

**BODY SHAMING AT WORKPLACE: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT ON WHETHER BODY SHAMING
AN OBSTACLE ON THE CAREER GROWTH AMONG THE EMPLOYEES**

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ABSTRACT

In today's modern management scenario most of the organizations are claiming their achievements in the gender equality, preventing sexual harassment at work place etc. But there is yet another issue apart from this that is not addressing properly by the organization is body shaming. Shaming on one's physical appearance and discrimination on the basis of it is a very common issue faced by a lot of employees. There are skilled employees who were neglected by the management because of their physical appearance. The data relevant for the study was collected through secondary data sources. The result of the study shows that women are experienced more body shaming incidences than men. It also revealed that body shaming leads to lower self-confidence and ultimately affects the career growth of the employees.

Key words: Gender equality, Discrimination, Body shaming, Career growth, Self-confidence.

INTRODUCTION

Body shaming simply means negatively commending or criticizing one on the basis of the physical appearance. It includes the act of insulting and harassing others based on their inability to match the expectations related to the physical appearances. It is gaining more importance in the business organizations today, because it not only affects the physical health of the employees but also mentally. It hampers the self-worth and the confidences of the employees. It will eventually reduce the productivity of the employees and act as a barrier in building a good career. Various surveys clearly show that the efforts from the side of the organization to identify the body shaming practices among the employees and to prevent it were very less. Most of the organizations are not considering this as a serious issue to be resolved quickly and are not aware of its consequences. Some of the employees commended that they are even criticised and neglected by the superiors just because they are not looking fair in the physical appearances. Many of them are of the belief that looking fair is an important criterion for getting into a higher job position. Body shaming ways include the following;

- Criticizing one's own appearance through judgement or comparison with others.
- Criticizing others appearance in front of them.
- Criticizing others appearance without their knowledge

The scope of body shaming is wide. It includes:

- Fat shaming
- Shaming for thinness
- Shaming on height
- Shaming on hairiness
- Shaming on hair colour
- Shaming on skin colour
- Shaming on body structure
- Shaming on facial features
- Shaming on tattoos and piercings
- Shaming on marks on the body due to injury or diseases

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out the degree of body shaming at the work place.
2. To identify the negative impact of body shaming on employees.
3. To analyse the impact of body shaming at work place on the career growth of employees.

IMPACT OF BODY SHAMING ON EMPLOYEES

Body shaming will negatively affect the employees in many ways. They are:

a) Reduces self esteem

Self-esteem denotes a person's overall sense of self-worth and value. A lower self-esteem will lower the self-confidence of the employees. It creates a negative feeling about themselves among the employees. It will affect the work performance because lower self-esteem hampers once belief to be capable of success.

b) Depression

Body shaming will lead the employees towards the depression. It reduces the interest of the employees in the work activities. They can't able to focus and concentration well on the work. It lowers energy level and makes change in the daily behaviour of the employees.

c) Increase absenteeism

Body shaming increase the tendency of the employees to stay away from the work place. Absenteeism will negatively affect the employers as well because of the production disruption, lower morale etc. It affects the employees in a way that frequent absent from work creates a negative impression about the employees in front of the employer.

d) Career Disruption

In most of the cases of body shaming, it makes a feeling among the employees that they are unable to work in the same industry or level. Its consequences are more serious than that of the job loss. The employees were at this point of time forced to choose another career option, it may be not as much interested than the previous one.

e) Tendency to leave the organization

If the employee realized that they can't able to withstand the mental pressure out of the body shaming any more, then they will choose the decision to quit the job and to leave from the organization.

f) Lowers the productivity

Body shaming reduces the productivity of the employees, because it will create a negative attitude towards the work and the work place among the employees.

g) Lowers the motivation

Body shaming leads to a decrease in the motivation among the employees to work efficiently. It creates a discomfort among the employees at the workplace. The policies of the organization to improve the motivation in doing work will fail if the employees are suffering body shaming from the co workers.

h) Negative impact on the physical and mental health.

If he body shaming incidence is too frequent. It will affect the mental health of the employees and leads to anxiety, depression and personal isolation. The health risk associated with the body shaming is heart problems, anorexia, depression, diabetes and more.

FINDINGS

A survey on body shaming was conducted by Fortis Healthcare on 1244 women across 20 cities in India. The key findings of the survey are;

- a) 90% of women recognised that body shaming as a common behaviour.
- b) 84% reported that women experienced more body shaming than men.
- c) 47.5% reported that they experienced body shaming at work place.
- d) 66% believed that it is important to look good in order to feel confident.
- e) 67% reported that they are feeling angry because of body shaming.
- f) 97% believed that the issue of body shaming needs to be addressed soon.
- g) 32.5% reported that their friends like to make negative comments about the way they look and in the terms of body weight, body shape, skin tone, hair etc.
- h) 28% reported that they find it difficult to stand up for themselves when someone criticizes their physical appearance
- i) 46% admitted that they are passing negative comments about people's appearances without knowing about their knowledge.
- j) 31% reported that sometimes they don't like facing the world because of thinking about what others will say about their appearances.
- k) 62% reported that they felt anxious and nervous when others comment on their looks and physical appearance.
- l) Only 19% participants reported that they felt embarrassed about the way they look.
- m) Body shaming has a significant impact on the psychological wellbeing and act as a main reason for stress among the employees.
- n) 95% participants believed that they do not realize that they indulge in body shaming.

Some other studies show that men undergo body shaming too. Body shaming are not exclusively female problems. Men undergo body shaming on weight, hair loss and skin colour. A British survey pointed out that around 80.7% males are faced body shaming incidence. They also pointed out that they are not treated and recognised well in accordance with the skill and knowledge in the work place, just because of the reason that they are not looking good. Many of the employee's complaint that the organizations are not taking any initiative in preventing body shaming at the work place.

SUGGESTIONS

The following suggestions will help to prevent body shaming at work place among the employees. They are;

- 1) The organizations must take strict actions towards employees to prevent body shaming at work place.
- 2) The organization must arrange counselling programs for the employees to improve their self esteem and to reduce the negative consequences of body shaming on their personal and work life.
- 3) Promotion, salary hike and other incentives must be given only on the basis of the work performance of the employees.
- 4) There will be no discrimination towards employees on the basis of their physical appearance.
- 5) Take regular feedback from the employees regarding the social environment at the workplace and take corrective actions to solve the issues raised by the employees.

- 6) There are some tips to overcome body shaming at work place. Practising this will help to deal with body shaming incidences effectively. They are:
- Speak up for ourselves if anyone criticises on physical appearances.
 - Remind ourselves on our worth.
 - Be proud on our body.
 - Practice positive self-talk.

CONCLUSION

Happy employees are the real assets of every organization. They will act as the key drivers in leading organizations towards the success. Earlier the incidence of body shaming was not revealed by the victims. But now the situation is changed and a lot of well-known persons posted their body shaming incidence in various online platforms. Hence body shaming is gaining more attention now. Most of the organizations are not taking this seriously and are not following any concrete practices or policies to prevent it. Body shaming affect the employees both mentally and physically. If it is not prevented it will directly influence the productivity, focus and concentration of employees on work. Maintaining a satisfied and healthy work force is not an easy task. Employees will not satisfy with the monetary benefits alone. There are certain things that give positive mind set and motivation at work place. In includes a better social work environment free from criticism and discrimination. Therefore, there is a need to develop relevant programs and policies to reap the benefit from a good social environment without body shaming and criticism.

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