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**Impact of Physical Attractiveness on Selection and Recruitment Process**

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***Abstract***

*The personality traits which include physical appearance in particular always matter once an organization goes for hiring new entrants. The principal point of this study is to comprehend the relationship of a candidate's physical appearance, qualification, dressing style, attractive communication skills, gender, and candidate's photograph on resume with the hiring decision taken by a manager. The findings of this paper reveal that decision of hiring managers does not necessarily based upon the physical attractiveness but is influenced by various other factors which include candidate's appearance, his/her dressing style and educational qualifications.*

***Keywords:*** Photograph, Physical attractiveness, Hiring, Selection, Recruitment, Dressing style

**1. Introduction**

In today's organizations, the issues adjoining selecting and recruiting the right employees are getting difficult day by day. One of the reasons of this difficulty is the decrease in the number of capable candidates and the increasing complications of global economy. Another reason might be the discrimination of the employers for the applicants. There are different hidden issues also that can influence the recruitment and selection procedure other than the qualification and experience of candidates. These issues can be related to ethical, cultural or social aspects but may have a significant impact on the recruitment process and maybe are keys to issues generating by discrimination. There is a chance that those organizations which ignore the importance of such issues which are related to physical appearance, dressing style, gender, qualification, race, communications skills or looks might themselves are involved in such activities that are based on any sort of biasness.

By nature, it is considered that good looking people are good in every aspect. Dion, Berscheid, and Walster [1972] in their famous research study, named as "What is Beautiful is Good", concluded that attractive people are always getting an edge in their lives and are given priority over the unattractive ones. Similarly, some other factors like age of female candidate, her facial expressions and attractive communication skills are effective too. But all these practices of

biasness can put an organization into risk for applying unethical actions, so employers must be cautious of the reputation of the organization [Kleiman and Farley, 1988].

The purpose of this study is to comprehend the association between a candidate's physical appearance, relevant qualifications, age, dressing style, grooming, presence of photograph on resume, and the hiring decisions by the managers to determine the impact of physical attractiveness on recruitment process.

## **2. Literature Review**

From ages, throughout the society, appearance-based biasness can be recognized but still it seems that not much importance is given to the subject, in fact, very few have ever considered the potential consequences [Cash, 1981]. Philosophers and researchers are continuously studying the concept of this phenomenon at workplaces to understand the importance it can contain for an individual. In this study, we are focusing primarily on that impact of attractiveness at the time of hiring.

### **2.1 Beautyism**

"Beautyism" is a term that describes the social advantage attractive people get whereas less attractive people get discriminated over a lot of less attractive attributes [Cash, 1990]. It is well-known that physical beauty earns an individual fame and significant social benefit within the culture or society [Dermer & Thiel, 1975]. Male and female who are attractive are taken as more social, responsive, confident and effective in their everyday life whether there are careers or personal/official relationships [Cash, 1981; Cash, Kehr, Polyson, & Freeman, 1977].

### **2.2 Theory of "What is Beautiful is Good"**

"What is Beautiful is Good" [Dion, Berscheid, and Walster, 1972], is one of most famous studies, examined the concept of physical appearance within society. The study focused on the perceptions of people upon seeing a person for the first time and drawing certain stereotypes about his/her personality traits and nature. It concluded that on seeing a person's beauty, society unwillingly concludes opinions about the person's overall personality, and success level in life.

### **2.3 Physical Attractiveness-What Society thinks about it**

It is a common observation that we notice in our daily life routines that attractive individuals are more popular than the unattractive ones, they are better treated and are offered more opportunities at workplaces and even in relationships just because of their appearances [Langlois, J., Kalakanis, L., Rubenstein, A., Larsen, A., Hallam, M., & Smoot, M., 2000]. When society thinks that social competence is necessary, it refers to the idea that attractive persons are good in building positive relationships and possess good communications skills.

### **2.4 Role of Physical Attractiveness at Workplace**

Workplace conditions are changing globally and with increasing number of organizational challenges, management often ignores some issues which are creating a high impact on the recruitment process. Numerous researchers have found out that attractive candidates are considered to be more capable as compared to unattractive candidates [Beehr & Gilmore, 1982; Quereshi & Kay, 1986]. Not only this, after hiring, the long term employment also brings lots of advantages for attractive candidates. Dipboye, Arvey, and Terpstra [1977] concluded that high salaries are presented to attractive candidates than the unattractive ones. Also, attractive employees are expected to get high grades [Berscheid & Walster, 1972], promotions [Morrow, P., McElroy, J., Stamper, B., & Wilson, M. 1990], bonuses [Ross & Ferris, 1981], and overall career success personally and professionally than the unattractive employees [Dipboye,

Arvey&Terpstra, 1977; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996]. However, there is an exception like the area of modeling or acting where hiring decision must be based on this physical attractive biasness [Cash &Kilcullen, 1985].

We know that face-to-face communication job positions require attractive candidates like receptionist or front-desk officers. Beehr and Gilmore [1982]stated that physical attractiveness is very important in occupation where face-to-face communication is required.

### 2.5 Importance of Dressing

Being attractive or unattractive is a part of fate or is in genetics, but there are some attributes which can be changed and modified to make the personality of a person much desirable or more presentable. Dress or dressing style comes under this category; even sometimes dressing style enhances the personality more as compared to physical features. In a research done on the impact of physical attractiveness, dressing style, and job category, Johnson and Roach-Higgins [1987]concluded that dressing style has a dominant effect on the perception of an employer. Riggio and Throckmorton [1988]concluded that suitable dressing has more powerful impact on the hirers than physical attractiveness.

### 3. Methodology

The purpose is to analyze the relationship and associations between physical attractiveness andselection and recruitment process. in order to carry out research, primary data was collected through 'questionnaires-survey' as the research tool from employers and employees of different organizations working in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America and Bahrain.

The total of 250 questionnaires with instructions to fillwas hand delivered and emailed to the respondents. T-test (one sample test) is used to test the impact of physical attractiveness on recruitment process. By using t-test, we found out that physical attractiveness has no direct impact on hiring decision of manager but it somehow influences the hiring decisions made by managers.

### 4. Hypotheses, Results and Discussions

**Table 1: One sample test- Employees' Perception**

| Hypotheses  | Mean | Sig. (2-tailed) | Empirical Conclusion |
|---|------|-----------------|----------------------|
| H1-A: You think, outward-facing jobs (i.e., Sales) should consider appearance when hiring.  | 3.59 | .000            | Rejected             |
| H2-A: You would rank the importance of appearance when interviewing for a job.  | 3.61 | .000            | Rejected             |
| H3-A: You think that candidates with attractive communication skills are given unfair advantage in interviews and the workplace in general. | 3.35 | .000            | Rejected             |
| H4-A: You believe steps should be taken to assure that unattractive communication skills are not discriminated in the workforce.            | 3.14 | .000            | Rejected             |
| H5-A: Your confidence level and positive body gestures of the candidates help you in selection rather than their qualifications.            | 3.40 | .000            | Rejected             |
| H6-A: You are more concerned about discrimination based more on your gender than your looks.  | 2.90 | .000            | Rejected             |

|  |      |      |          |
|--|------|------|----------|
| H7-A: If you would go for an interview, you would dress up appropriately.  | 4.07 | .563 | Accepted |
| H8-A: You think dressing style affects the quality of performance in the workplace.  | 3.49 | .000 | Rejected |
| H9-A: Your photograph on your resume helps you in getting an interview call.   | 2.78 | .000 | Rejected |
| H10-A: You have come across anyone who was not hired solely on their appearance.   | 2.86 | .000 | Rejected |
| H11-A: You think relevant qualifications are the most important determinant when filling a position.   | 3.66 | .001 | Rejected |
| H12-A: You think that level of a female candidate's appearance that impacts the likelihood of being selected for further stages of the hiring process. | 3.36 | .000 | Rejected |
| H13-A: You think It's relevant to consider as one of many factors for a job, a candidate's appearance.   | 3.24 | .000 | Rejected |
| H14-A: You give importance to the appearance of hair, makeup and nail art at the time of interview (female candidates).                                | 2.42 | .000 | Rejected |
| H-15-A: You think it's important for women to maintain their attractiveness as their age increases.  | 3.47 | .000 | Rejected |
| H16-A: At what age, you think women look their best.   | 1.95 | .000 | Rejected |

**Table 2: One sample test- Employers' Perception**

| <b>Hypotheses</b>   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b> | <b>Empirical Conclusion</b> |
|---|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| H1-B: Outward-facing jobs (i.e., Sales) should consider appearance when hiring.   | 3.64        | .008                   | Accepted                    |
| H2-B: Rank the importance of appearance when interviewing for a job.  | 3.78        | .061                   | Accepted                    |
| H3-B: Candidates with attractive communication skills are given unfair advantage in interviews and the workplace in general.    | 3.30        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H4-B: Steps should be taken to assure that unattractive communication skills are not discriminated in the workforce.            | 3.08        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H5-B: The confidence level and positive body gestures of the candidates help you in selection rather than their qualifications. | 3.59        | .001                   | Accepted                    |
| H6-B: Discrimination is based more on gender than looks.  | 3.29        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H7-B: Much importance is giving to the candidate's dressing at the time of interview.   | 3.35        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H8-B: Dressing style affects the quality of performance in the workplace.   | 3.11        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H9-B: Attractive candidates are called for interviews more than the unattractive candidates (presence of photograph on resumes) | 2.88        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H10-B: Candidates are not hired solely on their appearance.   | 3.45        | .000                   | Rejected                    |
| H11-B: A candidate's qualifications are the most important determinant when filling a position.                                 | 3.64        | .003                   | Accepted                    |

|  |      |      |          |
|--|------|------|----------|
| H12-B: The level of a female candidate's appearance that impact the likelihood of being selected for further stages of the hiring process. | 3.16 | .000 | Rejected |
| H13-B: It's relevant to consider as one of many factors for a job, a candidate's appearance.   | 3.51 | .000 | Rejected |
| H14-B: Importance is given to the appearance of hair, makeup and nail art when interviewing female candidates.                             | 2.79 | .000 | Rejected |
| H15-B: Important for women to maintain their attractiveness as their age increases.  | 3.32 | .000 | Rejected |
| H16-B: At what age, women look their best.   | 2.15 | .000 | Rejected |

The formulated research hypotheses which have been shown in Table 1 and 2 were interrogated via applying the 1-sample T-Test. The testing proceedings showed that H7-A and H11-A for Table-1 were accepted because their p values were greater than 0.05, thus making the 2-tailed value insignificant. All remaining hypotheses were rejected. In Table 2, the hypotheses H1-B, H2-B, H5-B and H11-B were accepted because their p values were greater than 0.05, thus making the 2-tailed value insignificant, all other hypotheses were rejected. At the time of interview though, employees have placed a rather higher value to the importance of dressing (H7-A, Table 1).

During this present study, we realized that when we see someone who is physically appealing, a certain perception of good thoughts occurs as an instinctive reaction. At the same time, we also found out that this perception was studied with limitations in the present study. The completeresults did not match with this idea but it did show influence of physical attractiveness on the hiring decisions by managers at certain levels.

Lots of research studies have found that within employment settings, candidates who are attractive are given more preferences over the unattractiveness [Beehr& Gilmore, 1982; Dipboye, Arvey, &Terpstra, 1977; Marlowe, Schneider, & Nelson, 1996]. Dion [1972] demonstrated views on personality traits which showed the dominance of physically attractive people on unattractive people, who lack in several personalities' attributes. The present study tested this theory but did not find any evidence which can support above mentioned studies in the case of employees but the employers' results show that there is influence of appearance at the time of interview (H2 and H5-Table 2). Male and female who are attractive are taken as more social, responsive, confident and effective in their everyday life whether there are careers or personal/official relationships [Cash, 1981; Cash, Kehr, Polyson, & Freeman, 1977]. The present study [Table 2: H5] strongly supports that candidates who are confident are successful in getting jobs; confidence along with good communication skills can lead the employees to a higher grade of achievement where even biases like physical attractiveness and gender differentiation have no impact.

Johnson and Roach-Higgins [1987]concluded that dressing style has a prominent effect on the view of an employer. Riggio and Throckmorton [1988] concluded that suitable dressing has more powerful impact on the hirers than physical attractiveness. The present study agrees to these theories by showing positive impact of dressing on employee's perception by a value of 0.563 shown in H7. The present study has however evolved a new ray of hope that society now is more aware of such ethical biases as ever before. Actions are now taking place at workplaces to lower the chances of these possible occurrences of biasness.

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