CIPRIANI COLLEGE
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HOW MANAGEMENT PRACTICES PERPETUATE WORKPLACE INEQUALITY

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How Management Practices Perpetuate Workplace Inequality

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In many business places, whether it is the public sector or private sector, the issue of workplace inequality is always an issue. Workplace inequality, while being an issues needs to be tacked from all levels of the organization, starting with then management and owners, as they are the ones that set the pace and greatly influence organizational culture.

Supervisors and managers play a crucial role in how rules and regulations are enforced and how workloads are distributed, as well as creating opportunities for growth and development. Management can unintentionally or intentionally encourage and motivate employees, which can in turn affect the candidacy for promotions. Conversely, they may negatively influence the motivation and performance of employees, thus reducing their opportunities for promotion as well as negatively affecting productivity. These practices may take the form of unfair task allocations, communication gaps and exclusion, workload distribution inequalities, bias in flexibility and accommodation, and real or perceived favoritism. By understanding how these dynamics work, one can better identify the effects on employees, which is the first step in developing corrective actions.

One of the primary ways in which inequality is displayed is through unfair task allocations. The distribution of roles, responsibilities and recognition in the organization creates opportunities for individual growth and development but can also expose often underlying issues within the organization. In some cases, supervisors or team leaders may allocate the most visible or rewarding tasks to a select few while others are given less interesting/ influential parts of the project regardless of the experience with similar projects.

Particularly in task-oriented processes, the inputs and evaluation of all members of staff is vital to properly diagnose the process. When some are excluded from this process, this can influence the levels of analysis and thus affect the overall evaluation of the project, which may lead to increased inefficiency and waste of resources in the future.

Communication is critical for all organizations. Any breakdown in this system can easily lead to miscommunication, double work, inconsistency, information and knowledge hoarding, which also impedes future communication attempts. Over time these repeated patterns can cause a disruption in teamwork and trust amongst team members and find themselves ingrained in the organizational culture.

In addition to the above-mentioned, unfair workload distribution is one of the many ways that nepotism and other flavorist practices present itself in the workplace. In many cases, this may lead to burnout and low morale in some workers, while others are relatively underutilized.

Managers need to manage. They need to be accountable for their actions and the actions of those under their supervision. Even with then best intentions, when managers assign tasks to their most reliable employees, often leaving them overburdened and creating an endless cycle of workload imbalance, they simultaneously neglect sharing the workload with other members of the team.

The argument of some employees being more reliable than others may not always be the case and may in fact reflect favoritism rather than an objective assessment of performance. Over time these patterns can distort performance evaluations, hinder career progression and create workplace culture where inequality is normalized rather than being addressed.

Similarly, biases in flexibility and workplace accommodations are other ways inequality often manifest, hiding beneath formal policies that appear fair on the surface. While many organizations promote flexible work arrangements such as remote work, and adjusted hours, access to these benefits is frequently uneven. Some employees receive preferential treatment which allows them to arrive at work at their own convenience without it formally being recorded while others are made to follow the strict rules and guidelines on time and attendance. This inconsistency can diminish trust in management and demoralize employees as they may perceive these practices as bias, and can create resentment among co-workers, reduce productivity, and contribute to a culture of suspicion and resentment.

Equivalently, favoritism is one of the main drivers of inequality in the workplace. It often sets the pace for who gets opportunities and support. When certain employees are given preferential treatment whether through flexible work hours, lighter workload or access to promotions, it creates an unequal footing that ruins fairness and transparency in the organization. When a manager or supervisor chooses personal friendships or biases among employees, this practice could ultimately reinforce a cycle of inequality and become the 'new norm' in the workplace, thus creating a toxic work culture.

Addressing workplace inequality is the task of supervisors and managers, and requires them to act with fairness, take accountability for actions and decisions, and be transparent to ensure all employees are treated equally and given equal opportunity to succeed.