

Good research paper about workplace

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Introduction

Workplace inequality can arise in relation to race and even gender.

Moreover, such acts of discrimination can be perpetrated on an individual or at a structural level. Structural bias occurs when certain categories of people are given unequal status as compared to other people. However, individual discrimination refers to prejudicial treatment meted on a person because of certain features like their accent and gender. Therefore, the paper seeks to address the kinds of discrimination that exist in the company where Maria works as it is typical of what happens in organizations. Additionally, issues of unfair treatment, rights of an organization to demand certain behavior from employees and the appropriate plan will also be tackled using Maria's experience as a case study.

Indications of structural or individual discrimination

Maria's case indicates that there are certain individual or structural discrimination. Firstly, there is the issue of prejudice based on national origin. According to Applesby (2008), the problem of bias because of an employee's national origin arises when one is alienated because of their accent or ethnicity and even because they come from a different part of the world. In Maria's case, her employers have an issue with her Latino accent, which comes about because of her ancestry. As such, even though she is a native-born US citizen, she is sidelined most especially because she is colored. The individual discrimination meted on her is evident from the low evaluations accorded to her by her male supervisors. Having worked for the company for 10 consecutive years and most importantly seven in the

position she currently holds, it would be expected that she has a wealth of experience on the organization's functionality. Therefore, it is mere prejudice for her to be rated lowly yet she has maintained the position for a long time. Besides, the customers she has encountered during her career in the company have never staged any complaints with regards to her accent during communication. Maria is faced with the problem of individual discrimination mainly because she is working in an environment where both her supervisors and co-workers are white males.

Secondly, the issue of structural discrimination is evident since the company seems not to hire people of color and most especially females (Gold, 2009). It appears that Maria is the only female and colored person in her department. This speaks a lot about the organization's view of female workers as well as colored employees. Maria's capabilities have been undermined because of her ethnicity and even more because she is female. The organization particularly Maria's department appears to be dominated by men. It creates the perception that white males are the most competent individuals and that explains why Maria would still get low evaluations after having served the company for a long time. Even worse is that limitations are placed on women's capabilities because even though Alex is of Anglo origin the white supervisors are confident that he is an "up and comer." It is sad to realize that they are not able to bestow a similar confidence on Maria who been working for the company for a long time now. They can merely argue that she is a good employee but cannot give her the same opportunity accorded to Alex probably because she is of the female gender.

Finally, Maria is probably experiencing individual prejudice because she is

industrious and a force to reckon with in the company. It could be that Maria is assertive and that is what is causing fear amongst her supervisors and co-workers. There are several instances where supervisors and even male co-workers find it challenging to have a female employee in top management positions. Therefore, it is not surprising that Maria's supervisors have come up with the excuse that she has a loud and aggressive approach towards those around her. Mentioning two instances of lateness and a single case of absenteeism for the ten years she has worked for the company does not appear to be a big issue as magnified by the supervisors. Maria is being victimized so she cannot get the well-deserved promotion.

Any indications that Maria was unfairly treated

Maria was treated unfairly to a large extent. To begin with, Maria who had worked with her company for about 10 years has stagnated in the same position for 7 years, which is a long time. The fact that she was of Latino ancestry does not justify the company's refusal to give her a promotion. Alex got the promotion yet he was of Anglo origin. This is a great injustice because even though Maria has a Latino accent she was born in America thus she should be treated properly just like other white Americans in her department. Additionally, she has better qualifications than Alex does and that makes her more deserving of the promotion. Both Maria and Alex possess a graduate degree only that Maria has an advantage because of her longstanding experience with the company.

Specifically, the federal laws do not allow employers to get involved in the harassment of employees or for them to take any “adverse employment action” because of their sex, color, race, or ethnicity (Hunter, 1992). In this

regard, the adverse action taken is the failure to grant promotion to an employee who is qualified. Additionally, state and federal anti-discrimination policies regard neutral employment policies as illegal. For instance, the policy that not all employees holding senior positions should have an accent in their speech is out rightly acceptable. In these respects, it is obvious that Maria is being rendered unequal treatment. There is a violation of federal laws in the case where she is denied promotion even though she is highly qualified. The company perpetuates unjust treatment towards Maria because of their adverse action and the neutral employment policy.

It is not mentioned that Maria was being given employment leave. As such, it would be wrong for her employer to take offense for her one time absence.

The good thing is that Maria has always explained the reasons for her lateness and absence thus should not be used to justify her failure to get a promotion. Additionally, her aggressive nature is good because it means that she was able to express herself in an open and loud manner in order to put an end to unfair treatment.

Company rights to require that employees speak in unaccented English

Requiring that every employee who speaks directly to clients should observe the use of unaccented English is beyond their rights. Title VII of the EEOC addresses this issue under the section related to the classification and segregation of employees (Gregory, 2003). This provision is violated when minority employees are divided through physical isolation from customer contact or even other employees. It is not mandatory for employees to speak English without an accent. Companies in the US are expected to adhere to

Title VII of the EEOC (Gregory, 2003). This means that the company where Maria works has no right to subject employees to relating with clients in unaccented speech.

An accent is influenced by an employees' national origin and no one individual has control over this factor. Furthermore, Title VII does not allow companies to engage in decisions that are racially motivated because of business concerns (Gregory, 2003). For instance, an organization may be keen about the impact of an employee's relations or even the negative effect they may have on customers. Similarly, the organization where Maria works has no right whatsoever to demand that their employees speak unaccented English. This ideally means that they are violating Title VII of the EEOC which strongly prohibits the company from making regulations that are racially motivated merely because of their business interests.

Recommendations for an appropriate plan

The company where Maria works can take certain steps that will assist in ensuring that a similar controversy related to either structural or individual prejudice does not recur. The first initiative would be for the business to work together with an experienced attorney concerning discrimination policies. In this way, the business will thus be better placed to come up with procedures and policies that are consistent with federal and the state laws of discrimination. This step will allow the company to develop a manual that is comprehensive. Moreover, working with a business attorney will make it easier for an employer to make appropriate changes. This would greatly assist the company to avoid lawsuits and complaints like those that have been leveled by Maria mostly because they would be acting in adherence to

the law.

Secondly, it is extremely necessary for an employer to review the manual governing the acts of employees with the management staff. This move affords the employer with the opportunity to both supervisors and senior managers about the firm's policies on discrimination (Craig, 2007). In fact, managers should be allowed to ask questions, in order for them to ascertain that they fully understand the provisions of discriminatory policies. For the whole process to be binding supervisors and managers need to sign a document that clearly shows that underwent discrimination training and that they understood the expectations of the entire program. With this being, the case Maria's supervisor would have no reason to deny her a promotion simply because her Latino ancestry has an influence on her accent.

Discriminatory training equips an organization's top management thus they are better able to handle issues like accents rather than hamper the career growth of an employee who has diligently worked for the company. For instance, Maria would have gotten a higher evaluation if the White male supervisors went through training.

Discriminatory training has a high likelihood of providing the top management with a more liberal outlook and a better understanding of issues to do with racial differences thereby making it possible to avoid imposing stereotypes on certain employees (Craig, 2007). Similarly, employees should go through discrimination training, ask questions, and sign a given form where they acknowledge to have gone through the training. Consequently, employees will not be able to level baseless accusations. Their complaints will only be valid if the provisions stated in the form, which they

signed, have been violated. It is possible that the supervisors' position that Maria should not be given a promotion because the rapid nature of her speech and her accent would serve, as a barrier for effective communication may actually be right. However, they would not have had a conflict if Maria signed a document that expressly stated the same. Therefore, there is no doubt that signing of documents that states the policies and expectations from both sides helps to bind both sides to a particular agreement thus minimizing disputes.

The third item in the plan would be to encourage equality and cooperation amongst the personnel in an organization (Friedman, 2005). Work groups and departments that promote diversity throughout the organization can achieve this initiative. With this, it will be easier for employees and the top management to appreciate diversity. For example, the white male supervisors discriminated against Maria because the company did not promote the culture of diversity. This is clearly depicted in this case because Maria was the only colored person in her department and even worse is that she was the only female. Evidently, this creates room for bias especially because the department is dominated with staff and supervisors who are white males.

Fourthly, there is need to establish a clear guideline in which personnel can report cases of discrimination to a particular human resource professional. Friedman (2005) is of the view that an experienced professional will help in handling the matter with the candidness it deserves. This move will particularly help in solving problems when it is still early. Lack of proper guideline on how to address discriminatory practices is what caused Maria's

problem to get out of hand before her concerns could be treated with the serious the issue deserves. Therefore, creating a channel in which an issue of prejudice can be dealt with helps in avoiding even greater problems.

Finally, managers should be alerted on discriminatory complaints put forth by employees. As such, they will be able to schedule a meeting with accused employees, human resource representatives and the manager. This makes it possible to find amicable solutions to the problem. Moreover, management can devise appropriate disciplinary action to accused employees so that corrective measures can be taken to salvage the situation. Overall, if the plan is taken into consideration then the company is likely to prevent the recurrence of what happened to Maria.

Conclusion

There are cases of structural or individual discrimination in the workplace. Structural discrimination arises in a situation where an employer shows prejudice against people of a given race while the one at the individual level can be disadvantageous for an employee like was the case with Maria's accent and also because she was a colored female. Unfortunately, workplace bias can cause an employee to receive unfair treatment. Maria's case is a typical example because she was given low evaluations and even denied a promotion because of her Latino ancestry and the accent that accompanies the same. Even so, federal and state laws do not support acts of unfair treatment as seen in from the EEOC acts. However, with the right plan businesses can be able to cushion themselves from employee complaints on matters of prejudice in the workplace. In a nutshell, businesses both small and large should among other things take the initiative to incorporate

comprehensive policies in the workplace to avoid any controversies that are likely to emerge in the future.

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