Ethics & Morality · GS - IV

In the context of work environment, differentiate between ‘coercion’ and ‘undue influence’ with suitable examples.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - IV	Ethics & Morality

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Both coercion and undue influence compromise free and ethical decision-making, but coercion operates mainly through force, threats or fear, whereas undue influence operates through misuse of authority, trust, status or dependence.

Model Answer

Introduction:

Ethical decision-making requires genuine freedom of choice. Coercion and undue influence both undermine this freedom, but they differ in their methods and circumstances.

Coercion:

Coercion involves **force, threat or intimidation** to compel a person to act against their will. It may involve explicit or implicit threats of harm or punishment. For example, a supervisor threatening an employee with physical harm or illegal retaliation unless they falsify records constitutes coercion.

Undue Influence:

Undue influence occurs when a person uses **position, authority, trust or psychological dependence** to improperly influence another's decision without necessarily using direct threats. For example, a senior manager pressuring a subordinate to favour a particular vendor by exploiting the employee's dependence on performance appraisal is undue influence.

Key Difference:

Coercion primarily operates through **fear of force or adverse consequences**, while undue influence operates through **abuse of power, relationship or authority**. Both undermine autonomy, fairness and informed consent.

Conclusion:

An ethical workplace requires employees to exercise independent judgment without fear or manipulation. Transparent procedures, grievance mechanisms and protection against retaliation can help prevent both practices.

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