



WORK MATTERS

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COLUMN

Nepotism in the Workplace

In Trinidad and Tobago, in both the private and public sectors, those in positions of power or possess some level of influence usually tend to give preference to their friends and family members during the hiring process. Such a practice is viewed as nepotism. While nepotism may not always be perceived as a bad practice by some, the literature notes that exerting one's power or position in an organization to help those you may know to secure employment or a promotion; may have negative impacts on the organization. This practice can create instability within an organization as individuals may see this as an abuse of power and develop a sense of distrust and resentment towards those in authority. To get a better understanding of how nepotism is viewed in the organization, we will have to explore a couple of local examples and personal experience surrounding this heavily debated topic.

A piece written on the 23rd March 2016, by Janine Mendes-Franco summarized the nepotism case brought against Marlene Mc Donald and Kamla Persad-Bissessar. Marlene Mc Donald was accused by the members of Fixin' T&T of acts of nepotism and misbehavior in public office. The Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley was called upon to fire Ms. Mc Donald after investigations revealed that she had not only hired her husband and other family members into her constituency office against proper policy procedures, but also secured a house for her husband under HDC. Kamla Persad-Bissessar was also accused of hiring relatives in her constituency office during her term in office. In both cases, nepotism was viewed as an abuse of power, especially because proper policies and procedures were not followed during the recruitment process.

In another situation involving employees at the state owned TTT Media House at the time reported several incidents of unfair treatment, nepotism and corruption existing within the organization. According to the Shqiperi Gazette by Staff Writers issued on the 23rd, July 2021, the general secretary of the National Trade Union Centre (NATUC) Michael Annisette

called upon the Minister of Communications within the office of the Prime Minister to look into reports of nepotism and political malfeasance at the state-owned organization of TTT. Mr. Annisette spoke on the levels of favoritism reported to him by members of the company and warned against the repercussions if left unchecked. He described favoritism and corruption as a social cancer and warned that poor decision-making led to the downfall of many organizations irrespective of large amounts of wealth and human capital.

From personal experience within the private sector, nepotism is a common occurrence here in Trinidad and Tobago. Managers, supervisors and even executive members employ family members within the organization to various positions within different departments without due process. As stated earlier, while some may not have an issue with this practice, others may view it as an abuse of power or poor decision-making practices that affects the workers and the institutions. Workers tend to develop a sense of distrust and resentment towards management if they feel like they are being looked-over in terms of promotions, fair salary packages and overall treatment in the workplace. Any sense of favoritism or nepotism taking place leads to a negative outlook, especially if proper policy is not followed when recruiting and promoting the 'favored' persons. Further, one of the issues is the qualifications and skills to effectively carry out their functions, which in this case can lead to reduced productivity, reduced teamwork, and increased complaints from customers and could lead to loss of profits due to falling efficiency levels in services and products offered.

There are however, few instances where nepotism has landed the right person in the right position as they have the necessary skills to carry out their functions to high standards therefore lifting the organization and boosting the performance of the business; but we still have to question the process.

Nepotism is mostly viewed as destructive and cancer-

ous to most organizations, and this usually occurs as a result of hiring friends and family members into positions. By not following the proper policies and procedures laid out by HR for recruitment, staff members may develop distrust and resentment towards those in authority, and reduce productivity. However, there is nothing wrong if someone is hired that is known or related to a member of management if that person comes through the correct channels and is deemed the best candidate for the job through education and experience.

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