

Impacts of classism and lookism stereotypes



Stereotype: Classism & Lookism

In every organization, every manager knows *people* are vital in determining the success *or* failure of an organization. The performance of the organization is determined on how well the organization manages, motivates, involves, develop, and engage its stakeholders. Despite, how high the performance is of the organization, there are underlying issues that take place on a daily basis that a lot of leaders forget about. Two of these challenges is the effect of classism and lookism. This paper shall explore the impact of classism and lookism (in and outside of the workplace) while incorporating the evidence obtained through research giving the reader a better understanding of how these two “isms” relate and work hand in hand. To understand Lookism and classism we have to know what the word stereotype means. A Stereotype is a thought that is adopted about specific individuals or about certain ways of doing things. Stereotype occurs when members of a specific social class are branded by the rest of the community. (Cardwell, 1996)

The first area to define is classism. First the word, “Class” in the workplace is defined as one’s relative status according to income, wealth, power, and/or position in a company (or life) (Adams, 2013). Anyone who has ever had a job can prove, all of these factors matter a great deal in the workplace. Much like the other “isms,” classism is at play on an institutional level and can be found in recruitment and hiring practices, reimbursement of job expenses, jokes, and slurs heard in the workplace, informal networks, designation of work hours, and even in the location of the workplace. Outside of looking at classism in the workplace, classism can take place Classism can

throw any type of situation into disarray. In the workplace, employees need to work as a team with determination to achieve a common goal despite their economic differences. However, when the economic differences take as center stage, the overall performance of an organization is significantly hampered. Employees lose morale and trust on each other abilities.

In many ways we can compare classism and its affects through the education system. It is expensive to be poor and being from a lower income household. Success is a challenge, long-term. The effects of poverty can lead to stress have shown that lower class Americans exhibit higher signs of anxiety and mental illness. Also, being from a poor neighborhood can affect the child's overall well-being outside of the classroom as well. Negative living conditions such as unclean water, no electricity, pollution, lack of parental presence, lead exposure, crumbling infrastructure and inadequate food can have a huge impact on a child's psychological and physical development. Another important factor to note is that poorer neighborhoods have underfunded and overcrowded school districts. Without having the funds to live, the child then resorts to making money from selling/buying drugs which leads to jail and then creates institutionalism.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act protects employees and job applicants from discrimination based on the protected categories of race, color, sex, national origin, and religion. Appearance, let alone " attractiveness" (or the lack thereof), is not a protected category. Consequently, it is not necessarily illegal to discriminate based on appearance, for example, by hiring only attractive people (Cavio, Muffler 2012). But does lookism really exist?

According to the Huffington post (online) the author visits the issue and gives specific examples of how it works.

The author introduces the narrative that the new year can mean the “ new me” for some individuals.

The author says that it is only a belief that lives would be better if we were more attractive. Also, the reading says that we are fixated on our looks. In summarization to be better looking, means that you are going to make more money, have an incredible education and get the job of your dreams (Talley, 2019). Talley also has over a decade of researching lookism. We have learned now that we know lookism exists, however most people don't do anything about it. Studies performed through Iowa state university stated all studies lookism did exist; all but one (90%) noting better looking individuals receive favorable treatment. In one study, better looking criminals received more stringent punishment (Saiki, 2017).

Giving specific examples of lookism gave the reader a wakeup calls on how just by looks you judge by class. For example, going to a wedding. The overall goal of this big day is to unite two people for life. However, the celebration over the years shows more about how much money you have then how much you love. Everyone looks at the wedding dress, was it custom? Where did they get it? Oh, we can not forget about the venue; should it be beachside or should the wedding take place at our home that is located the richest zip code. Ask yourself, when someone tells you they are engaged, what is the first thing you do? Be honest. You look at the ring. How

many diamonds are in the set? Where did the ring come from? Without even knowing it we are demonstrating classism through lookism.

I also noticed that even though the author did an outstanding job of giving us an insight on what lookism does, however I found a bit of sexism taking place. She only talked about woman being targets of lookism; For example, “The idea that the quality of our lives depends on what we look like pervades glossy women’s magazines, self-help discourse, and advertisements for spa services. It is everywhere” (Talley, 2019.)

Lookism is everywhere however this is not just limited to woman. Men can face lookism as well. As much as going to the gym and eating the right foods can help you lose weight, plastic surgery is the best options for some men to “look” the best in the boardroom or out on the town. The statistics according to a press release from the American society of plastic surgeons, show that, procedures such as liposuction (up 23%) and tummy tucks (up 12%) have had a boost in popularity among men over the past five years, while male breast reductions have increased about 30% in that time.

What about a good career that pays well, do you have to be good looking in order to have the job. According to the book, “Beauty Pays,” a good-looking male is said to make 13% more during his career rather than a “looks-challenged” peer. The book also goes on to say woman makes up the difference by trading on their looks to marry men with higher earning potential. (Tucker, 2012)

In looking at class through lookism we have to see what it looks like for our teenagers. The best example comes from a one-time retail giant,

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Abercrombie & Fitch. At one time this store, ruled the world. With the vibrating sound of the store, teenagers felt like they were entering an exclusive night club. A night club that sold ripped jeans for one hundred twenty dollars. So, what did it take to be an employee for this trendy clothing chain? Looks. The one-time CEO explained to the media that sex sells. In order for someone to wear their clothes they have to be good looking and a part of the cool crowd. It was all in the way that you looked. They called it “All American.” With the overpriced clothes and sizes not going any bigger than a size 10 for woman, the oppressed community finally had enough. When sales plummeted A&F realized what they were doing was wrong. The one time “cool store” had a class action law suit against them from 62, 000 employees that claimed discrimination took place daily on the sales floor. When talking to customers that came in, it was found that preppy look also signified the money you could spend on clothes, creating classism in the High Schools across the country. Some schools went so far as to becoming an all uniform high school to prevent hostile learning environments. Since 2012, A&F has changed their look completely. They have lowered prices and practice inclusivity when hiring employees. The once most hated retail chain in the world, A&F is righting its wrongs; the question is how many employees needed therapy because of how they were treated? (Note to reader: As a past manager for that company I do not support the behavior/mission/vision and practices that took place during my employment. I know that because of lookism in my store, it led to eating disorders and depression for some of my team. When a regional manager told me to move a 19-year-old freshman at UNLV to stock because of her “freshman 15,” I quit on the spot.) Class

aligned with Lookism is a real reality for our teens, what are some solutions to prevent this from happening?

Allan Johnson explains what we can do as people to prevent this type of oppression taking place. We have to look at what we are participating in and how we are participating in the issue (Adams, 2013). Overall it is about being self-aware of what we are doing at the time. We shape how people feel and it is our responsibility to think about where we fit in on the oppression cycle. If we can do this with each interaction, we make we are setting a footprint for our future and effects our overall well-being in a positive way.

In conclusion, I have identified and defined what lookism and classism is. I have provided examples through research that explained how the two are similar and different. I incorporated the article and linked how lookism can affect a workplace-professional, children and teenagers. I also gave real time examples through real life experience and what long-term effects it can have on a person. Lookism and Classism are on the rise, I hope this paper deconstructed these two “isms,” giving you a better understanding and how to navigate it through our everyday life.

Diversity- Being invited to the party

Inclusion-Invites you to dance

Equity- you chose the music being played

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