfered in the allocation of contracts** and inflated costs, resulting in a loss of public funds. This scandal highlighted the impact of political interference on ethical conduct in public service.
 - **Corruption:**
 - Corruption is another major challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. Corruption occurs when **public officials use their position for personal gain or engage in unethical practices such as bribery, nepotism, and favoritism.**
 - Corruption is pervasive in India and has a significant impact on public service delivery, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement.
 - For instance, in the 2019 **Vyapam scam, public officials allegedly accepted bribes to admit candidates to medical**

colleges, compromising the merit-based admission process. This scandal highlighted the impact of corruption on ethical conduct in public service.

◦ **Lack of Accountability:**

- Lack of accountability is another challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. **Public officials often act with impunity, knowing that they are unlikely to face consequences for their actions.**
 - This lack of accountability erodes public trust in public institutions and hinders the effective implementation of ethical standards.
 - For instance, in the **2014 Nirbhaya gangrape case, public officials were criticized for their delayed response and inadequate measures to prevent sexual violence.**
 - This case highlighted the impact of lack of accountability on ethical conduct in public service.

◦ **Inadequate Training and Awareness Programs:**

- Inadequate training and awareness programs are another challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. Public officials often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to implement ethical standards effectively.
 - Moreover, public officials may not be aware of the importance of ethical conduct or the consequences of unethical behavior.
 - For instance, in the 2013 Saradha chit fund scam, public officials allegedly failed to detect the fraudulent activities of the chit fund company, leading to a loss of public funds. This scandal highlighted the impact of inadequate training and awareness programs on ethical conduct in public service.

Conclusion

- In India, various challenges hinder the effective implementation of ethical standards in public service, such as political interference, corruption, lack of accountability, and inadequate training programs.
 - To overcome these challenges, there is a need to promote a culture of ethical conduct, enforce laws and regulations, and enhance transparency and citizen engagement.
 - Strengthening institutional independence, improving accountability mechanisms, and providing comprehensive training and awareness programs for public officials are also necessary to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of public service delivery and promote sustainable development.