

Title Discrimination, Mental Health & Recruitment Processes – A Personal Reflection

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Are "traditional" focus areas of diversity and inclusion creating a blind spot for discrimination and hindering mental health in the process? Specifically, this review focuses on the consequences of automated hiring practices and perceived job-title bias on mental health during the application process.

My Past

Fortunate circumstances have provided me with the opportunity to concurrently work and study full-time for these last thirteen years. This has provided me with the chance to develop discipline and time-management skills, exposure to varied industries, work environments, and meeting inspiring people at an early age. My academic career, in parallel, has been shaped with continuing achievements and a variety of certificates, resulting from an insatiable curiosity to learn. Midway through graduate studies at the Australian Institute of Business (AIB), I lost my first grandparent and my world seemed to turn on its head. I had an epiphany: I was going to take advantage of every opportunity and make the future I wanted for myself come to life.

Current State

Fast-forward to the current day where I work in the Aerospace and Defence sector with a company renowned for its simulation and training services. I currently co-lead an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) subcommittee and take part in a Professional Women's Network at work. Having travelled to over thirty-five countries and a chance to teach abroad, I feel confident that I have the cultural awareness to be a citizen of

the world and take those cultural lessons into my work. With a list of qualifications, including a Bachelor in Psychology, a Diploma in Aircraft Mechanics, and a Master of Business Administration with AIB, I feel equally confident of my ability to take a varied educational background and life experiences into the work arena to become a leader for the workforce of the future.

The Conversation

Two conversations that are becoming a feature of the post-COVID19 era are Mental Health and EDI (Electronic Data Interchange). Before examining the focus on EDI deficits potentially amplifying discrimination in the workplace, let us first note the relationship between diversity and discrimination. Diversity explores how we differ as individuals whereas discrimination is when individuals are treated badly due to these differences ([Corrington et al. 2020](#)).

Unconscious Bias In Job Titles

Are job titles creating an unconscious bias among hiring managers when an associate role may exude more seniority than an analyst ([Caprino 2021](#))?

The ongoing EDI conversation is a testament to the importance of considering the human behind the role in any workplace. Note, perceived discrimination (PD) and unconscious bias can manifest itself deliberately, subtly, at an organizational level or amongst individuals. For all its benefits and advancements because of the EDI conversation, a lesser-evident bias lurking around the workforce for decades and not so publicly addressed is job-title discrimination ([Berry & Sanchez 2019](#)). Even pre-COVID19, employees were no stranger to “added” tasks not necessarily related to their role, education, experience, or career path development ([MindTools 2021](#)). Though job descriptions were further blurred during the pandemic, those fortunate to secure a stable income were also thrown unknowingly into hybrid roles. Both job seekers and recruiters have shown bias in job titles but do the job descriptions always match the title ([White, Stafford & Beaver 2019](#))? Shouldn't it be the case that people performing the same tasks for the same employer should be offered equal pay and perhaps title revisions to more accurately describe their roles? ([Figart & Mutari 2018](#)).

Dehumanised Application Process?

The post-COVID19 reality brought on increased productivity, but higher levels of stress and anxiety also exposed reduced job satisfaction and performance ([Alexander et al. 2021](#)). As many organisations race toward hybrid workplaces, more employees than ever are leaving their jobs in favour of a remote opportunities and work-life balance ([PwC 2018](#)). Actually, 40% of employees leave employment due to job dissatisfaction ([Zhang & Feinzig 2017](#)). So begins the application process where job titles not only classify individuals but may no longer adequately portray job responsibilities (e.g. traditional role mandates) or levels of seniority (e.g. non-managers leading small groups with the loss of management to bigger projects). Employees required a significant amount of agility to transform what education and experience prepared them for into the jack-of-all-trades needed to support their companies. How are these skills adequately captured in the application process to secure that first interview when many hiring firms rely on artificial intelligence (AI) to implement their hiring models ([Wharton 2012](#); [Bigu & Cernea 2019](#))?

Mental Health/Awareness

Does application rejection foster the PD for not having the right job title to qualify for an opportunity?

If someone scans the requirements of a new role, fits the job description perfectly, and is rejected upon first application without much of an explanation why, there may be a disconnect in how the non-selection decision was made. With a surge in hiring demands, gone are the days when a recruiter offered a personal touch replaced by an influx of automated rejection messages thanking you for your time and inviting you to look back for future opportunities ([LinkedIn 2021](#)). Is AI's automated response feeding PD or is the subjective interpretation of being discriminated against resulting in more negative reactions to unsuccessful job searches? Regardless, the negative impact of rejection and how an employee can perceive inadequacies in themselves for not reaching their “status” goals must be addressed ([Keshabyan & Day 2020](#)).

Dare we explore the potential for COVID19 nurturing symptoms of secondary trauma in the workplace when employees feel less qualified in their current role and block themselves from future opportunities ([Montana State University; Ali 2020](#))? This is exactly the type of behaviour “top” organizations are striving against as they invest heavily in mental health awareness campaigns, programs for employees and compete for top talent amidst a new telework reality ([PwC 2018](#), [Spataro 2020](#)).

In conclusion, an open question in the EDI world is whether we are adequately addressing all areas of Diversity & Inclusion in a rapidly changing society or are new labels for old problems required to ensure a well-rounded analysis of and actionable goals toward a positive way forward?



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One of CAE's 2020 Diversity Champions, Francesca is a self-motivated coach with an academic background in Psychology and Aircraft Mechanics. Attaining her Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Logistics & Supply Chain Management from AIB in 2021 further reinforced the guidance provided in operations, sourcing, project management, and organisational training.