

Amazon's Gender and Racial Discrimination Impacts on Employee Performance

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Abstract

Gender and racial discrimination are major issues in today's corporations. In this paper, we investigate Amazon to see how their employees do based on race and gender. A positive work environment allows employees to reach their full potential. It makes them happy and promotes a more productive workplace. Regardless, bias is difficult to avoid and can be found in almost every aspect of our lives. If employees are not happy due to inequity or biased decisions, eventually they leave or try to collectively make their work environment better by voting for unions, as did some Amazon employees in Staten Island warehouse on April 2, 2022.

Our brains are designed to classify the objects we encounter to make sense of the complex world around us. Biases, on the other hand, can lead to prejudices against others, resulting in significant inequities across various groups. While there are many kinds of biases, this research focuses on racial and gender bias in the workplace. We will go through what gender prejudice is, where and when it occurs, as well as the consequences and strategies for reducing gender bias to create a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Key words: Amazon; gender discrimination; racial discrimination; employee performance.

Introduction

Women are underrepresented in businesses all around the world, and their proportion decreases as they go up the corporate ladder, even in this post Covid-19 pandemic era with unprecedented low unemployment rates in the United States of America (Mujtaba, 2022). Gender-based discrimination and unconscious gender bias are only two of the many obstacles that women and other minorities confront in their pursuit of corporate leadership positions (Mujtaba and Cavico, 2015; Cavico and Mujtaba, 2017). Many companies have shown their commitment to gender equality by establishing family-friendly workplaces, policies, as well as expanding women's professional networks and opportunities (Delapenha, Espinosa, Fabre, Lemon, Gibson, and Mujtaba, 2020; Mujtaba, Cavico and Senathip, 2016). We believe that unconscious gender bias has a role. Bias remains in the workplace, and more must be done to help highly brilliant women thrive and reach the top of the corporate food chain (Murningham, 2018).

There have been numerous lawsuits that have been filed against Amazon, alleging that the firm maintains a hostile work environment for Black, Latino, and Native American office employees (Mujtaba and Cavico, 2015). Five of the lawsuits assert that the firm regularly overlooks minority groups in favor of white employees when it comes to promotions. According to one of the complaints, which was filed by an Amazon human resources employee, data supports the assertion that Black, Latino, and Native American employees do not receive the same level of promotion as white employees (Murningham, 2018).

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According to the Seattle Times, the five cases were brought by women who currently or had worked for the retail giant, including two Seattle workers. The complaints aren't only about promotions, they include cases of inappropriate supervisory behavior, harassment, and racial discrimination.

The women, who "vary in age from 20s to mid-60s," also say that white management retaliated when they first made complaints within the organization. According to the claims, one is white, another Latina, the other Asian American, and two are African Americans, and three of the ladies were still working for Amazon at the time of their complaint. One of the claims was filed by Pearl Thomas, a 64-year-old human resources employee and explained that "after presumably assuming she had disconnected from a video chat, her employer in Amazon Web Services HR, Keith DurJava, alluded to her by using the 'n-word'" (Murningham, 2018, para. 6). According to the lawsuit, she also claimed that a separate manager told her, "You don't want to be an angry Black lady," and that her employer put her on a performance review plan after she filed the complaint (Murningham, 2018) which could amount to retaliation.

Amazon, which gained more than \$100 billion in sales while hiring 1.2 million workers worldwide during the pandemic, has been facing harsh criticism resulting from their allegedly biased hiring and promotion procedures. Gender imbalance in the workplace is a pervasive problem that manifests itself in a corporation's structures, operations, and policies. Women face some of the most serious gender inequities because of biased human resource (HR) practices. This is because human resource strategies (including policies, decision-making, and implementation) have an impact on how women are hired, trained, compensated, and promoted (Wu, 2021). As a result, this study's objective is to conduct a critical examination of gender and racial discrimination and the ways in which it can prevent various employees from fully engaging in their professions.

Social cognition is often applied in human resource decision-making processes, where organizational leaders assess others' skills, potential, and qualifications (Lawrence, Weisfeld-Spolter, Tworoger, Yurova, and Mujtaba, 2022; Cooper and Mujtaba, 2022). As with other forms of social cognition, personal biases can certainly influence management and human resource decisions. Most human resource decisions related to growth and career paths are critical since they affect women's wages and career prospects such as training opportunities and promotions (Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Cavico and Mujtaba, 2021). Women face discrimination at every stage of the human resource management process, including training, recruiting and selection, job assignments, remuneration, performance appraisal, promotion, and termination.

Studies have found that women encounter personal biases throughout the selection process (Mujtaba, 2022b; Verniers & Vala, 2018). According to meta-analyses, female applicants for male-dominated occupations obtain a worse rating and are recommended for employment less frequently than equivalent male candidates. In audit tests, which include submitting nominally acceptable applications for job positions but changing the gender of the applicant, female candidates stand a lower chance of being interviewed or called back (Verniers & Vala, 2018). A recent study revealed that male candidates were found to be far more competent and employable than female candidates and are often offered a higher starting wage as well as more career mentorship. To summarize, when applying for jobs that are mainly male-dominated, women face severe disadvantages.

There is compelling evidence that some women are evaluated poorly in tasks dominated by men. According to a meta-analysis of experimental research (Heilman & Caleo, 2018), women in leadership roles receive lower performance ratings than comparable males; this impact is exacerbated when women demonstrate conventional masculine or agentic characteristics. Furthermore, ladies in masculine occupations are subjected to a greater standard of performance than males. In one study of military cadets, men and women both awarded female colleagues' lower evaluations, even though their credentials were comparable. Finally, when it comes to advanced problem solving, women are perceived less positively; in these cases, people question their competency and disregard expert women's recommendations, while giving expert men the benefit of the doubt (Mujtaba, 2022b; Cavico and Mujtaba, 2017).

Certain categories of women are more likely to face discrimination and poor performance evaluations at work. Female agents who act assertively and purposely are perceived negatively and are less likely to get employed than comparable male agents. Furthermore, pregnant women seeking employment often face discrimination. Additionally, mothers are less likely than non-mothers or males with or without children to receive promotion recommendations. Why do individuals make distinctions between agentic and pregnant women or mothers, two categories that appear to be unrelated?

The stereotype content model explains why competitive women with a high level of competence, but little warmth suffer prejudice, whereas pregnant women and mothers with a high level of competence but little “observed” warmth face discrimination due to a perceived lack of deservingness (Verniers & Vala, 2018). When considered collectively, research reveals that numerous forms of discrimination directed at diverse groupings of women have the same overall effect—bias in recruiting and performance evaluation choices.

Women are more likely to be denied career opportunities than men, resulting in a shortage of diversity in senior management and leadership positions in firms. Female managers are delegated fewer difficult or significant jobs and offered fewer training opportunities for personal development than male bosses. Female supervisors and mid-level employees, as a result, face barriers to advancement and senior roles. Additionally, males are more likely to be assigned critical leadership roles in businesses dominated by men or women (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012). This is an issue since difficult work, particularly developmental work, helps people to gain important abilities that will help them succeed in their professions.

Additionally, some business leaders believe that women have fewer opportunities for growth than men. Managers are less likely to promote female employees than male employees, even if both have the same level of education. As a result, men climb the corporate ladder faster than women. Given most of the hierarchical businesses' organizational structures, even minor discrimination against women in promotion decisions can have far-reaching consequences. As a result of gender discrimination among business decision-makers, women are underrepresented in corporate leadership positions (Nadler & Stockdale, 2012). There seems to be considerable opportunities for bias against women in management and human resource decision-making processes. Biases among organizational decision-makers can present themselves at any stage of the human resource decision-making process, and these biased decisions can be associated with a negative influence on women's pay, promotion, and career prospects.

According to a National Institutes of Health (NIH) study, there is a link between perceived workplace racial discrimination and poor mental and physical health. The NIH team conducted a meta-analysis of earlier research and current literature to ascertain the most plausible associations between perceived bias and adverse health outcomes. Employees who have been discriminated against report higher levels of psychological distress and health difficulties than non-discriminated employees (Nikajet *et al.*, 2018).

According to peer-reviewed NIH-funded cross-sectional research, racial discrimination may contribute to smoking, while sexual harassment and workplace bullying (hostile work environment) may contribute to employees engaging in excessive alcohol consumption as a coping mechanism. Aches and an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, obesity, and high blood pressure are all physical signs of stress. Employees endure despair, anxiety, and a lack of self-control, which manifests as anger or even suicidal thoughts (Valantine & Collins, 2015). Perceived racial discrimination influences individuals and their job circumstances. When an employee's concentration wanes, he or she is more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors such as failing to finish assigned duties on time, leaving early, or arriving late, and a bad work culture develops.

An organization that appears to tolerate racist behavior jeopardizes its employees' psychological well-being. Disengagement, poor productivity, and increased staff turnover occur as a result. It continues to be a cause of concern, with documented cases of intolerance and bullying on a global scale. For example, more than half of Black employees in the United States report encountering workplace racism. Additionally, the issue of racial discrimination may become more apparent as individuals go up the corporate ladder. Additionally, these prejudices may present themselves during the employee attraction and recruiting processes. Personal prejudices, according to a Danish study published in the *American Economic Journal*, encourage people to prefer colleagues who share their ethnic origin, even if they are less productive (Valantine & Collins, 2015). As a result of less productivity, they lose 8% of their earnings.

Subtle discrimination has an effect as well. Subtle forms of discrimination include being passed over for a promotion or compelled to retire early. In general, when bias is pervasive, workplace trust and morale decline. As a result of institutional racism, minority or black candidates, particularly black women, experience reduced earnings. In the United States, for example, black persons earn less than white individuals – males earn 13% less and females earn 21% less (Valantine & Collins, 2015). Pay inequities contribute to poverty and limited access to healthcare. African American women face a poverty rate that is more than double that of white women in all but one state in the United States.

Diversity at Amazon

Amazon is an organization that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. On their website, they mention a variety of plans for being an inclusive company and making their employees feel welcomed, involved, and protected (Diversity and inclusion at Amazon, n.d.). It is also clear that they support minorities by using symbols such as the LGBT flag. Studies and reports show that Amazon stands for something, but it reflects a completely different reality. Let us begin by mentioning Bloomberg's coverage as the article, "*Amazon sued for the alleged race, gender bias in corporate hires*," discusses a lawsuit filed by a woman who alleges that Amazon hires women and people of color for lower-level jobs and that their growth within the company is slow but steady; she also mentioned her experience of being sexually harassed and receiving racist treatment from her colleagues.

Ms. Newman, the woman who filed the lawsuit, claims that her time at Amazon was not pleasant. She claims that while she was there, she was assaulted by a senior employee who pulled her hair and used discriminatory language. Furthermore, the article mentions violations of the Equal Pay Act, which establishes that men and women should be paid equally. She mentioned that she applied for a higher job and was placed in a lower position, but her workload was absurd and all the activities she performed were from the position she originally applied for. Furthermore, the article points out that Amazon lacks black people in higher-level positions, with white managers accounting for 56% of the company (Larson, 2021). This is not the first time a woman of color has filed a lawsuit against Amazon, claiming sexual harassment and discrimination. If this company advocates for equality, their employees should be protected when they speak up and try to tell their stories. Silencing employees and invalidating their stories demonstrates the company's lack of clear and transparent protocol, and what they stand for becomes just words.

Amazon also experiences race-related issues. Vox conducted an in-depth investigation and report on how Amazon continues to exhibit consistent issues that affect diversity and maintain a bias towards a specific race (Rey, 2021). Amazon is not acting in a way that represents best practices for advancing diversity and inclusion in any meaningful and thoughtful way (Rey, 2021). Ms. Ray, a woman of color, was hired to encourage and assess diverse practices within the organization. She mentions that she was thrilled to perform in this position because she always saw Amazon as a company that cared and was aware and supported social issues such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In this report, it is stated again that the organization claims that roughly 26% of their company is made up of black people, which appears to be a large number; however, what is not stated is that most of this 26% comes from people who work in warehouses, and the company does not always work toward their success. The article goes on to say that the company is biased, favoring white people and men in higher-level positions. According to the data, 56% of managers are white and 70% are men (Rey, 2021), which is deeply concerning for a company that advocates for diversity but does not reflect that in their company culture. Ms. Ray also claims that the company's problem begins with their S-team, which is the upper tier of executives who, until recently, hired the first black women to be on the team. It is also stated that some changes should be expected because the company now has an insight into what diversity is and how an opinion from a different perspective can contribute and advocate for a change. In the article, it is mentioned by a senior member of the company that "We struggle to bring Black folks in because there's not a whole lot of desire, in my opinion, to go outside of our normal practices." He also mentions that "When they do get here, it's harder to get promoted, harder to get top-tier rated, and easier to get lowest-tier. All those things combined make it so folks don't want to stay. And folks will leave Amazon and go take on more senior roles elsewhere" (Rey, 2021, para. 6). This reveals a lot about Amazon's work culture and their employees because if they have the mentality that they must be white men to get promoted, it means that there is some discussion about this topic and some bias occurs in the hiring process for top tier jobs. The workplace environment is vital for their employees' health to feel more comfortable and welcome. When unfortunate events like the ones mentioned above occur, the public realizes not only what a company thinks but also how they act. Ms. Ray concludes her thoughts by stating her reasons for resigning, and in summary, she states that willingness for change is essential and that if people do not work to strive towards a higher purpose, nothing can be done.

The most pressing issue for Amazon is the prompt response to their employees' needs and the implementation of necessary measures to address these issues. Amazon, as previously mentioned, has been accused of failing to protect diversity, and little action has been taken. According to a CNBC article, employees had several demands during the Covid-19 pandemic, but managers took very little action and took too long to help them.

This is exactly what is happening right now regarding racial concerns; their response is slow, and their justification is that the company has nearly 25-30% black employees, but they do not show a breakdown of how many are managers and high tier employees. Something interesting mentioned in the article is the ESG, which is an index that calculates a company's overall performance in *environmental, social, and governance*(ESG) aspects. Although Amazon's ESG rating has improved in terms of environmental metrics, it still needs to improve in the social category, specifically in terms of how it treats employees (Wasserman, 2021). Amazon has a clear issue that has been brought to the attention of investors and the public, and while statistics such as the ESG show that they strive for sustainability, the diversity aspect that they mention on their website and that they clearly claim to protect is evidence that is left in the dark when it comes to their employees' integrity and protection. The ESG is clear and concise. Amazon has issues that need to be addressed, such as the social category, which is a critical issue that has slowly and steadily increased over the years.

Another big issue that has been brought to light in media more extensively in recent times is that there is a trend of gender inequality within Amazon's work culture. Back in early 2021, there were five separately filed lawsuits against the company from both current and former female employees alleging both race and gender discrimination. According to the Washington Post in Seattle (2021), Emily Sousa, who was a current employee at the time of the article posting, brought to light claims of her shift manager comparing her to the stars of explicit adult entertainment, as well as trying to get the employee to interact outside of the workplace. Emily also noted that after she had expressed that she was not interested, she was demoted by the manager (Washington Post, 2021). In another piece of literature on the same story, Tiffany Gordwin, who was also an employee of Amazon, said that she was unfairly passed up for a promotion on multiple occasions in Avondale, Arizona. Gordwin said that the positions would be offered to white men, and believed it could possibly stem from her complaining about racial discrimination from a white male supervisor (Independent, 2021). The other employees who filed suit also brought up more claims, including instances of race, gender, and sexual orientation discrimination.

The Seattle Times reported that Amazon's work culture and hiring / promotion practices show a trend of gender and race discrimination inequalities. They reported that between 2018 and 2020, over sixty percent of roughly 400,000 employees hired in the United States for the lowest paying hourly roles were either Black or Hispanic, as well as over fifty percent of them being women (Seattle Times, 2021). When looking at the highest paying roles, most are either White or Asian, as well as male. This shows that there are clear differences in how the employees of the company are being assessed and treated, based on their race/gender. While all this is going on, the former CEO, Jeff Bezos, made a fortune of \$86 billion during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of these employees in the lower-paying roles are living paycheck to paycheck, as Bezos sits on a massive sum of accumulated earnings. From this, it can be assessed that although the company is growing and thriving, the money is not trickling down to the employees placed in lower-paying roles.

In addition to the racial and gender mistreatments, Amazon has a White male majority demographic for their employee base, which means that the number of Black women who are in executive positions is low. In 2019, Alicia Boler Davis joined Amazon as the 4th Black woman to join the senior leadership group (Jazmin Goodwin, CNN Business, 2020). This shows that Amazon is indeed lacking in its diversity and gender disparities in its management-level positions. According to Goodwin, in 2018, Amazon adopted the "Rooney Rule" for its board which is a policy that requires teams to consider minority candidates for coaching and operation level positions. So, Amazon's leadership and managers do recognize its lack of a diverse work environment and that over the years they have tried to make positive changes. In 2019, Amazon's workforce consisted of "57% men and nearly 43% women" (Jazmin Goodwin, CNN Business, 2020), which means that although they have been trying, the numbers still show a predominately male demographic in their workforce.

Moreover, when Amazon recruits their employees, they want to show that they strive for a diverse and inclusive work environment. This means that they will include the whole spectrum of genders and races. Amazon recognizes that they may have mistreated some members of the Black race, and therefore on their employee recruiting website they state that "the inequitable treatment of black people is unacceptable" (Galetti, 2021). They also mention that the rights of LGBTQ+ must be protected as well as that of immigrants. Recognizing that they still have room for growth in their inclusiveness category is a strong starting point coming from Amazon because according to Galetti, they are committed to building a more inclusive and diverse organization for the long term.

If employee recruits see that Amazon's management do address the discriminatory and inequity issues of the past that the organization has had instead of ignoring them, then prospective employee candidates from many races and cultures will want to join the company because Amazon is indeed trying to be inclusive and diverse. Additionally, they are showing that they do want to make a change because they are publicly announcing that they set "goals in 2020 to double the representation of black directors and vice presidents"(Galetti, 2021, para. 2). However, the question is if they are in fact meeting those goals because they have indeed made promises but taking those into practice is difficult. Therefore, according to Galetti, Amazon mentions that they did their most important work in 2020 but it was less visible. They started by clearing all the insensitive language in their tech documentation as well as bringing representation to all minorities.

Amazon is a company that is established worldwide which means that their goal to establish a diverse community does not only happen in America, but it also happens in other countries as well. Amazon in the U.K. has taken an initiative too in terms of "increasing the number of women in the technology and innovation roles" (Staff, 2018, para. 8), which includes women in the LGBT+, BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic), and employees with disabilities.

According to Staff (2008), the organization established resource groups worldwide where they take initiatives that build skills for leaders from diverse perspectives to empower employees from many backgrounds. This does show that their message of "we are committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion" is true because they are teaching their managers the importance of accepting people from all backgrounds. This will make employees give their top performance to their jobs because they will feel comfortable and focused, which means that people from different backgrounds will be giving multiple perspectives to solve an issue. Amazon in the U.K. even focuses on inspiration and recognition found in diversity which does show that they are making a vast difference. For example, they share that many of their women have won awards for their contribution to the company as well as their influence on the market. Moreover, Amazon shows that they support employees with disabilities, the black race, women, and many other diverse groups, and they attest to this by giving multiple examples of the differences that they have made in employees' lives. While the numbers do show worldwide that Amazon's workforce in top leadership ranks is not as diverse as their customers, they are trying to make a change so that employees from all backgrounds feel welcomed, grow, and stay with the organization.

Recommendations

Given the grievances currently experienced by employees within Amazon Inc., to not only improve the employee experience but also the company's production and function overall, Amazon must intentionally take steps to better themselves in the areas of diversity and inclusion.

The first step towards greater equal opportunity in the workplace is adhering to existing laws. Employers must adhere to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) laws, which make it illegal to discriminate based on specific criteria, including but not limited to disability, gender, race, and religion. Such laws serve the purpose of "ensuring equal employment opportunity for all current and prospective employees without regard to race, age, gender, disability, or other such protected characteristics which are not job-related" (Mujtaba, 2022b, p. 64), some of which appears to currently be an issue at Amazon. To better address this within Amazon, company executives should create clearly defined company-specific rules and regulations having to do with expectations as well as norms to be applied at every level of employment. In pursuing this route, Amazon executives should seek the input of all its employees so that all concerns are being addressed thoroughly and conflicts regarding blatant discrimination is avoided moving forward.

Avoiding bias in recruitment and hiring. As demonstrated by the research discussed earlier, many of Amazon's issues with diversity, particularly in areas of gender and race, stem from the recruitment and hiring processes. To have the best chance of fixing this in the future, any instances of prejudice or bias should be addressed at their sources. First, all advertisements for employment should be framed in a way that encourages and celebrates diverse backgrounds, talents, and ideas, such as offering scholarships or internships to minority groups prior to actual employment, thus incentivizing the process. Then, in terms of the interview process, Amazon recruiters should intentionally be selected to include members from diverse backgrounds, race, ethnicity, gender, and ability-wise. In doing this, a broader perspective is gained since each of these individuals bring their unique experiences, skills, and opinions to the table.

Finally, a clear-cut criteria must be established for the evaluation of potential candidates to ensure as much fairness and equality as possible (Gurchiek, 2020). Though each candidate's interview may take a different course, it is important to intentionally level the playing field to allow for accurate comparison.

Take initiatives. It is vital for a company to advocate for change to have activities that promote inclusion and diversity. Many corporations in the United States run campaigns to hire more Hispanic or African American staff, and Amazon should fall in line. Minorities must be targeted for growth, and if organizations do not attempt to diversify their processes, the bias indicated before will be encouraged by higher level executives. Amazon should not add to or promote the stereotype that white people work in offices while African Americans and Hispanics work in warehouses, as reported by many media outlets. Big corporations, such as McDonald's, offer scholarships tailored to specific demographics, such as the Ronald McDonald award for Hispanic students. Not only should Amazon clean up their image, but they should also internalize the diverse policies that they promote on their website. Initiatives can be the most effective approach for new employees to feel welcomed and begin to dispel the stigma that has already been established. Despite Amazon's discourse, articles, and several discussions in support of diversity, little action appears to have been taken to address the alleged issues. Indeed, statistics for warehouse labor and corporate jobs should be posted separately to demonstrate the disparity and to be more transparent with consumers and investors.

Work towards change. Now that the root causes of race and gender biases have been addressed with possible recommendations, it is important to extend the reach of interventions to the entire current employee base at Amazon. In doing so, greater inclusion, respect, and collaboration are directly embedded in the company culture and expectations are more clearly defined. Continuous training programs are an important part of today's workforce's function with benefits including "a talented diverse workforce and satisfied customers, high morale and commitment, low employee recruitment and retention cost, better teamwork and increased productivity, and an inclusive as well as a supportive learning environment" (Mujtaba, 2022b, p. 32). Implementing training sessions surrounding topics like cultural literacy, cultural competence, and implicit bias would allow employees from a variety of diverse backgrounds to better understand the reality of their coworkers thus increasing respect and tolerance within the organization. Ideally, each training workshop would be incorporated into the company work schedule biannually, or better yet, on a quarterly basis to regularly emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Table 1 proposes a potential mentoring plan for a quarterly workshop series surrounding different areas of implicit bias that can exist within Amazon employees, managers, and administrators.

Table 1. Implicit Bias Mentoring Plan

Quarter	Workshop Description	Meeting Style
1	Understanding Amazon's mission and current diversity challenges.	First day of the first quarter in person (offered virtually on a case-by-case basis)
2	Defining cultural competence and cultural literacy and how to deliberately practice it at work.	First day of the second quarter in person (offered virtually on a case-by-case basis)
3	Identifying individual implicit biases and setting goals to enhance each employee's perspective and company expectations.	First day of the third quarter in person (offered virtually on a case-by-case basis)
4	Setting goals specific to diversity and inclusion within Amazon for the coming year (within each level of employment, department, etc.).	First day of the fourth quarter in person (offered virtually on a case-by-case basis)

Encourage inclusion and equity. It is fundamental for change to encourage employees to commit to diversity and inclusion. Amazon should use social media and all other relevant outlets within the company to commemorate pride month, black history month, Hispanic month, and women's day, among other appropriate events. It should be something that their organization encourages and then demonstrates the respect that these events deserve within the organization. Employees should demonstrate the company's work ethics, and the work environment in which they work should be healthy for everyone, regardless of their skin color, race, sexuality, or ethnicity. The company should be transparent and encourage its employees to respect diversity and embrace the uniqueness that everyone brings to the company. Because Amazon is now a global organization, it benefits from diversity of a variety of countries, ethnicities, and traditions. If they can respect diverse traditions in a foreign country, why is it so difficult to include women and African Americans in corporate positions?

Summary

Amazon has numerous lawsuits against them for gender and racial discrimination during their hiring and promotional procedures. Gender and racial-based discrimination are acts of denying someone an opportunity based on their gender or race or misjudging someone solely because of their gender or race. Most discrimination is based on bias. Biases do lead to prejudice against others resulting in severe inequities across various groups. Lawsuits emphasize that Amazon may have had a hostile work environment for some of their employees, especially the Black, Latino, and Native American office employees. Based on a complaint made by a human resources employee at Amazon, data supports that Black, Latino, and Native American employees do not receive the same rates of promotion compared to white employees.

Most Black employees work in warehouses with little to no room for growth. On the other hand, most of the managers are white and male. There are also lawsuits which claim that the firm regularly overlooks minority groups in favor of white employees regarding promotions which reduces diversity and long-term competitiveness.

The cases made against Amazon are not all about promotions. There are also cases of inappropriate supervisor behavior, harassment, and racial discrimination. Women face serious gender inequality in this fast growing retail giant as well as in most other firms in the United States. Human resource policies and strategies impact how women are hired, trained, compensated, and promoted. The unequal pay goes against the Equal Pay Act which states both men and women in the same positions must be paid equally. Some businesses seem to show that women have fewer opportunities to grow than males. An audit test that submits nominally acceptable applications for job positions, but changes the gender to female, shows that female candidates stand a lower chance of being interviewed or called back. Women who are assertive are often viewed as negative, women who are mothers are less likely to receive a promotion, and pregnant women are commonly discriminated against in the modern workplace. Amazon's data shows that there are fewer Black employees and women in higher positions than whites.

According to a the National Institutes of Health study, there is a link between workplace racial discrimination and poor mental and physical health. Employees who have been discriminated against report higher levels of psychological distress and health difficulties than non-discriminated employees. Employees that are harassed or bullied in the workplace are more likely to drink alcohol as a coping mechanism, and those who face discrimination are more likely to smoke due to the added stress. Employees endure despair, anxiety, and a lack of self-control, which manifests as anger or even suicidal thoughts.

Amazon represents itself as an organization that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion. Their website even reflects that they strive to make their employees feel welcomed, involved, and protected. Based on the information we gathered about how Amazon truly treats its employees, it goes to show that Amazon stands for one thing but reflects another. Amazon is silencing their employees when they should be protected, and invalidating their stories shows their lack of protocol. They are not acting in a way that represents best practices for advancing diversity and inclusion in any meaningful and thoughtful way. Amazon recently hired their first black women to be a part of their S-team or the upper tier of executives, so we hope for changes now that there is insight on diversity and how an opinion from a different perspective can really make a difference. Amazon recognizes that a few managers may have mistreated some individuals due to race and now they emphasize that the inequitable treatment of people based on their skin color is unacceptable. They also mention that the rights of LGBTQ+ must be protected as well as that of immigrants, which is showing that they're recognizing discriminatory issues and taking a step forward in the right direction. They also publicly announced they were setting goals in 2020 to double the number of black directors and vice presidents.

Amazon in the U.K. has also taken positive initiatives in terms of increasing the number of women in the technology and innovation roles. Given the nature of the diversity issues currently facing Amazon, the first step Amazon should take towards equal opportunity in the workplace is following existing laws such as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Laws. Amazon's company executives should also create clear rules and regulations of the expectations of employees as well as seek the input of employees regarding concerns or complaints of discriminatory conflict in the workplace. Then, all work-related outreaches should also be inclined to show support for diversity, and recruiters should be more inclined to select diverse members. Finally, it is important for Amazon to have continuous training sessions quarterly regarding inclusion and integrate it into the company's employee development plan, along with the topics of cultural literacy, cultural competence, and implicit bias recognition to ensure all of their bases are covered in terms of increasing unity and fairness, while also decreasing the negative diversity-related issues that are covered in this paper.

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