

# Discrimination and sexual harassment

Life



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Most Americans can trace their predecessors back to some country across the oceans or the Mexican-American or Canadian-American borders. Each ethnic group has enriched American culture with its own particular types of music, food, customs, and dress. It usually takes two or more generations for the members of a new immigrant group to become sufficiently absorbed into the life of a community that they lose their separate identity. Some ethnic groups - mainly those of dark skin colors - never achieve total acceptance.

People concerned about improving group relations in their organization must guard against such clichés as “ I'm not prejudiced” and “ I treat all people the same. ” Even the most “ liberal” individuals do not treat all people the same. Moreover, they should not. All people are prejudiced for or against other people. However, it is behaviors, not attitudes, which comprise the major group problems confronting managers and supervisors. There are many laws against discriminatory behaviors, but there are none against prejudicial attitudes.

The ethnic prejudices found in neighborhoods, schools, and jobs come from two main sources: (1) the values and beliefs individuals learn from others, and (2) the tensions and frustrations all people experience while competing with other people, especially those who are culturally different. Race and racism, outgrowths of prejudice, disrupt organization behaviors (Shepherd & Penna 34). Cultural diversity changes the organization by providing new human resources and managerial challenges to employers.

As the United States experiences shortages of skilled workers, most organizations should to find ways to optimally utilize multicultural workers.

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This often entails dealing with employees who have different attitudes toward time, status and roles, relationships, responsibility, decision-making, and technology (Goldstein & Leopold 45). In addition, as the nation's workforce is reshaped with respect to age, sex, racial composition, and national origin, the challenge to managers and supervisors is magnified; managers must take strong leadership in eliminating discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. (Abbasi & Hollman 96).

If an organization devises an innovation strategy to cope with discrimination and sexual harassment, the result will be the successes an organization will experience. First, managers should play a role in the management of diversity initiatives in order to deliver permanent change in organizational culture, systems, and structures; should work in an integrated partnership within their organization to implement diversity successfully; second, cultural and gender diversity includes every employee, so, managers and supervisors must be aware of their values, motivations, communication styles, attitudes, and needs.

Arguments that support the thesis 1. Helping across cultures at workplace can be accomplished only with the assistance of well-trained managers. Most discrimination and sexual harassment problems are rooted in the organization culture. Certainly, group therapy is an alternative. Another alternative is affirmative action designed to change jobs. One of the reasons managers and supervisors are continually frustrated is because the social problems they are called upon to solve are themselves the products of a larger social environment.

Frequently, for example, an alienated worker's problem resolution depends not on his or her adjustment to an existing situation but instead on being moved to another job or another company. This kind of environmental change is modeled after milieu therapy. It is clear that many minorities and women do not get the help they need because company resources are not attuned to their needs. The more effective employers behave in the following manner: 1. They regard each employee as a vital part of the organization.

2. They view all personnel positively, because whatever diminishes anyone's self (e. . , humiliation, discrimination, degradation, failure) has no place in a culturally sensitive organization. 3. They allow and provide for individual and cultural differences. 4. They learn how employees see things. Since sensitivity to their own feelings is a prerequisite to effective leadership, it is beneficial for administrators to have maximum self-insight. For some administrators, this is an integral part of their personality; for others it must be learned. A growing number of administrators are participating in some type of sensitivity training.

If it is true, that helping across cultures can be accomplished only with the assistance of a healthier person. A worker does not need guidance from an administrator who is a racist. Nor does a female employee need a sexist supervisor. The more effective administrator is a mature person who functions with compassionate efficiency, who is able to assist his or her subordinates to solve their problems without resorting to pity, panic, or resignation. This type of administrator maintains professional balance and keeps his or her perspective with self-insight and humor.

Once diversity-related problems are identified, managers should move with great care when implementing change. Some actions, although well intentioned, will only exacerbate the problems. Anything that disrupts the existing flow of work activities can cause additional complaints and stress. 2. Diversity-related leadership is an important organizational factor determining the extent of discrimination. Without the full commitment of upper-level leaders in an organization, discrimination and sexual harassment initiatives are likely to fail and thus discriminatory practices are unlikely to be ended (Cox & Blake 8).

However, it is also necessary to look below the upper-most levels to examine the ways in which the behaviors and decisions of mid-level management and direct supervisors may also perpetuate discrimination and sexual harassment. Upper-level management at the highest levels of leadership in organizations, the CEO, the top management team (TMT), and the corporate board are instrumental in determining the direction that the organization will take with regard to discrimination and sexual harassment.

Leaders must first recognize the potential for discrimination in traditional organizational practices and structures and must believe in the need to value all employees and remove obstacles to their success (Stoner & Russell-Chapin 13). The CEO and top management team make important decisions regarding organizational strategies and resources, and they communicate the organization's priorities to all members and stakeholder groups (Chevrier 45).

The extent to which leaders choose to emphasize inclusiveness in the organization's strategy and the extent to which resources (i. . . , personnel, <https://assignbuster.com/discrimination-and-sexual-harassment/>

money, time) are devoted to eliminating all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment are indicators of leaders' priorities and of which “types” of employees are valued (Morrison & von Glinow 67). Top-level leaders can also discourage discrimination and sexual harassment by implementing systems of accountability that make rewards contingent upon meeting diversity goals. After the corporate board and TMT have decided to pursue an organizational change strategy throughout the organization, the role of the CEO is particularly important.

Cox and Blake (1991) argued that for champions for diversity are needed to enact change—and the CEO is in a very good position to passionately pursue change, to role model the behaviors required for change, and to help the organization to move forward. Such a leader can help to establish an inclusive organizational culture through persistent communication of and visible support for all programs and policies aimed at reducing discrimination and sexual harassment (Morrison & von Glinow 89). In addition, when successes occur, he or she would provide rewards and interpretations consistent with the desired values.

In this manner, a CEO who demonstrates commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment throughout the organization may play a crucial role in transforming an organization from monolithic (unicultural) to multicultural. The quality of leader-subordinate relationships is also an important consideration for discrimination and sexual harassment in organizations. High-quality leader member exchanges (LMX) may be less likely to develop between leader subordinate dyads composed of individuals who are demographically different (Hiller & Day 34).

Yet, because LMX relationship quality is thought to be pivotal for the access that subordinates receive to resources, information, important networks, and opportunities, high-quality LMX relationships with diverse subordinates are one key to combating discrimination sexual harassment in organizations. Ultimately, those managers who establish high quality LMX relationships with all of their employees without discriminating against minority subordinates will be in a better position to utilize all of their human resources (Douglas et al. 8). Indeed, recent evidence demonstrated that departments in which racial minorities reported high-quality LMX relationships with their managers had higher profits than departments where minorities reported low-quality LMX relationships (Nishii, Mayer, Goldstein, & Dotan 19). 3. Without integration of equality goals within the broader business diversity-oriented strategy the organization will not develop open communication, mutual trust, and confidence in management

When strategies for advancing diverse employees and creating a culture of inclusiveness are embedded within an organization's strategic business plan, consequent levels of discrimination and sexual harassment conflict tend to be lower. Actually including EEO as part of a company's business strategy is important because statements of non-discrimination are a very tangible and salient sign that discrimination is not tolerated within an organization (Morrison & von Glinow 167).

Further, publicly stating the importance of diversity as a basis of competitive advantage and human resource quality fosters the belief that diversity represents an opportunity for the organization rather than a problem. There is also a theoretical basis for expecting that organizations that pursue an

innovation strategy will be motivated to capitalize on the diversity of behavioral scripts that result from a diverse workforce.

This is based on the evidence that diverse groups are more likely to produce a diverse set of ideas compared to homogeneous groups (Milliken & Martins 78), and the wider set of ideas is expected to translate into better decisions.

An organization that perceives the differential competencies and experiential bases of diverse employees as a source of competitive advantage is less likely to engage in practices that discriminate against diverse groups.

Arguments on the other side 1. People from different backgrounds and cultures tend to form unhealthy teamwork with diversity-related problems

Workplace harassment which entails the use of abusive language or isolation of specific workers may result because of their diversity (disabilities, performance record, sex, or place of birth) which will hinder the efficient formation of teamwork (Broadnax 13). People are more susceptible to workplace harassment and discrimination, which is bad for the organization. However, people from different backgrounds and with varied skills when effectively managed tend to form a strong teamwork. Teamwork is useful for an organization in that people are able to share their ideas or problems, thereby, providing workable solutions to issues.

The use of cross-functional teams and employee participation are key to success of the organization. This is because they provide a more firm platform on which to exchange knowledge and information. Therefore, managers who take strong leadership in this area are essential. Workplace harassment practices such as sexual harassment are so inhuman that it results in the breakdown of individual and team relationship in an

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organization and in most cases; it results because of one's race, disability, or gender. Harassment is not only directed to junior employees but it can be directed to a senior member of the group.

The consequences of workplace harassment and surveillance are normally severe in that it results in mental, physical, and emotional illnesses. Therefore, the managers in this case have a lot to lose if they do not act quickly. 2. People solve nothing, time solves problems Most managers are reluctant to admit that there are diversity-related problems that should be solved. While managers must be supportive and allow a reasonable period of time for problem abatement, it is important to remember that managers do not help employees or the organization by neglecting problems.

Nor do problems go away or resolve themselves if given ample time. If a business is managed poorly, it loses profits and eventually fails. If cultural conflicts and sexual harassment are handled poorly, valuable employees are lost. Avoiding financial and human resources losses tests the leadership mettle of managers. Central to conflict resolution is mastering the processes of problem solving, the dynamics of which are threefold (Nishii, Mayer, Goldstein, & Dotan 78-90): 1. The facts that constitute the problem must be understood. Facts usually consist of both objective reality and subjective reactions. 2.

The facts must be thought through. They must be probed into, reorganized, and turned over in order for distressed employees to grasp as much of the total configuration as possible. 3. A decision must be made that will result in resolving or alleviating the problem. This usually involves a change in behavior and, if possible, attitude. Succinctly, the three operations of

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problem solving are fact-finding, analysis of facts, and implementation of conclusions. For the maximum effectiveness, the people involved in the discrimination and sexual harassment conflict must be fully involved in the efforts to solve their own problems.

It is possible for a manager to define the problem and prescribe solutions, but when this happens the self-responsibility of the employees involved in the conflict is weakened. It is always better if the employees who have problems are able to assist in bringing about the resolution. A problem cannot be solved if the necessary information is missing. A manager may want to understand his or her subordinates' conflicts but be unable to do so because some of the data are missing or distorted. In some situations, administrators are not privy to all the information. In other instances, the information may have been misinterpreted.

Like any puzzle, missing pieces of information in a human relations problem will render it insolvable. Information alone is seldom enough. Too much information can freeze negative attitudes and reinforce dysfunctional behavior. Conditioned by organization and peer group norms, contradictory information may cause a manager to say to a complainant, " I understand what you have said but I don't believe it. " For example, a sexist supervisor may disregard documentation of a female's abilities to do male-oriented jobs. An individual with delusions of male superiority is not likely to believe reports documenting female competence in male jobs.

Thus, in order to be helpful, information must be believed by the manager. All of this underscores the crucial importance of managers taking strong leadership in order to eliminate harassment and discrimination. Sensitivity is <https://assignbuster.com/discrimination-and-sexual-harassment/>

the capacity to identify and empathize with the values, aspirations, and feelings of subordinates. Today, more than ever, organization needs culturally sensitive administrators. Without being able to see employees as they see themselves, to dispel fears of cultural differences, and to communicate with their subordinates, managers will turn their organizations into socially and psychologically destructive battlefields.

If they are unable to put themselves in the minds of their subordinates, there will be little help for the aggrieved persons. Frequently, managers are problems themselves or causes of problems. As noted earlier, the ability of managers to achieve and maintain a condition of objectivity when dealing with their subordinates' problems is important in the conflict resolution process. If a manager is wrapped up in his or her own inner world, he or she will not be able to perceive clearly the feelings of others. The challenge to administrators is awesome: They must empathize with subordinates but not to the point of losing their objectivity.

In many instances, aggrieved workers do not know how they really feel about their situation until they have communicated these feelings to someone else. Distressed workers may only be aware of internal discomforts. Providing opportunities for them to tell how they feel is usually the first step in isolating negative feelings and related behaviors. They may have previously communicated internal discomforts by arguing with, laughing at, or avoiding contact with other workers. Talking about negative feelings can provide a better view of them and a better chance for managing them.

While allowing an employee to 'tell' is a valuable technique in resolving problems, it is only a first step. Telling should be related to some end and <https://assignbuster.com/discrimination-and-sexual-harassment/>

not merely an end in itself. Solutions must be sought. Perhaps the major distinction lies between talking about the discrimination and sexual harassment conflict and talking through the discrimination and sexual harassment conflict. In the first instance, usually nothing more than random talk, free association of ideas occurs. In the second instance, more structured thinking occurs: a problem is acknowledged, its implications and related behaviors examined, and solutions pondered.

Talking through a problem excites all the body processes, often causing increased heartbeat and sweating. The whole person is caught up in it. It is imperative that distressed workers focus on problems that can be solved. This is by far the most efficient use of one's energies. For example, an older worker who focuses on his age, a woman on her gender, and a Hispanic on his ethnicity are all wasting valuable time and energy, as they cannot alter those things. However, if they focused on ageism, sexism, and, racism, then something constructive is possible. Managers must also focus on problems that have the potential of being solved.

Some of the questions to be answered by managers and supervisors during this process are:

- What is the problem? (Who did what, when, where, what happened? )
- Who senses (feels) the problem? (Only the aggrieved, co-workers, supervisors? )
- How are you personally affected? (Emotionally, socially, economically, professionally? )
- What was the immediate cause for what happened?
- What organization rules and regulations pertain to the problem?
- Who can act to resolve this problem?
- What do you want to happen?
- What are your options?
- What will you do?

Conclusion

Discrimination and sexual harassment management in the organization is a reflection of how the changing world and market place will be in the future. Diversity will enhance respect for individual differences within the organization and hence make it able to create a competitive advantage in the organization. Discrimination and sexual harassment management in the organization is able to benefit associates through the creation of safe and fair environment for all. Future research is needed to examine the consequences that the alignment among organizational processes and structures has for levels of organizational discrimination.

This is critical because an intervention into a single process or structure is unlikely to effectively reduce discrimination and sexual harassment. For example, if top management leaders adopt a strategic business plan that explicitly involves reducing discrimination and sexual harassment, but fail to also build a culture of inclusion, their efforts are likely to be ineffective. It would be useful to examine how individuals perceive the alignment of organizational processes. More generally, research needs to take a systems approach to discrimination and sexual harassment. Restate your thesis somewhere near the end of your paper.