Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

An apparel manufacturing company having a large number of women employees was losing sales due to various factors. The company hired a reputed marketing executive, who increased the volume of sales within a short span of time. However, some unconfirmed reports came up regarding his indulgence in sexual harassment at the workplace.

After sometime a woman employee launched a formal complaint to the management against the marketing executive about sexually harassing her. Faced with the companies' indifference, in not taking cognizance of her grievances, she lodged an FIR with the police.

Realizing the sensitivity and gravity of the situation, the company called the woman employee to negotiate. In that she was offered a hefty sum of money to withdraw the complaint and the FIR and also give in writing that the marketing executive is not involved in the case.

Identify the ethical issues involved in this case. What options are available to the woman employee?

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2019	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
20	~250 words

Answer Hint

Workplace dignity; gender justice; sexual harassment; corporate accountability; abuse of power; victim intimidation; conflict of interest; integrity; legal redressal; ethical courage

Model Answer

Introduction

The case highlights the conflict between commercial interests and the fundamental rights of employees. The company's attempt to buy the complainant's silence raises serious concerns regarding workplace ethics, gender justice and institutional accountability.

Ethical Issues Involved

1. **Dignity and respect:** Sexual harassment violates the employee's dignity, safety and right to a respectful workplace.

2. **Gender justice:** The company's indifference reflects institutional insensitivity towards women's grievances.

3. **Integrity and accountability:** Offering money to suppress a complaint prioritises profits and reputation over justice.

4. **Abuse of power:** The marketing executive's position and commercial success may influence the company's response and discourage reporting.

5. **Conflict of interest:** The company's dependence on the executive's sales performance may compromise an impartial investigation.

6. **Victim intimidation and justice obstruction:** Pressuring the employee to withdraw her complaint may undermine her autonomy and the lawful investigation.

Options Available to the Woman Employee

1. **Reject the offer:** Refuse to sign any false declaration or withdraw her complaint under pressure.

2. **Approach the Internal Committee:** Submit a written complaint to the Internal Committee constituted under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, and seek an impartial inquiry.

3. **Pursue legal remedies:** Continue cooperating with the police and seek assistance from appropriate legal authorities. Any withdrawal or settlement must not be assumed to automatically terminate criminal

proceedings.

4. **Seek protection and support:** Document communications and evidence, preserve relevant records, and approach legal aid services or a women's support organisation if required.

5. **Escalate institutional misconduct:** Report the company's pressure to appropriate authorities and pursue remedies against retaliation through lawful channels.

Conclusion

The employee should prioritise dignity, safety and justice over financial inducement. The company must ensure an impartial inquiry, protect the complainant from retaliation and hold wrongdoing accountable, irrespective of the executive's commercial performance.