Mains Practice Question

Case Studies

You have just been appointed as Additional Director General of Central Public Works Department. The Chief Architect of your division, who is to retire in six months, is passionately working on a very important project, the successful completion of which would earn him a lasting reputation for the rest of his life. A new lady architect. Seema, trained at Manchester School of Architecture, UK joined as Senior Architect in your division. During the briefing about the project, Seema made some suggestions which would not only add value to the project, but would also reduce completion time. This has made the Chief Architect insecure and he is constantly worried that all the credit will go to her. Subsequently, he adopted a passive and aggressive behaviour towards her and has become disrespectful to her. Seema felt it embarrassing as the Chief Architect left no chance of humiliating her. He would very often correct her in front of other colleagues and raise his voice while speaking to her. This continuous harassment has resulted in her losing confidence and self- esteem. She felt perpetually tensed, anxious and stressed. She appeared to be in awe of him since he has had a long tenure in the office and has vast experience in the area of her work. You are aware of her outstanding academic credentials and career record in her previous organisations. However, you fear that this harassment may result in compromising her much needed contribution in this important project and may adversely impact her emotional well-being. You have also come to know from her peers that aho is contemplating tendering her resignation.

A. What are the ethical issues involved in the above case?

B. What are the options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization?

C. What would be your response to Seema's predicament? What measures would you institute to prevent such occurrences from happening in your organization? (Answer in 250 words, UPSC Mains 2023)

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Approach

- Begin with a short introduction to the case.
- Discuss the ethical issues involved in the case, options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization and your response to Seema's predicament.
- Summarize the key points and conclude.

Introduction

This case study explores a challenging scenario in the Central Public Works Department, where tensions between the retiring Chief Architect and the recently joined Senior Architect, Seema, threaten the success of a crucial project. Seema's innovative suggestions have triggered the Chief Architect's insecurity, leading to a toxic work environment.

Body

(a) Ethical issues involved in the case:

- **Workplace Harassment (Dignity and Respect):** The Chief Architect's humiliation and disrespectful behavior towards Seema violate **her dignity and create a hostile work environment.**
- **Professional Jealousy (Collaboration and Teamwork):** The Chief Architect's insecurity and unwillingness to collaborate with Seema hinder the project's success and compromise teamwork.
- **Impact on Emotional Well-being (Employee Well-being):** Seema's continuous humiliation and stress due to the Chief Architect's behavior **adversely affect her emotional well-being, hindering her productivity.**
- **Ethical Leadership Failure (Ethical Conduct):** The Chief Architect's **unethical conduct, including belittling a competent colleague,** reflects a failure in ethical leadership within the organization.

(b) Options available to you in order to complete the project as well as to retain Seema in the organization:

- **Mediation:** Facilitate a private conversation to **resolve conflicts between the Chief Architect and Seema.**
- **Collaborative Task Delegation:** Assign **specific project tasks to Seema and the Chief Architect based on their strengths and expertise,** promoting collaboration and accelerating project completion.

(c) What would be your response to Seema's predicament? What measures would you institute to prevent such occurrences from happening in your organization?

In response to Seema's predicament:

- **Mentorship and Support:** Assuring Seema that her contributions are valued while providing emotional support to boost her confidence.
- **Idea Incubator**: Create an **"Idea Incubator" platform where employees, including Seema,** can propose innovative project ideas. Recognize and reward contributors, fostering a culture of creativity.

To prevent such occurrences in the organization:

- **Fair Evaluation**: Ensure **recognition is based on merit through unbiased performance evaluations.**
- **Zero-Tolerance Policy:** Implement and communicate a strict anti-harassment policy to foster a safe work environment.
- Anonymous Reporting: Establish an anonymous reporting mechanism for employees to safely report harassment or conflicts without fear of retaliation.

Conclusion

Addressing the ethical issues involves a combination of immediate interventions, support for the affected party, and systemic changes to prevent future occurrences. The focus should be on creating a respectful and inclusive work environment that values the contributions of all employees.