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Q2

(a) "Corruption is the manifestation of the failure of core values in the society." In your opinion, what measures can be adopted to uplift the core values in the society? (b) In the context of work environment, differentiate between 'coercion and undue influence' with suitable examples.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · GS IV · 10 marks · Probity in Governance

Probity in Governance: Concept of public service; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Information sharing and transparency in government, Right to Information, Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Citizen's Charters, Work culture, Quality of service delivery, Utilization of public funds, challenges of corruption.

Core demand of the question

- (a) Treat corruption as a failure of core values and state measures to uplift those values
- (b) Differentiate coercion and undue influence in the work environment, with examples

Revision summary

Corruption is private gain from entrusted power and shows that honesty, impartiality and duty have failed.

Uplift needs family and school, leadership example, e-systems that cut discretion, and statutes that protect whistle-blowers and punish graft.

Coercion is forcing a person by threat of harm such as transfer, violence or a withheld bill.

Undue influence is unfair advantage taken from a dominating or fiduciary relation without an open threat.

Both appear at work; POSH and Conduct Rules cover the quiet pressure as well as the shout.

Introduction

Corruption is not only a missing file. It is a public sign that honesty, fairness and duty have lost force. Part (b) then names two ways power is abused at work without always looking like an open threat.

Body**(a) Corruption as failure of core values, and how to uplift them**

- Core values in public life include honesty, integrity, impartiality, empathy, and respect for the Constitution and for other people's property.
- Corruption is the use of entrusted power for private gain, whether as a bribe, a favour to kin, or a cooked tender.
- When those core values fail, the officer treats the counter as a shop and the citizen as a customer who must pay extra.
- Laws can punish the act; they cannot, by themselves, create the habit of not asking.

- Family and school must treat a stolen rupee as shame, not as cleverness, because the first map of honesty is drawn before the first posting.
- Civic education should teach that tax and a clean tender are duties, not optional virtue.
- **Leadership example matters:** a minister or secretary who lives simply and refuses a gift sets a visible standard that a circular cannot.
- **Institutions that reduce discretion reduce the market for bribes:** e-procurement, direct benefit transfer, published queues, and the [Right to Information Act, 2005](#).
- The [Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988](#), the [Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013](#), and the [Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014](#) supply investigation and protection so that a honest junior is not alone.
- Training must use live cases, not only slogans, so that an officer practises refusal before the first envelope arrives.
- **Social shame and social honour still work:** a community that celebrates the bribe-giver as efficient will keep producing corruption even after a new Act.
- **Uplift of core values is therefore simultaneous:** character at home, example at the top, systems that make honesty easy, and punishment that is real.

(b) Coercion and undue influence at work

- **Coercion is forcing a person's will by threat of harm:** transfer, dismissal, violence, or a false case.
- In contract language, [Section 15](#) of the [Indian Contract Act, 1872](#) treats coercion as committing or threatening to commit an act forbidden by the Indian Penal Code, 1860, or the unlawful detaining of property.
- At work, a superior who says "sign this false muster or I will ruin your annual appraisal" is using coercion.
- A contractor told that the bill will never be paid unless a percentage is returned is under coercion, even if no one raises a hand.
- **Undue influence is quieter:** one party dominates the will of another because of a real or apparent authority, or a fiduciary relation, and uses that position to obtain an unfair advantage.
- [Section 16](#) of the [Indian Contract Act, 1872](#) defines that relation; a doctor, a guru, a bank manager, or a reporting officer can occupy it.
- At work, a boss who does not threaten firing but uses a junior's fear, gratitude, or isolation to extract unpaid personal work, political canvassing, or sexual compliance is using undue influence.
- A loan given to a subordinate on terms the subordinate cannot refuse, because the same person writes the promotion, is undue influence even if the paper looks voluntary.
- Coercion is the stick in the open. Undue influence is the stick hidden inside trust and hierarchy.
- Both violate dignity and [Article 14](#) equality in a public office. The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 treats a quid-pro-quo demand as harassment whether it arrives as a threat or as a "favour".
- The [Central Civil Services \(Conduct\) Rules, 1964](#) require courtesy and forbid conduct unbecoming; they cover both the shout and the soft pressure.
- **The ethical response is the same in structure:** name the power gap, record the request, refuse the unlawful act, and take the matter to a competent authority rather than bargain in private.

Flow diagram

Core values fail -> Corruption
Family example systems law -> Core values fail
Coercion -> Open threat
Undue influence -> Dominating will
Open threat -> Workplace abuse
Dominating will -> Workplace abuse

Conclusion

Corruption shows that honesty and public duty have failed as living values, so repair must join character, example, systems and punishment. Coercion forces the will by threat. Undue influence captures the will through hierarchy and trust. Both are abuse, and both must be recorded and stopped.

Facts & figures

Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988

The principal Union statute that criminalises bribery and related misconduct by public servants, as amended in 2018 on commercial organisations.

Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

Creates a Lokpal at the Union and requires Lokayuktas in States to inquire into allegations against public functionaries.

Indian Contract Act, 1872, Sections 15 and 16

Section 15 defines coercion; Section 16 defines undue influence through a dominating or fiduciary position.

Right to Information Act, 2005

Gives citizens a legal right to official information, which reduces the darkness in which bribes are priced.

Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964

Service rules on integrity, gifts, courtesy and conduct unbecoming of a government servant.

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