

Beauty bias essay



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As Aristotle once said “ Beauty, is a greater recommendation than any letter of introduction” (www. thinkexist. com). The beauty bias is the notion that people who are attractive are usually rewarded socially. The idea of beauty is a socially accepted principle and although this principle has been widely accepted from the beginning of time, the standards of beauty have drastically changed from the past. In today’s society, there is a large amount of discrimination based on the physical attractiveness of a person which in turn affects them in the workplace in areas such as recruitment, selection, and performance appraisal.

Though there is no correlation between beauty and brains as of now there are no set laws which prevent discrimination based on attractiveness since it is a difficult concept to prove. Society is attempting to change the way hiring practices are handled, however the problem may already be too deeply rooted in our culture to be completely eliminated. Basing hiring standards on beauty directly influences diversity in the workplace by limiting the pool of applicants for a job.

Consequently, this may increase or reduce job opportunities for certain individuals in the workplace. “ Never underestimate the halo effect,” says Janice Guler, Ceridian’s director of staffing. “ Attractive people are assumed to be intelligent and successful and it’s been said that as many as 50 percent of managers make their hiring decisions within the first 30 seconds of setting eyes on an applicant. While this is unfortunate, it’s human nature. People have a real tendency to trust their gut, rather than trusting the empirical data (<http://akalol.ordpress.com/2009/03/17/>). As well as limiting the pool of applicants, discriminating based on appearance allows for the creation of a

biased environment in the workplace by reinforcing stereotypes that are directly associated with sexism and racism. A study of the relationships of gender and attractiveness biases to hiring decisions found that beauty bias may be a disadvantage to women trying to obtain a position in a more masculine field such as truck driving or construction work.

According to this study, attractive women are viewed as being more feminine and less capable of meeting the physical demands of a job; therefore having less of a chance to be able to get job placements in certain positions (Psychology Today 2003: 18). Over the years, aesthetic labour has grown in importance in service sector jobs. In a recent study, ninety percent thought of being attractive is important to a certain extent in retail sales and eighty one percent of employees believe good looks in jobs such as waitresses and receptionists makes a positive difference (Jet 1994: 12).

Abercrombie and Fitch is one of the companies which are falling into the trend of seeking young and beautiful individuals which exclude those who do not possess the characteristics that are deemed able. As quoted by an Abercrombie and Fitch employee “ Attractive white people could admit to no retailing experience but would be hired because they fit the image, while those with a lot of retail experience but without pretty faces are passed over” (Berry 2007: 46).

The officials of the company pride themselves in building a “ pretty” sales force and acknowledge that it is a growing trend in “ American retailing”. Hence, the recruitment phase greatly limits the talent pool due to discrimination based on the beauty bias. According to many studies

aesthetically attractive people also tend to earn more income. Beauty discrimination can profoundly damage a worker's self-esteem; therefore lower their performance over the course of their lifetime.

Attractive workers, on the other hand, are substantially more self confident; thus, increasing their motivation which can lead to higher productivity. In a recent study which assessed beauty, brains and confidence it was found that because attractive people think more highly of themselves they are also more confident in their capabilities which directly reflects on their earnings allowing them to earn a higher income and having to deal with less financial stress (Judge, Hurst & Simon 2009: 749).

When a person encompasses a high amount of core self evaluation, they are able to develop a greater social capital and be more socially connected which is also directly tied with success in employment. Mulford, Orbell, Shatto and Stockard (1998) found that “ Others are more likely to cooperate with attractive people, partly because the latter are expected to be more cooperative. ” Attractive men have a greater chance of being hired; receive higher pay and a greater chance of being promoted than unattractive men.

However, the relationship between the two is not as clear for women.

Attractive women have a greater chance of being hired and better pay but also suffer negative effects in the process. For example, attractive women have been found to be less likely to be made partners in law firms or placed in managerial positions since beauty is acquainted with submissiveness (Berrie 2007: 50). Another reason for this is that women who are beautiful

are viewed as “ airheads” and are seen more as sexual objects rather than someone who is of higher authority.

Being beautiful is not without its flaws as attractive people are also seen as being narcissistic and “ stuck up”. This could have negative affects on the effectiveness of their leadership abilities since co- workers will be less willing to cooperate with a person who they believe is “ bossing them around”. Task performance could be affected as well due to the idea that being beautiful allows you to get away with things that normally would not be allowed in the workplace (Jane, Hurst & Simon 2009: 750).

We live in a society that is so focused on attaining beauty and captivated by the idea of beauty in general. Sometimes beauty can have a positive effect on our lives, but sometimes beauty can backfire. It is difficult to see past a person appearance when we are making hiring and other decisions in the workplace which is partly due the fact that first impressions have a lasting effect on people, but it is still discriminating to judge a person based on their “ beauty” just like it is unfair to discriminate against a person based on race or gender.

There is a saying that states “ Never judge a book by its cover” however; it seems that physical attractiveness has been a strong determinant for recruitment, selection and appraising decisions. If managers would base their hiring decisions on skills and abilities rather than making the workplace a beauty pageant, they will be able to motivate employees, create equality in the workplace and be able to keep employee morale up to standards.