

Business ethics: Workplace discrimination

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Discrimination is a common phenomenon in the labor market. Employment discrimination occurs when the employers hire workers “based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (Gaskill). It is the known fact that nowadays people are less discriminated than before. In this research paper I will discuss what types of discrimination people may face in the workplace, how to avoid them and what people should do in these situations.

The US government issued laws and acts that prohibit discrimination, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This act made African Americans and women equal in the workplace, but there are many cases when people are discriminated. The US government decided to establish the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) that would investigate workplace discrimination. However, discrimination still exists in the workplace. There are a lot of great laws that are working, but the problem is that not all of them are enforced. I agree that discrimination should be prohibited. However, not only government should fight this problem, companies should have policies, issue reports, codes of ethics and surveys about discrimination.

According to Evelyn Hendrix, Department Faculty at Lindenwood University, unfair discrimination based on religion, race, disability, sex and pregnancy is illegal. However, fair discrimination is wise based on experience, qualification and job specifications. During her career, Evelyn Hendrix faced unfair discrimination. Her co-worker had a pay raise because he had children. She thought that it was unfair because they were on the same level of management. Evelyn Hendrix complained to her boss about this situation, but the boss thought

that it was fair. Evelyn Hendrix didn't report it to government because she enjoyed her job (Hendrix).

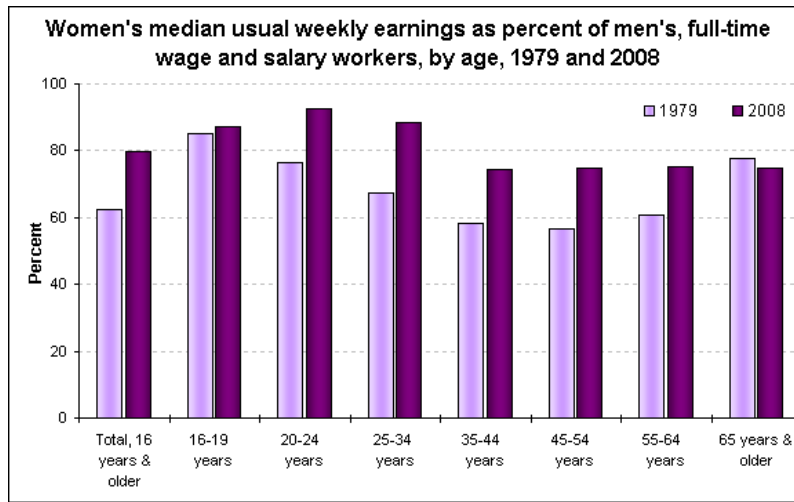
Origin of Discrimination

Racism is an origin of discrimination. Racism is a "belief that the race of people is inferior to another" (Gaskill). According to California State University racism motivated four practices in the USA, as slavery, racial segregation, job discrimination, denial of voting rights. Slavery occurs when people treating others as their property. It was practiced in the USA before the Civil War and was prohibited on January 31, 1865. Racial segregation is "the separation of humans into racial groups in daily life" (Gaskill). It was prohibited in 1964. Job discrimination was prohibited by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Denial of voting rights occurred after the Civil War, and made it difficult to vote. It was prohibited in 1965 by the Voting Rights Act.

Sex Discrimination

Sex discrimination happens when "people are treated differently because of their sex". EEOC solves thousands cases based on sex discrimination. It is not so bad then it used to be for women. During the 20th century women gained rights and got equal status among men. For example, women held only 17 percent in management area in 1970. Today women hold more than 40 percent and 50 percent of professional jobs. There was a huge progress for women. However, only one fifth of top managers were women in 2011 and very small percent were women of color.

Table 1. Woman's Earnings as a Percentage of Men's, 1970-2008



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *The Editor's Desk*, Women's-to-men's earnings ratio, 1979-2008. Web. 3 Dec. 2012.

Different studies prove why women's paycheck is smaller. Most of the time women chose their careers based on what they like. Besides, women chose jobs with more control over the schedule. Oppositely, men chose future jobs based on high salary and status in society.

How to Avoid Sex Discrimination

One of the strategies is to pair female executives with senior executives. They will get support and advice in promoting. In reality, most of the female executives have an adviser and think that they helped them in promotion. Another strategy is not to exclude women from informal communication. According to recent research, 50 percent of women think that exclusion from informal communication interferes their promotion. Secondly, employers should take all complaints about sex discrimination very seriously. Furthermore, company should

create a strong policy that indicates what is considered as sexual discrimination. Company should use EEOC's website as guide to create a policy.

Age Discrimination

Age discrimination occurs when the manager treats his employees less favorably because of their age. Older workers are practically always discriminated in the workplace. Most of the time discrimination is placed on the belief that it is hard to learn new things for older workers, as how to use technology, computers, emails and smartphones. Besides, it is believed that elderly workers get sick more frequently, and are more expensive to employ than younger workers. One of the top managers explains his view over old workers, as

The way I look at it, for \$40,000 or \$50,000, I can get a smart, raw kid right out of undergrad who's going to work seven days a week for me for the next two years. I will train him the way I want him, he will grow with me, and I will pay him long-term options so I own him, for lack of a better word. He will do exactly what I want – and if he doesn't, I will fire him... The alternative is to pay twice as much for some forty-year-old who does half the amount of work, has been trained improperly, and does not listen what I say. (Williams 255)

According to the Knowledge Management in 2001, 38% are afraid that they will face age discrimination, 3% don't know (Jones).

Reducing Age Discrimination

Firstly, managers need to realize that older workers cost less for the company. One of the reasons is that training young workers is very costly. Secondly, older workers have better views on how to solve problems, they do a better job (the overall quality is better), they are less likely

to show up late or quit. According to recent survey where 773 CEOs were questioned about productivity peak of the employees, the average answer they gave was 43 years old. Companies need to interview more carefully for the job positions, and train employers to identify the most qualified recruits to hire or promote.

Racial Discrimination

Racial discrimination occurs when “people are treated differently because of their race or ethnicity” (Coleman). According to EEOC, they found approximately 30,000 charges of race discrimination. In Major G. Coleman’s work, he conducted a research on how the market structure influences racial discrimination, and what aspects of a firm’s strategy influence the managers to discriminate employees. Mr. Coleman found that more competitive markets are more likely to hire nonwhite employees, and he claims that in competitive markets discrimination is the least. However, in the long run racial discrimination is not eliminated completely. According to recent research, only 12 percent are black from the total population of the USA. Therefore, only 2 percent of CEOs are black, and only 6 percent working in management field are black Americans. Furthermore, Hispanic population is 16 percent of all Americans, only 5 percent are CEOs, and 7 percent managers. In addition, there was a study where different ethnicities were mixed, as Hispanic, whites and blacks, and were split into pairs. Each pair had the same resume, and same set of skills, and were trained in the same way for the interview. The study claims that black and Hispanic males got 3 times less jobs offers than white males.

How to Avoid Racial Discrimination

Firstly, managers need to start looking at statistics. They should compare the rates of hiring the whites, Hispanics and blacks. If the statistic shows that maybe your firm has racial discrimination, you need to survey all of your employees to check if they are satisfied with their managers and bosses. Secondly, managers can test their hiring system. Therefore, company can hire a private firm to employ people. Finally, companies need to pay more attention to skills and characteristics of the employee before promoting. The crucial factor is to make sure to use fair job related criteria to make decisions.

Discrimination Based on Disabilities

According to the Disabilities Act of 1990, it is prohibited to employ people based on their disabilities. Only 37 percent of people with disabilities were employed in 2006. EEOC states that over 24,000 discrimination reports based on disabilities in 2011. However, only 491 reports were successfully proved that it was discrimination. During 2011, companies had lost over 100 million dollars (Williams). In addition, most of the people with physical disabilities are employed in part-time or low-cost jobs, and have small chance for promotion. Various studies show that people with disabilities can accomplish the tasks as good as people without disabilities. Besides, they are less likely to quit the job and better follow the safety instructions.

Companies and People with Disabilities

Companies should change their opinion and break the stereotype about people with disabilities. According to Gary Dessler, if employees cannot do their job as assembled, employer should provide a reasonable accommodation. Employer might change the schedule, re-design the work place, even modifying the equipment to support the worker during the job. It was reported that in half accommodations it costs nothing to implement it and \$600 in another cases. Nowadays, IBM is ranked the number one company for people with disabilities. IBM provides education, special equipment as computers with touch screens and software that reads text (Dessler 39). Employees benefit from inputting the text with their voice with special software that predicts words based on text you say or type.

Possible Solutions for Employees

When employee is feeling that he is discriminated the best option is to file a complaint to the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP). If you don't know how you were discriminated, you can find information, and follow the instructions on the US government website department of labor. There are 3 main discrimination groups: by major law, by audience and by topic. Second option is to go to EEOC's website. You can file your complaint online, by mail or by phone. Both websites have good information, and step-by-step guide how to solve employee's issues.

To summarize, discrimination can be wise and unfair. People should avoid any type of unfair discrimination. Not only government, but also companies are responsible for workplace discrimination. It is well-known that there are different kinds of laws and acts that keep people

from breaking them. However, we live in civilized society and it is terribly to realize that only law keeps people from hurting other citizens. On my opinion to avoid workplace discrimination, firms should make strict policies, and if discrimination happens companies should first report it to the government.

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