In the U.S. criminal justice system, prosecutors hold a large amount of power. They have the discretion to conclude who to charge, what evidence would be sufficient, and the case management as well. Nonetheless, not all legal facts comply with ethical do's and don'ts, as we can see in "*It may be legal, but is it ethical?"* (Marzouk, 2015). Prosecutors are duty-bound to fairly use their power to safeguard people and concentrate on justice.

The first scenario seems a prosecutor unmasks the seventeen-year-old gang member to the media. The prosecutor also comes to the conclusion that only if the minor pleads guilty will he be served with protection. From the legal standpoint, this seems wrong as the minors need special privacy protections. Revealing their identity can breach the due process and put them in danger (WJP, 2026). Again, from the ethical standpoint, it breaks the "Model Rules of Professional Conduct (MRPC) Rule 3.8. The rule underlines that prosecutors must advocate for justice and not use threats to get a plea (ABA, 2025). Using protection as a bargaining tool is not unfair; it is unsafe.

The second scenario pertains to a fourteen-year-old who pressured a relative to confess to murder. From the legal perspective, this is wrong as no proof has been found that entails that the boy has committed the murder. Arresting someone without proper evidence would breach the Fourth Amendment and would be considered an abuse of power (WJP, 2026). From the ethical viewpoint, it is also wrong because it uses a child as an instrument to get information. The criminal justice system prefers safeguarding the children and treating everyone in a fair way (Faller, 2019).

The third scenario comprises an arrest where a young man has been detained for a small amount of marijuana. It has been understood that the case will be dropped, and he will testify against his brother. They might be legal, though unfair. It could mess up the future of the young man. Just

like he may lose a scholarship. Again, from the ethical standpoint, it is wrong to use the law in the form of a threat or to penalise someone (ABA, 2025).

In some landmark cases, we get support for these ideas. In *"Brady v. Maryland (1963)",* the Supreme Court ordered that prosecutors need to submit all the evidence that could be helpful for the defendants. And in *"Kyles v. Whitley (1995)",* the court pinpointed that prosecutors need to act in the interest of justice, not for any personal win or gain. Apart from these, in *"United States v. Young (1985)"* it has been demonstrated that if prosecutors act unfairly, it can damage the trial, even if no one notices.

All these scenarios portray the breakdown between doing something legal or ethical. Prosecutors must responsibly use their powers, safeguard the rights, and make fair decisions. Justice should be our ultimate aim rather than winning a case or using threats to get better results.

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