Biases in organization

**Introduction**

Gender bias refers to a situation where people are not treated equally just on the basis of their gender. In the terms used by the chapter, it is referred to as anchoring because it refers to rely too heavily on the gender trait of people (Sims). The managers may have limited information regarding the performance of men and women and he will anchor his hiring decision on the bases of initial information that men work better than women. It can happen when some important task is not assigned to a female employee just because of her gender whereas her experience and working abilities are perfectly suited to that particular job. The current status of gender equality in workplace organizations is a result of long time historical development which is primarily affected by industrial revolution and modern work organizations. Before the industrial revolution, people were asked to do certain work on the basis of their genders only. After the World War II, there was a clear direction for the American society implying that women were solely made for motherhood and men will work outside. Some organizations still follow these predefined work rules on the bases of gender and do not allow females to work on certain tasks or project. Many child care centers opened during the war time were closed to show that these children should be looked after by their mothers. Early laws made to protect labor exaggerated the gender differences in organizations. Participation of both white and black women in the workforce increased till mid 90s and is on a steady decline ever since. Women were also offered a lower salary or reward for a similar position as compared to men. This is an important aspect of the organizational performance because in many cases, women are more qualified than men and are suitable for doing a certain task. In this scenario, an organization will suffer if it does not allow a female to work on the task. Another implication will be that there will be demotivation prevailing in at least a group of employees who are all females. Any incident can be taken to court by an employee resulting in costly hearings and payments of damages if they prove right.

**Organizational Problem**

I have been working in a multinational organization that has its headquarters in the USA. The organization is involved in software development and other IT related activities. Being a multinational company, the organization comes across people from both genders and from all races. It is important for the organization to have very clear codes of conduct regarding any biases but that is not the case in this organization. There are two major biases which I have observed in this organization. Gender and racial biases have taken serious shape in this organization. I have spent 10-12 years in the organization and have observed many gender biases instances. The situation has improved over time but still it is far from ideal. The organization is involved in making games, software and other related products. First problem that I observed was at the time of hiring where female employees of equal qualifications to men were rejected just on the basis of their gender. The HR manger took the stance that these jobs require late sitting so they are not suitable for women. Further analysis revealed that there was a considerable difference between the terms and conditions offered to people from both genders. The males were offered better salaries on the ground that they will be more beneficial for the organization. When employees were hired by the organization, there were other biases during the work environment. The women were not assigned critical tasks even if they were more qualified and suitable to do it. Managers perceived that they will not be able to do the task appropriately and in time. Another issue came across when time for promotion came for all employees, there were many instances where male employees were preferred over female employees and were promoted. During the general processes undertaken on day-to-day basis, managers showed bias towards females by pointing out unnecessary errors in their work. Most of these managers tried that women do not hold any critical positions in their offices. Some managers showed better behaviors towards females but they also showed sexual harassment actions towards them. The racial bias has also been observed in this organization to a higher extent. This kind of bias will be considered representativeness because the managers will assume that the white employees will be more efficient workers because this has been concluded in the past by other managers in this organization. The managers have shown that they have limited information about the racism aspect implemented by this organization so they also show representative bias in their attitudes. It also shows the application of fundamental attribution error because managers tend to judge people from other gender and race based on internal factors. They did not identify that there is a clear problem in the organization based on these biases and this problem has to be resolved. The applications of people from other races are either not considered or they are considered if there is no appropriate white candidate available for the same post. The attitude of managers towards employees who were not white was clearly different. Among the two biases discussed, gender bias was more prominent but when the managers came across racial differences within the same gender, they exercised the racial bias. One very clear example of this was witnessed by me when one of my colleagues left and we needed to recruit an assistant programming manager for that seat. There were 4 candidates who were all females and there were 2 candidates each from white and black races. The manager from human resource showed the bias by eliminating both the black candidates from contention and then one of the white candidates was selected. When I casually asked the manager about his decision, he said that the candidates from other race were not considered for this job and they were dropped without looking on their details. Sometime later, I came across the details of these candidates and found out that one of these candidates had better qualification than the candidate who was actually employed. Similar incident was noticed by me when the organization employed a manager from outside only because there were no white people from the juniors to take his place. Instead of promoting a person from another race, they hired a white person from outside.

The results of these actions were very prominent both inside and outside of the organization. At the individual level, gender bias is demotivating the female employees and people from another race. This demotivation is badly affecting the performance of organization and in most cases, there is no solution available to these people. These employees are also thinking that they are not treated well despite being equally qualified. There were clear indications that these employees had little job security and, in some instances, they had no chance of being promoted to upper organization levels. Groups or teams also suffered because their members had little coordination among them especially when they were from different races or gender. Groups which had all members from same race performed much better as compared to multi gender or multi race groups. The group leaders suffered the most because they had to make sure that their group members performed well and extract results from them but they generally failed to do so. Another issue was that groups with people from different races showed more conflicts as compared to single race groups. Group leaders had double responsibility because they have to manage this conflict as well. The solution to this problem is that groups should be formed keeping people from same race. If this is not possible, the employees can be trained before participating in the groups regarding their acceptable behavior towards their group members. This will make sure that employees do not behave bad towards any of their colleagues while working as a group. As far as gender is concerned, it may not be possible for the organization to form all females’ group in work setting. Organization has to come up with strict policies to ensure that no person is allowed to discriminate others on the basis of their gender. This will make sure that group members will behave appropriately towards all the group members. From an external point of view, we can see that the image of organization is affected negatively in the eyes of general public. Females and people from other genders feel reluctant to apply for job in this organization and there is a chance that people may also sue the organization regarding discrimination. The owners of organization also saw the negative impact of such practices in the form of declining value of their wealth. Managers also found it difficult to manage their work tasks especially when they had to manage with people from different genders and races. Performance suffered on the individual, group and corporate levels resulting in non-achievement of targets. The final consequence of this behavior is that the organization will remain behind its competitors in the market. The top management will also be affected as their strategic management goals and objectives will not be achieved and they will have to revise them. A large number of meetings will have to be arranged with all levels of employees so that all issues come to their knowledge. They will make new policies regarding acceptable behavior regarding gender and racial biases. Clear communication is also necessary to make sure that nobody works against these practices. In summary, all these steps will make sure that the race and gender biases are minimized.

**Conclusion**

There should be equal opportunity for all people to be employed at all posts. This will be achieved by training the managers in this regard. As far as the human resources are concerned, the details of all employees especially regarding their races may not be shared with recruiters. As far as the gender is concerned, the major criteria for selection should be qualification and experience of the employee. Within the organization, employees must know what behavior will be acceptable or otherwise. In the first place, if there were clear guidelines for employees to follow, this problem would not have taken place. The future managers can learn many things from this scenario. Diverse workforce will present many challenges to these managers and they must have clear directions about how to tackle them. Managers will be successful if they focus on the performance, there will be less problems for them. The future managers will have to study the biases in detail and then try to see if there is any biases currently practiced in their organization or not. They can take guidelines from the seniors to make sure they take the right decisions.

# **Reference**

Sims, J. (n.d.). Learning and Decision Making. In *Organizational Behavior.*