

The Effect of Bias on Selection and Recruitment

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The process of selection in human resource management is one that involves choosing the best and most suitable candidates among applicants who apply for a job (Chand, 2015). It results in the elimination of unsuitable candidates and uses scientific techniques for the appropriate choice of a suitable candidate for the job. Many scholars have advanced definitions for what selection entails in Human Resource Administration. Stone (1982) defines selection as a “process of differentiating between applicants in order to identify (and hire) those with a greater likelihood of success in a job” Durai (2010) acknowledges Dale Yoder’s definition for selection, asserting that it is the process by which candidates for employment are divided into two classes: those who will be offered employment and those who will not. Durai also mentions O. Donnell’s definition, that it is “the process of choosing from among the candidates, from within or from the outside, the most suitable person for the current position or for the future position.

In light of the discussion above, it will be appropriate to assert that in terms of human resource administration, selection can be described as all measures put in place by the human resource unit of an organization to get deserving candidates hired for available positions, with unqualified ones eliminated. According to Durai (2010), there is no commonly accepted selection process available, thus depending on the job type, an organization may adopt their own process depending on its nature and requirements. *Ipsa facto*, the main objective of the selection process in Human Resource Administration is to be able to tell a good and qualified applicant from one that is not, to distinguish applicants who are likely to perform well in the job from those who are not. It behooves on the organization to adopt its own style of selection provided the objective of getting the suitable applicant can be reached.

Selecting a candidate for recruitment could be a very sensitive thing for a human resource unit and could come with many lapses no matter how accurate the measures put in place are because humans

are simply not infallible but saturated with a natural instinct of biases. Thusly, this essay discusses the fact that biases are a very common phenomenon which may inevitably affect the process of selection in relation human resource administration. When I had applied to several employers for a job, one employer called and asked me to come for an interview. Excited, I got dressed in my very best black suit with a white shirt and black tie. I was confident in what I wore. I hired a taxi and off I got to the office. I asked for the name I was given. When she came out and saw me, she asked, “are you Daniel?” I said “yes, you spoke with me an hour ago and you gave me directions here.” “I am sorry the position is filled.” She said coldly to me. I asked again: “How long ago? but I just spoke to you” She said nothing and walked back into her office. I wondered what the reason was. I saw it that she was not expecting my type of person.

According to Babcock (2006), analyses conducted by a Harvard University-led research team showed that it is entirely possible that an entire team responsible for selection are biased and don't even know it. Greenwald and Banaji (1995) described biases as unconscious attitudes that automatically trigger off, making us evaluate different people or situations we encounter, without a person's full awareness. If you are a recruiter, you should be asking yourself if unconscious attitudes automatically trigger off in you. If diversity is a quality that makes America stronger then it is important that people who stand at the gates of human resource unit reckon and reconsider working and staying alert on biases. Babcock (2006) avowed that Bias—hidden or overt—can have implications on decisions as an organization selects candidates to join its outfit. It also impacts how candidates are evaluated, promoted, and compensated. I have seen many companies in America in which the number of the staff members of a particular ethnic group outnumber all other ethnic groups because the hiring manager or the boss is of that ethnic group. In effect nepotism has clouded true judgement in the selection process.

The Evils of Bias in the Process of Selection

When bias clouds the decision-making process of any human resource team in charge of an organization's selection and recruitment process, the negative effects are obvious. Babcock (2006) noted that when bias creeps into the process of selection it can affect the turnover and the quality of life of employees. Babcock continued to point out that it may lead to lawsuits because where there is a display of bias, there is also the resultant effect of discrimination. Are these not prevalent in our world today?

Bias decreases productivity, and leads to a loss of human capital, a resultant effect of the right persons not being selected. When recruitment is done based on a biased selection, it breeds a subtle strategy for creating differences among groups which hurts and crumbles an institution's journey towards success. When nepotism and biases become so glaring that prospective candidates get affected, it drains away customers as well as productivity.

Hidden bias can leave employers very susceptible to shifting demographics, and organizations that allow bias to creep and meander into selection and recruitment processes are bound to not properly hire, train, engage or motivate workers. Besides, such practices leave the organization at a competitive disadvantage.

Bias and Selection in Higher Education

Studies in academia have shown the existence of the influence of bias in the selection process of faculty. In a study, Steinpreis et al (1999) found that female and male psychologists in academia were more likely to want to select a male early career researcher than a female who is equally qualified. This clearly indicates how bias operates naturally in all categories of people. In this case of the psychologists, whatever the orientation they might have had, or whatever may have triggered off their own evaluations of male researchers and female researchers seemed to be

embedded in their minds, thus making them over rule all criteria used in selection. With that hidden in their minds, only males were okay to select for the research job, despite having a qualified female. If this has been the norm, the faculty that would oversee research in this psychology department of academia will only be male. The presence of a female in the team might lead to negative problems. Another study by Moss-Racusin et al (2012) showed bias as regards who could be selected for a laboratory manager role. Members of faculty rated male applicants as more competent than equally qualified females, besides they slated for males a higher starting pay than for females who were equally qualified.

Trix and Psenka (2003) also mention the heavy presence of unconscious bias and gender schema in higher education. Trix and Psenka discussed that an examination of letters of recommendation, essential for new jobs and for promotion and tenure, revealed gender bias. It was found out that females were about two and a half times more likely than men to receive short letters of minimal assurance; these letters were twice as likely to contain “doubt raisers” such as negative language, faint praise, or irrelevancies, and the disposition to include references to personal life. Attention to training and teaching was more common in letters for women, whereas research, skills and abilities, and career received more attention in letters for men. Recommenders unconsciously stereotyped based on gender when they were writing their letters (Trix & Psenka, 2003).

Beckett (2009) to looked into problems associated with selection and recruitment in schools. In the study, findings from heads of schools interviewed indicated that there is not enough screening of applicants, documentation and selection are not effectively done. This consequently does not rule out the possibility of bias. When it comes to recruitment, the mere mention of recruitment not well done and the fact that heads of educational institutions are not

involved in the selection and recruitment process, as noted by Beckett, is an indication of the fact that there is the preponderance of the presence of heavy bias in the process of selection which also leads to a bias recruitment.

Another element of bias that influences selection is power and authority (Esch, 1994). Esch discussed the fact that school boards usually influence the process of selection. He asserted that school boards select not by reason of getting the appropriate qualified candidate, but they select on who will operate within the confines of the existing political culture of the board (p. 9). Here, the element of bias is already established because no applicant is qualified until found qualified by the power and authority of the board—there can be no fairness in the process of selection whatsoever.

Thompson & Walsh (2015) avowed that bias exists in schools with regards to racism. Thompson and Walsh asserted that most schools have around 1-in-20 faculty that are black in some educational institutions. This indicates that only few blacks are selected for recruitment. The authors continue to mention the fact, that the only reason that could justify the issue of very few black faculty recruitments is bias and discrimination. Flaherty (2015) also mentioned that even though some schools emphasized recruiting people of color for faculty positions, it has been neglected as a result of the heavy presence of implicit bias which has influenced the selection and recruitment.

Conclusion

Selection is a very sensitive area in the Human Resource department. It is very important for leaders to keep eyes on and monitor the activities of this department because the success of any educational institution or any organization is determined by type of faculty or staff that are

selected and recruited to accomplish the goals of the institution. When job seekers fill applications, there are always declaration of statements from organization that indicate they respect diversity and have no discrimination or any biases yet it is unfortunate to note that these biases, racism and discrimination has become a creepy needle that keeps gnawing at even renowned and most prestigious organizations and institutions when it comes to selecting candidates for recruitment. Today, if you do not know anyone from within, selection will not be your friend. Even though bias, discrimination, and racism are a human idiosyncrasy, it is really an imperative need for organizations and most especially academia to disallow it from breeding. It must not be allowed the oxygen to breath. The culture of education will be of a null and void if little foxes like these can operate. It is nauseating to have little evils like selection and recruitment biases crawl an advance nation like America when it is a role model for other naions.

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