

Religious Discrimination Is Still Practiced During Recruitment

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Employers discriminate prospective employees on religious grounds during the recruitment process. This is despite the call for freedom of association, including religious association as provided in national constitution and labour laws. Prospective employees are not made aware that their religious affiliation resulted in them failing a job interview. The few who suspect possibility of religious discrimination end up hiding their religious identity resulting in future workplace challenges.

Religious discrimination which is treating someone differently based on a set of beliefs used to be dominant before the rise of human rights activism. Christianity which has 33.32% of the world's followers discriminated against Islam with 21.01 % of the world's followers. Islam also discriminated against Christianity. Religions such as Hindus and Buddhists amongst others also practiced religious discrimination. The discrimination was very visible in females who were expected to remain at home and stick to household chores because it was openly believed that a woman place was in the kitchen. With the coming in of human rights and equality laws, religious discrimination is no longer acceptable and can result in legal battles between employees and employers. However, it continues to be practiced by employers with blame for such practice pointing at workplace human resources management.

Human Resources Managers (HRM) are responsible for crafting workplace policies and procedures which do not discriminate on any grounds. HRM are also responsible for ensuring that all workplace policies and procedures are adhered to. During recruitment, HRM are the first to come into contact with the prospective employees resume and application. At this stage, HRM disqualify prospective employees based on the religion given on their resume. HRM also practice discrimination of religious denominations. For example a prospective employee who is a member of a denomination which requires them to attend meetings during working hours is considered a possible matter of conflict between employee and employer. In a bid to avoid possible workplace conflict, HRM consider it best to disqualify the prospective employee on religious grounds.

The job interview exposes a lot about prospective employee's religious affiliation. Strict religious laws will entail a prospective employee to be dressed formally, but in religious apparel. Presentation of head gear, shirts, dresses and trousers makes it easy for HRM and interview panelists to judge prospective employees on religious grounds. For example an organisation which requires staff to wear uniforms becomes hesitant to recruit the prospective employee on the argument that the prospective employee will refuse to wear the uniform on religious grounds. The panelists then focus more on religious questions rather than professional, technical questions related to the position being interviewed for. It will require much focused HRM and interview panelists to score the prospective employee without discriminating them on religious grounds.

Sociologist and writer DaShanne Stokes insists that "Discrimination is discrimination, even when people claim that it is tradition." That implies that religious discrimination is never justifiable. No matter the

circumstances, religious discrimination will never be accepted as a positive act. On the other hand, there are opposing debates which argue that prospective employees can be favoured based on their religious affiliation. Attending a job interview whilst dressed in a particular religious apparel can work to the advantage of the prospective employee. This occurs when HRM and interview panel have high regards towards the religion and denomination of the prospective employee. For example if HRM and interview panel are of the belief that the prospective employee is honest by virtue of being a member of a particular religion or denomination, the prospective employee will be recruited. As Stokes put it, discrimination can never be justified hence HRM should ensure impartiality during job interviews.

HRM need to explore further into the recruitment process and venture into pre- interview discussions with prospective employees. During the discussions, HRM find out whether the prospective employee is flexible to wear uniforms and can work outside normal hours, amongst other religious based questions. It is possible that a prospective employee will be flexible with some religious rules meaning they can work for the organisation without challenges.

Impartiality during job interviews must always be practiced by HRM. It is the role of HRM to maintain balance of questions during interviews. In cases whereby panelists divert to biased religious questions, HRM come in as moderators and direct the panelists to professional questions. This does not happen during every interview hence HRM should be ready to jump into the role of a moderator anytime during the process. Objective HRM will provide for progressive interview processes and results.

Religious discrimination seems outdated today due to various calls to desist from it which are made by human rights activists. But it is still being practiced. It is the role of HRM to engage workplace leaders in discussions and enlighten them that religious discrimination is detrimental to the organisation. Organisations fail to recruit hardworking and excellent performing employees as a result of discriminating on religious grounds during the recruitment process.

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