Direct and Indirect discrimination at Work

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There are several different forms of discrimination which can occur in the work place. Indirect discrimination refers to an implicit form of discrimination which is usually unintended. Direct discrimination is explicit and occurs as a form of intended actions and this can be sex, age, or racial discrimination. Because indirect discrimination is usually unintended, it is critical to assess and monitor practices in the organisation (i.e., success rates of different groups etc.) to ensure that it is not happening.

Research has found that in the workplace environment and in employment decisions discrimination does in fact occur (Maass, Castelli, Arcuri, 2000). Race is an important factor in employment discrimination and many studies have looked at this relationship by investigating how different standards are set to specific groups, and how different individuals apply different standards to a group (Ziegert & Hanges, 2005). Ziegert and Hanges (2005) found that understanding implicit attitudes of individuals is an important aspect of understanding employee discrimination this is predictive of behavior. Explicit attitudes are different than implicit attitudes when discussing race. For example, in an in-basket selection exercise, managers were asked to rate potential job applicants. One group of managers received a memo from the president of the organization, which stated that he wanted a "White" candidate. The other exercise group received a memo which did not contain the statement about racial preference. It was found that based upon the manipulation of the situation racial bias occurred (Brief et al., 2000).

Therefore, it is important to consider factors in the organizational climate. Being aware of what type of behavior is supported and rewarded by management can affect employees and lead them to certain behaviors which are socially acceptable. As noted above, it is also wise to monitor the different groups in organisations (age, sex, ethnic background etc) to ensure that any differences in their treatment at work (e.g., pay-rise, appraisal results) are due to actual performance rather than their group membership.

References

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