



Mains Practice Question

Case Study

You are the Superintendent of Police in a city that has been experiencing rising incidents of online harassment targeting women. A recent case has attracted significant public and media attention: a young woman has committed suicide after being repeatedly harassed and blackmailed online. An investigation revealed that the harassment was carried out by a group of influential individuals, including the son of a prominent politician.

When you initiate action against the accused, you receive immense political pressure to slow down or drop the investigation. A senior politician contacts you directly, reminding you of your career prospects and how this case could harm your professional growth if you refuse to cooperate.

At the same time, the victim's family is seeking justice, and activists have begun to protest in large numbers, demanding accountability. The media is closely watching the developments, and public sentiment is strongly in favor of justice. However, the pressure from influential circles is mounting, and you risk being transferred or sidelined if you pursue the investigation aggressively.

Questions:

1. What are the ethical dilemmas involved in this case?
2. As the Superintendent of Police, what course of action would you take, and why?
3. Discuss the importance of integrity and accountability in public service, using this case as a reference.

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Introduction

This case revolves around a **high-profile investigation into the suicide of a young woman driven by online harassment and blackmail** involving influential individuals, including a politician's son. As the **Superintendent of Police**, there is mounting political pressure to stall the investigation, coupled with **public protests, media scrutiny, and the victim's family demanding justice**. Balancing the pursuit of justice with professional risks and external influences is at the heart of this dilemma.

Body

1. Ethical Dilemmas in the Case

- **Justice for the Victim's Family vs. Political Pressure**
 - Ensuring a fair and thorough investigation to bring the culprits to justice is essential for upholding the rule of law, supporting the victim's family, and restoring public trust.
 - Yielding to political interference may protect your career prospects but undermines accountability and sets a dangerous precedent for impunity.
- **Public Duty vs. Personal Career Prospects**
 - As a law enforcement officer, your primary responsibility is to serve justice impartially and

protect the public interest.

- Defying political pressure could result in transfers, professional stagnation, or reputational harm within the bureaucratic hierarchy.

▪ **Rule of Law vs. Abuse of Power**

- Pursuing the investigation demonstrates commitment to equality before the law, even when powerful individuals are involved.
 - Caving to political influence may perpetuate a culture of injustice where the powerful evade consequences.

▪ **Public Interest vs. Political Expediency**

- Addressing the growing menace of online harassment and ensuring justice would set a positive example for society.
 - Ignoring the case for short-term political harmony may avoid confrontation with influential individuals but will alienate the public.

▪ **Professional Integrity vs. Institutional Pressures**

- Upholding your ethical duty requires acting with courage and impartiality, irrespective of external pressures.
 - Giving in to pressure may align with the interests of the political class but compromises your role as a protector of justice.

▪ **Transparency and Accountability vs. Fear of Retribution**

- Proactively investigating the case and maintaining public communication reinforces trust in the police force.
 - Aggressive pursuit of justice may result in personal or professional consequences, including being sidelined or penalized.

▪ **Balancing Public Sentiment vs. Adhering to Procedural Protocols**

- Responding to widespread protests and public outcry strengthens faith in the justice system.
 - Ensuring the investigation remains unbiased and procedural despite media pressure is vital to avoid prejudicing the case

2. As the Superintendent of Police, what course of action would you take, and why?

▪ **Build a Legally Strong Case**

- Form a **Special Investigation Team (SIT)** with competent and trusted officers to handle the case discreetly and efficiently. This ensures shared responsibility and minimizes direct interference.
- Collect **robust and irrefutable evidence**, including **digital footprints, chat records, and CCTV footage**, to create a case that can withstand political and judicial scrutiny.
Why: A case founded on strong evidence limits opportunities for manipulation or dismissal, even under political pressure.

▪ **Adhere to Due Procedure with Transparency**

- Register a **First Information Report (FIR)** and ensure **all procedural steps, such as arrests and searches, comply with legal requirements.**
- Provide regular updates to higher authorities and the court to ensure institutional oversight while maintaining transparency with the public.
Why: Strict **adherence to due process** prevents allegations of bias or procedural lapses, reducing the chances of influential figures derailing the investigation.

▪ **Strategically Leverage Media and Public Opinion**

- **Communicate case updates to the media carefully**, emphasizing the rule of law and justice without resorting to sensationalism.
- **Use public sentiment and protests** to create a counterweight to political interference, signaling the importance of justice in preserving law and order.
Why: Public pressure can make political interference more costly and encourage accountability from influential individuals.

▪ **Engage Judicial Oversight When Necessary**

- If political interference intensifies, **seek judicial oversight**, such as **intervention by the High Court**, to ensure the investigation proceeds without obstruction.
- Consult legal experts to address specific challenges posed by political or institutional pressures.
Why: Judicial oversight provides fairness and protects you from potential backlash for

acting independently.

- **Maintain Professional Neutrality While Handling Political Pressure**
 - **Firmly but respectfully explain to the senior politician the legal and public constraints** that make suppressing the case impossible.
 - Seek institutional backing from superiors, framing the situation as a legal and administrative matter rather than personal defiance.
Why: A balance of tact and firmness reduces the risk of direct retaliation while allowing you to uphold your duty to justice.
- **Provide Support to the Victim's Family**
 - Offer the **victim's family counseling**, police protection if required, and regular updates on the investigation's progress.
 - Involve civil society organizations and women's rights activists to build public confidence in the investigation.
Why: Supporting the victim's family bolsters public trust and ensures justice, reducing the risk of public frustration turning into damaging narratives.
- **Prepare for Professional Repercussions**
 - **Acknowledge the possibility of being transferred or sidelined** and accept it as a professional risk for fulfilling your duty.
 - **Document all actions taken in the case meticulously** to demonstrate procedural integrity if questioned later.
Why: Taking a principled stand for justice may pose short-term career risks but enhances your reputation and long-term professional credibility.

Rationale for This Approach:

This course of action balances pragmatism and ethics:

- **Rule of Law First: Justice is pursued while adhering to legal procedures**, minimizing scope for interference.
- **Minimized Risks: Political fallout is mitigated through tactful communication**, judicial oversight, and public support.
- **Long-Term Credibility:** Acting in alignment with your duty enhances personal and institutional credibility, even if there are short-term challenges.

3. Importance of Integrity and Accountability in Public Service

- **Importance of Integrity in Public Service**
 - **Ensuring Impartiality and Fairness**
 - **In the Case:** Despite political pressure to suppress the investigation, the **officer's integrity would demand impartial action based solely on facts and evidence**. This ensures justice for the victim's family while reinforcing the rule of law.
 - **Why Important:** Integrity prevents the misuse of power, ensuring that decisions are free from personal or political biases.
 - **Building Public Trust**
 - **In the Case:** The **officer's steadfast commitment to justice, even under intense scrutiny**, fosters trust in the police force and reassures the public that no one is above the law.
 - **Why Important:** Public institutions derive legitimacy from the trust of citizens, which can only be maintained if officials act with honesty and transparency.
 - **Protecting Institutional Values**
 - **In the Case:** By **resisting unethical demands, the officer protects the credibility of law enforcement** and upholds its responsibility as a guardian of justice.
 - **Why Important:** A single breach of integrity can erode the credibility of the entire institution, undermining public confidence in governance.
- **Importance of Accountability in Public Service**
 - **Upholding the Rule of Law**
 - **In the Case:** **Accountability ensures that influential individuals**, including

the politician's son, are subjected to the same legal processes as any other citizen.

- **Why Important:** Holding all individuals accountable fosters equality before the law, deterring future violations and reinforcing democratic principles.
- **Responding to Public Expectations**
 - **In the Case:** The public's protests highlight a demand for justice and transparency in addressing online harassment. The officer must act responsibly to meet these expectations through clear communication and visible action.
 - **Why Important:** Public servants are accountable to the people, and failure to act decisively in such cases can lead to widespread disillusionment with the justice system.
- **Avoiding Abuse of Power**
 - **In the Case:** Ensuring accountability means preventing the misuse of political power to shield the accused and ensuring fair investigation procedures.
 - **Why Important:** Accountability creates checks and balances, preventing corruption, abuse of authority, and arbitrary decision-making.

Conclusion

This case underscores the **critical responsibility of public officials to uphold the rule of law, even in the face of immense political pressure.** Ensuring justice for the victim and her family, adhering to legal procedures, and maintaining professional integrity can not only restore public trust but also set a precedent for accountability.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-8645/pnt>

