Sample: Sociology - Societal Impact of Racism and Discrimination

According to the dictionary of literary terms, racism is defined as a doctrine or belief that the innate differences among the human races play a significant role in the determination of one's individual or cultural achievements, usually involving the notion that one's race is superior and therefore it has the right to rule the other races. Discrimination is a term that is used to refer to unfair or prejudicial treatment of different people basing on their social status within the society, race, sex, or age. According to sociologists, a society is a term that refers to a group or a system of human organisations with distinguishing beliefs or cultural patterns, which usually provides security, protection, continuity, and identity to its members. In many societies, racism and discrimination are pervasive, and they are still treated as silent codes that proportionally close the doors of opportunity to the young and old. Any member of a society who is forced to endure racism or discrimination usually experiences negative academic, social and mental health outcomes.

Often, what causes racism and discrimination in a society is the fact that its members have learned to hide their fear towards those who appear to be different. Fear is what makes individuals uncomfortable, and it is the reason as to why they chose to react with fear towards others who look differently. The society needs to embrace the diversity of the human race and shun racism or any other form of discrimination as it is detrimental to the development of a society.

According to Gaylord-Harden and Cunningham (2009), discriminations based on an individual's ethnic background in settings such as education are directly associated with increased negative perceptions of one's ethnicity from peers and colleagues. In fact, Flanagan et al (2009) argue that youths who experience any form of prejudice are more likely to feel that prospects in the society they live in are not for everyone who works hard. Such individuals usually get entangled in stereotypical notions, which eventually become self-

fulfilling prophesies leading to low academic achievement and negative outcomes (Davis et al, 2006).

For the longest time ever, the society has subjected individuals of colour, specifically the African Americans, to such kind of prejudice. McKinney, Bartholemew, and Gray (2010) argue that African American students are usually unfairly represented in exclusionary disciplinary cases, in which the result is suspension or expulsion. This is regardless of them not being involved in more severe actions or behaviours than their white colleagues to warrant such penalties. Consequently, the society is faced with the dilemma of dealing with a high rate of school dropouts and crime, which lead to prison or death.

When it comes to employment opportunities, the ethnic group that considers itself as superior tends to get the lion's share. For many members of the oppressed ethnic groups, economic difficulties seem to be a recurring affair. Most of the time, members of these groups are usually either the last to get hired or the first in line to be fired. As a consequence, austerity measures undertaken by governments or business organisations tend to hurt them the most. In addition, the opinions of those who are discriminated against are hardly considered when it comes to decision making, despite their qualifications, and as a result, the gap between the two develops and widens with time. Consequently, due to these perceived differences in social status, animosity brews between the two groups. A good example is South Africa during the days of apartheid, in which the hatred between the whites and the blacks led to the loss of many innocent lives and the imprisonment of thousands. On the other hand, in the United States, the unemployment rate for blacks persistently averages twice that of whites.

In conclusion, racism and discrimination and their damaging effects to the social fabric of a society pose a great responsibility for every member of any society to serve as an advocate for equity and social justice. Every society needs to come to terms with the fact that, as the

human race progresses, its way of thinking becomes more complex. Its core values should not be forgotten as they present a genuine hope for mankind in the fight against any form of oppression. The most effective way for the society to deal with these vices is to embrace diversity and treat it as a source of strength rather than a basis of comparison.

References

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