



Sexual Orientation Bias

Diversity in the modern society has been a crucial and controversial issue. Human mind is at times filled with prejudices on diversity which may revolve around race, culture, age, gender or religion. These prejudices may, to a great extent interfere with the social interactions as they tend to affect the behavior and psychological status of the victim. Prejudice may be described as a misconceived generalization that tends to create division between superiority and inferiority on persons or within the society. In the recent times, prejudice or biasness has been witnessed in various points of interactions including workplaces, recreational areas, and political circles as well as in education. Among the various diversity issues available, sexual orientation bias has been witnessed in recent past, especially in workplace and religion. The fact that one is a lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender does not make him/her less important or inferior to other people. For instance in the workplace, there have been cases discrimination in form of employment, promotion, wage payments

and so on. The most recent case of gender orientation bias is the one that dogged the Anglican Church where one of the bishops entered into gay marriage. This idea of sexual orientation bias is a misconception that this paper will address in the ensuing discussion.

In the recent years there have been various cases of gay marriages and lesbian unions as well as people born with bisexual status. The society has oftentimes moved with haste to dismiss these people as social outcasts who have no moral capacity to be part of the society. However, sexual prejudice may be described as a hate crime that can be punished under a court of law. For instance, Chin talks of gay hate crime as a criminal offence that is motivated by biasness of an individual. In addition, Chin explains that the reported cases of sexual orientation bias have been perpetrated against the sexual minority population, and to some extent involving violence against them.

During their research on sexual orientation bias in workplace, Basgett, Lau, Sears and Ho realized that most of employees experienced discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. For instance, the gay and lesbian employees faced discrimination against their peers on employment, promotion, and wage differential; gay and lesbian employees earned less than their peers. The prevalence of sexual discrimination in the work place may be accelerated by failure of employees to report such cases, mostly due to fear of inferiority complex. In addition, lack of openness at the workplace about sexual and gender identity makes it appear as a vice and always creates an

element of fear, anxiety, discomfort and inferiority complex among employees thus affecting performance.

Most statutes have failed to clearly address the issue of sexual orientation bias. Although almost all nations including the civil society outlaw gender discrimination, some remain mum on sexual orientation, thus offering little or no protection to the sexually differentiated individuals. In US, the Anti-discrimination Act outlaws discrimination based of on sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace. Lack of protection of gays or lesbians has even gone further to inflict violence and physical abuse by their haters in the society.

The problem of sexual orientation bias is not only discrimination, but the psychological trauma and emotional damage that are caused to the victim. For instance, Chin observes that sexual hate crimes have been a major influence to the prevalent cases of depression, anxiety and stress. In addition, the psychological effect of sexual bias tends to be harmful to the individual's principle of self-concept and may disastrously interfere with child hood development, the effect of which may extend to the adult social behavior of a person.

It is worth noting that, the traumatic effect of sexual orientation bias may affect the overall performance of a person. Even where there is no physical abuse, the mare publicity of negative perception of the ones sexual orientation can be very damaging to the day to day activities of

a person. One latest example is the one witnessed on a South African athlete over bisexual allegations. In most cases, experiences of bias in a certain situation leads to the perception of nondisclosure with the assumption that such a nondisclosure deter the occurrence of oppression from the society. Moreover, a big number of victims of this social rejection are turning to social crimes such as drug abuse and to some extent suicide as a means of escaping from the wrath of society.

The world is becoming more modern and societal norms, values and believes are changing by the day. This call for changes in the way people think and perceive sexual orientation. Being born a bisexual is not a personal wish but an occurrence beyond personal control. There should be an awareness campaign by all that being a gay or lesbian is a personal lifestyle or choice which does not make a person less human. The trend in the recent events shows that the society is moving slowly towards accepting the rights of the gays and lesbians, with the legislation also accommodating the solemnization of gay marriages.

The law on discrimination should be strict in order to protect the vulnerable, especially the youth. Social workers should be proactive to influence the society to accept and acknowledge the existence of heterosexual, lesbian bisexual or gay people in the society and then forge forward to extend help to those who may have need it to cope with the situation. Early intervention by social workers and parents can help the youth against future stigma of their sexual orientation.