

Impact of Physical Appearance on Employability: Navigating Biases in the Indian Labor Market

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Physical appearance significantly influences professional opportunities. Although this aspect of labor market dynamics has been explored in Western contexts, there is limited research on how it plays out in India. This is vital because here cultural norms and expectations differ widely. The present article answers the call and examines the impact of societal beauty standards and body image on employability in the Indian labor market. By conducting in-depth interviews with 28 professionals from various sectors, the work uncovers the existence of biases related to appearance in both hiring processes and career progression. The findings reveal that both men and women face unequal treatment based on their physical appearance—either benefiting from aligning with societal ideals or experiencing subtle discrimination when they deviate.

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Introduction

The idealization of fair skin has long been a prevalent beauty standard in many Asian cultures, shaped by a mix of cultural, historical, and socio-economic influences. In the past, lighter skin symbolized higher social status and affluence, while darker skin was linked to manual labor and lower societal rank. Colonialism further entrenched these beliefs by promoting Eurocentric beauty ideals that equated fairness with attractiveness. However, there is now a rising movement pushing back against these outdated standards, advocating for the celebration of diverse skin tones and raising awareness about the discriminatory and damaging impact of skin-whitening practices.

The pursuit of beauty has long been explored through the “beautiful is good” stereotype (Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coars, 2003). Facial attractiveness, in particular, serves as a strong marker of identity, while physical unattractiveness

or facial deformities frequently result in discrimination. Classic tales like “Snow White,” “Cinderella,” “Sleeping Beauty,” and “The Ugly Duckling” highlight society’s emphasis on beauty as a key factor for acceptance and validation.

The role of appearance and physical attractiveness serves as a subtle indicator of an individual’s suitability for an organization. Studies show that both visible and less obvious personal characteristics can lead to wage disparities (Frieze, Olson, and Russell, 1991). Hiring decisions are influenced by more than just cognitive abilities, with factors like body image playing a key role, as it is closely tied to self-esteem and mental health. A positive body image, combined with physical attractiveness, offers clear advantages in the job market, where those perceived as more attractive are more likely to be hired (Gilmore, Beehr, & Love, 1986). Taking this thread forward, this study examines the influence of physical appearance within the Indian labor market.

Impact on the Labor Market

Body image is a multidimensional construct that encompasses behavioral, attitudinal, and perceptual dimensions (Brown, Cash & Mikulka, 1990). The term has been used interchangeably with concepts like “body concept,” “body percept,” and “body ego” (Van der Velde, 1985), which makes it challenging to clearly define. The concept of body image originated in neuroscience (Head & Holmes, 1911), where it was theorized as a postural model that allows for move-

ment in space without conscious awareness. Later studies, including those by Schilder (1935), expanded this understanding by considering body image from both organic and psychogenic perspectives, suggesting that body image reflects how one sees themselves in their own mind.

Schilder’s tri-dimensional concept of body image includes physiological, sociological, and libidinal structures. The physiological dimension refers to the material body, while the sociological dimension captures cultural influences on body norms. The libidinal structure, informed by psychoanalysis, encompasses conscious and unconscious experiences of the body. Subsequent research emphasized the ego-feeling aspect of body image—how the self perceives itself (Federn, 1952). Modern definitions describe body image as a loose mental representation of the body, involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioral components (Slade, 1994; Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002).

Body image perceptions are typically categorized as either positive or negative. A negative body image is characterized by a skewed view of one’s physical appearance, often leading to emotions such as anxiety, shame, and dissatisfaction (Rosen, 1995). Studies suggest that dissatisfaction with body image is more common among women; however, men are increasingly impacted as well, particularly with the growing emphasis on idealized masculine physiques perpetuated by social media. This heightened focus, especially among men, can result

in conditions like muscle dysmorphia and unhealthy behaviors, including compulsive exercise and the use of anabolic steroids (Olivardia, Pope & Hudson, 2000).

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Beauty also plays a role in the labor market dynamics as attractive individuals tend to be perceived as more competent, motivated, and suited for employment (Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977; Gilmore, Beehr, & Love, 1986). This holds true for both men and women, though women face the additional challenge of the “beauty is beastly” effect, where attractive women may be perceived as less suitable for male-dominated or managerial roles (Heilman & Stopeck, 1985).

Although earlier research has explored gender discrimination linked to physical attractiveness, primarily using quantitative approaches, the influence of beauty premiums and body image in the Indian labor market is less understood. This paper aims to fill that gap through a qualitative investigation by examining how beauty and body image are perceived by the Indian population and whether these notions influence employability.

Methodology

This paper adopts an exploratory approach, enabling the examination of

various dimensions of the research and incorporating participant perspectives that are often overlooked. A qualitative research paradigm was employed to investigate the relationship between body image and labour market outcomes in India. The paper acknowledges the integral role of researchers’ actions and the influence of their studies on participants as a core element of the research process.

A total of 28 participants, comprising corporate executives and engineers aged 24 to 31, with at least two years of industry experience, were selected from two major urban centres—Mumbai and Hyderabad. Of these, 9 participants were males, and 19 were females. Although the participants hailed from diverse backgrounds and different cities across India, they had resided in Mumbai and Hyderabad for a minimum of one year. All participants belonged to the middle- and upper-class economic strata, which served as a proxy for their personal beliefs. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, each lasting approximately 30 minutes. Prior to the interview’s, informed consent was obtained, with the purpose and objectives of the paper clearly communicated to the participants.

Open coding was employed in the analysis, followed by the development of categories and the application of additional criteria to evaluate the participants. Recognizing that findings could be influenced by subjective analysis and a bias toward socially desirable responses, the researchers took steps to mitigate these

risks. The interviews focused on participants' prior experiences, and no explicit mention of the role of beauty in the workplace was made until the conclusion of

the interview. Data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Details of the participants are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 - Basic Profile of the Participants

Participant No.	Gender	Age	Occupation Area
1	Female	25	Engineering
2	Female	27	Executive
3	Female	27	Executive
4	Female	31	Engineering
5	Female	26	Engineering
6	Male	27	Engineering
7	Male	25	Engineering
8	Female	26	Engineering
9	Male	26	Engineering
10	Female	27	Engineering
11	Female	25	Engineering
12	Female	29	Executive
13	Female	28	Executive
14	Male	30	Executive
15	Female	26	Engineering
16	Female	27	Executive
17	Female	26	Engineering
18	Female	29	Executive
19	Female	27	Engineering
20	Female	28	Executive
21	Female	28	Engineering
22	Male	25	Engineering
23	Male	24	Engineering
24	Female	28	Executive
25	Male	26	Engineering
26	Male	30	Executive
27	Male	31	Executive
28	Female	28	Executive

Findings & Analysis

We try to explore the participants' understanding of beauty, their conception of body image, and whether conforming to the perceived notion of "being ideally beautiful" affects their job prospects or employability. Let us unravel the various themes discussed above:

1) Beauty ideals

Working in a world where appearance-related knowledge has been easily applied, employees have unconsciously started to seek physical attractiveness for advancement in their careers. The ubiquity of weight-loss centers and cosmetic surgery clinics represents the emphasis that people in the contemporary era put

on appearance. This was reported by a significant number of participants. In this section, we explore the perceptions of the participants on the idea or concept of beauty. It includes their understanding of what comprises beauty, the characteristics that define a good-looking person, and the physical characteristics that they attribute to beauty. Beauty varied from dressing up to presentation to the manner of communication. Physically attractive attributes included face, smile, eyes, skin tone, lean build, tall height, and Aryan physical features. Beauty for them was an aspect that they could relate themselves to. For instance:

Participant #1 said, “Beauty for me is an experience that elicits pleasure, admiration, or a sense of aesthetic appeal. I associate it with harmony, balance, and a sense of proportion.”

Participant #18 shared, “I find people physically appealing when they present themselves well and I feel good communication enhances attractiveness. Being a good communicator doesn’t necessarily mean speaking fluent English, but rather using a kind or convincing tone.”

Beauty also signified a quality or trait that they felt lacking in themselves which might explain why a person possessing that trait was appealing to the opposite sex:

Participant #3 said, “I find people with fair skin really beautiful because having a darker complexion I have always envied them. I am sorry for being a little filmy here but definitely, when fair girls with spotless skin go out, they just

shine in the bright sun. I feel that skin color does matter. I have always seen that girls who have a white tone are more likely to have a male fan following.”

The notion of beauty has also been critically evaluated in terms of how it was being packaged and sold and that there was an entire business industry earning millions from it:

Participant #9 expressed, “The perceptions of physical attractiveness are largely influenced by media portrayals. Beauty is not a universal standard but rather a concept shaped by cultural contexts. This means that what is considered beautiful can differ significantly across various cultures. As individuals absorb these cultural values, they begin to evaluate their own appearance and the appearances of others through that lens. This cultural relativity turns the standards of beauty fluid and can lead to differing self-perceptions and judgments, highlighting the profound impact that media and culture have on our understanding of attractiveness. In a world increasingly interconnected through digital platforms, these varying ideals can clash, creating both challenges and opportunities within cultural frameworks.”

The notion of beauty not only comprised what the participants perceived and accepted by others to be beautiful but also their conception of body image which is discussed in the next section.

2) Idea of body image

Most participants agreed that body image is subjective, with its meaning, at-

tributes, and significance varying from person to person. This contributed to individual uniqueness. Many individuals reported becoming more concerned about their body image after their college years. Those with a strong support system—such as family and friends—tended to exhibit greater confidence and were better equipped to respond positively to external comments. Participants who expressed satisfaction with their body image often engaged in activities like yoga, gym workouts, or other fitness practices to maintain their well-being. Interestingly, the study revealed that men were just as conscious of their bodies as women, with some unhappy individuals resorting to cosmetic surgery or minor laser treatments in pursuit of perfection. Ultimately, perceptions of body image shifted between personal views and others' perceptions, emphasizing the complex interplay between self-image and societal standards.

Participant #7 articulated, "Body image, for me, encompasses both self-perception and external perceptions. It underscores that our understanding of our bodies is shaped not just by our personal beliefs and experiences but also by the viewpoints of those around us. This interplay creates a complex framework in which individuals constantly navigate their self-image in response to societal expectations and peer influences. For me, this means grappling with conflicting feelings, as I feel the pressure to conform to idealized body standards promoted in media and social circles. Moreover, the impact of social media cannot be overlooked; platforms that showcase

curated images can intensify feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, making it even more challenging to maintain a positive body image. Ultimately, the perception of one's body is a dynamic process influenced by a myriad of factors, illustrating the profound connection between self-esteem, societal norms, and the ongoing quest for self-acceptance."

Also, perceptions of body image had a trickling effect in other spheres of life. For instance:

Participant #2 added, "After I started working, I could see that beautiful people get some extra benefits plus attention and hence, they had much more confidence than I had."

Sometimes, peers, colleagues and even close ones may consciously or unconsciously make a person reflect on their body type and if it does not match their ideal image, they will make the person believe that they should rectify it. There is an entire industry which is minting money in the name of fitness and advertisements on how to get an ideal weight according to Body Mass Index. Here we can bring to light how the consumers of such products are made conscious of their weight. The idea of body image is also shaped by media which sells a particular body type to be appealing and attractive as those of the movie actors or sports person and makes the consumers believe that this is the acceptable ideal body that one should have (Levine, Smolak, & Hayden, 1994; Paxton et al., 1991). Literature suggests that if the consumers of such images do not have the

prescribed ideal type of body image, then it gives rise to a flourishing business that gains by rectifying and making the person believe that the one now is a perfect version of their so-called flawed self. For instance,

Participant #17 recounted a humorous yet thought-provoking incident, “The salon I visit regularly is named ‘Fair and Handsome’. This makes me wonder that yes, the ideal notions of body image are defined. It also underscores the dissonance between widely accepted beauty ideals and the reality of diversity within the population. It raises important questions about how societal standards are constructed and who gets to define them.”

However, in some cases, the idea of body image changed with one’s understanding of the representation of body image. Participant #15 described a pivotal shift that occurred during her college years:

“During college, the more I started reading diverse streams of literature the more I became confident and started loving my body. Definitely, now that I am more confident, I take measures to reduce my weight and relieve stress. I believe that you should be comfortable in your own skin, and that is what matters. This newfound confidence has rendered a balanced approach to my body image. Rather than seeking validation through conformity to societal ideals, I prioritize personal well-being and comfort in my skin. It has been a transformative power of self-discovery and the importance of

embracing one’s unique body, reinforcing the idea that true beauty lies in self-acceptance and confidence.”

In examining the concept of body image, it becomes evident that this perception is heavily influenced by various external factors, including peers, colleagues, and media representations. Many individuals feel pressured to conform to these standards, often adopting practices aimed at correcting what they perceive as flaws in their appearance. This desire to adhere to societal ideals can lead to a cycle of self-criticism and efforts to reshape one’s body to fit a narrow definition of beauty. However, there are also individuals who challenge these imposed ideals, embarking on their own journeys of self-discovery. They actively question the projections of beauty that society offers, ultimately shaping their own definitions of body image that prioritize self-acceptance over external validation.

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This exploration reveals a significant connection between perceived beauty standards and personal performance in various domains, including the workplace. The pressure to conform to an ideal body type can influence one’s level of confidence, communication skills, and overall presentation, which in turn affects career growth and opportunities. When individuals feel satisfied with their bodies, they are more likely to engage confidently in

professional settings, contributing to effective communication and leadership. Conversely, those who struggle with body image may find their performance hindered by insecurity and self-doubt, creating a barrier to career advancement.

As we delve deeper into employability themes in the next section, it is essential to consider the multifaceted implications of body image on individuals' lives. Understanding how these perceptions impact self-esteem and professional interactions can shed light on the broader societal structures that perpetuate narrow beauty standards. By investigating the interplay between body image and workplace dynamics, we can better appreciate the importance of fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes self-acceptance, ultimately leading to healthier individuals and more inclusive workplaces.

3) Did being ideally beautiful affect job prospects or employability?

The perception of beauty indeed influenced job prospects and employability, though it was not the sole determining factor. Participants showed that physical appearance affected hiring decisions, career advancement, and even salary levels, often in ways that were not directly related to qualifications or job performance. Here are some key ways

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in which “being ideally beautiful” or adhering to societal beauty standards impacted employability.

- **First impressions and hiring decisions**

First impressions were critical during job interviews, and physical appearance often played a significant role. The “halo effect”, where attractive individuals are perceived to have other positive attributes such as intelligence, competence, or confidence, heavily influenced hiring decisions. For instance, when two equally qualified candidates were interviewed for the same position, the one who aligned more closely with societal beauty standards was viewed more favorably. He/she was judged as more persuasive, being a better communicator, and even more trustworthy during interviews.

This bias had long-term consequences on individual careers. Those who fit the ideal beauty mold were given more opportunities to prove themselves, while those who didn't conform to these standards struggled to even get their foot in the door. Participant #4 shared “When I started dressing better and paying more attention to my appearance, I noticed a change in how interviewers treated me—they seemed more interested, more engaged.” This shows how subtle changes in appearance disproportionately affected how candidates were perceived in a professional setting.

- **Confidence and self-presentation**

Confidence was often cyclical. Feeling attractive boosted confidence, which

in turn improved job performance, which further reinforced self-worth. However, this cycle also worked in reverse for those who didn't feel that they met societal standards of beauty. Without a sense of confidence in their appearance, they held themselves back professionally, avoiding situations that could advance their careers. This created a self-fulfilling prophecy, where the lack of confidence became a barrier to success, even when the individual was otherwise qualified.

Participant #23 recounted, "When I started working out and lost weight, I wasn't just healthier—I found myself walking into meetings with my head held higher, feeling more in control." This confidence can have a domino effect, improving communication skills, self-assurance, and overall professional demeanor, which can impress employers. However, confidence could also "I've been passed over for jobs where I was clearly the most qualified candidate. Later, I realized the positions went to people who simply looked the part better." Industries like fashion, hospital stem from self-acceptance just as much as physical changes.

- **Discrimination based on appearance**

Discrimination based on appearance, whether explicit or unconscious, was a reality many participants faced. For instance, Participant #12, who did not fit conventional beauty standards, shared that sales were more affected by this bias, but it existed across sectors. While appearance shouldn't affect employabil-

ity, those who didn't fit societal ideals encountered additional hurdles, requiring them to work even harder to prove their worth.

Participant #24 shared that she was often overlooked for promotions, even when she had more experience and better qualifications than her peers. She realized later that this was likely due to her appearance, which didn't align with the company's unspoken preference for a certain "look". This kind of discrimination wasn't always explicit, but its effects were long-lasting, contributing to lower morale, frustration, and a lack of advancement opportunities for those who didn't conform to societal beauty ideals.

- **Workplace opportunities and promotions**

Workplace opportunities, such as client-facing positions, were often disproportionately given to those who fit the conventional beauty standards. This created an imbalance where physical appearance, rather than merit, became a key factor in career advancement. Companies believed that attractive employees would better represent the company's image, especially in roles that involve public interaction, client engagement, or media representation.

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Participant #10 noticed that in her company, those who conformed to societal beauty standards were more likely to be chosen to represent the company at conferences or client meetings, even when others had more relevant experience. While this created unfair advantages for some, it also underscored the need to value merit and expertise over looks. Conversely, those perceived as less attractive found themselves pigeonholed into back-office roles, regardless of their capabilities.

- **Stereotyping and workplace dynamics**

Stereotypes based on appearance can also shape how the participants were perceived by colleagues. Participant #15 reflected, “As someone who’s considered attractive, I sometimes feel people assume I’m less serious or less intelligent. I’ve had to fight that stereotype my whole career.” Similarly, those who didn’t fit conventional beauty norms faced assumptions about being less capable, making it harder to earn respect or collaborate effectively with their peers. This dynamic affected team relationships, productivity, and individual morale. In some cases, being perceived as too attractive or unattractive isolated individuals from workplace networks, limiting their growth and influence.

These stereotypes created a toxic workplace environment, where the participants were judged based on superficial characteristics rather than their actual contributions. Attractive individuals faced jealousy or resentment from col-

leagues, while those considered less attractive struggled to gain respect or credibility. This dynamics often undermined team cohesion, reduced collaboration, and led to a culture of inequality.

- **Cultural and industry differences**

Different industries and cultural contexts influenced how much beauty affected employability. For example, Participant #18, who worked in the entertainment industry, said, “In my field, looks are almost as important as talent. It’s frustrating, but if you don’t meet certain beauty standards, you’re unlikely to get ahead, no matter how good you are.” In contrast, Participant #11, a software engineer, shared, “In tech, appearance isn’t a major factor in how you’re judged, but it’s still present in subtle ways—like during promotions or networking events.” While tech and academic fields prioritized skills, beauty bias still seeped in, especially in situations where visibility and presentation mattered. The intersection of appearance and industry expectations highlighted the pervasive nature of beauty bias across sectors and its complex effects on employability and career growth.

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- **Addressing the Bias**

Many organizations are beginning to recognize the negative impact of beauty

bias and are taking steps to counter it through diversity and inclusion initiatives. Participant #26, who works in HR, shared, “We’ve implemented blind recruitment processes where resumes and applications are reviewed without any identifying details. It’s helped us focus solely on skills and experience rather than being unconsciously swayed by appearance.” Awareness of this bias is the first step, and practices like blind recruitment, mentoring programs, and conscious efforts to celebrate diversity in body types and appearances are being brought into the mainstream to mitigate the effects of beauty-based discrimination.

This examination of beauty bias revealed a complex interplay between physical appearance and professional opportunities, underscoring the need for a critical re-evaluation of societal norms regarding beauty. First impressions, often formed within mere seconds, heavily dictated hiring decisions, regardless of the actual capabilities of a candidate. The halo effect, which posits that attractive individuals are ascribed other positive traits such as intelligence and competence, perpetuated this cycle of bias. Moreover, the impact of beauty on self-confidence could not be overstated. Individuals who felt attractive often exuded greater confidence. On the other hand, those who grappled with body image issues hesitated to engage fully in their careers, missing out on opportunities for advancement or leadership. This cyclical nature of beauty, confidence, and professional success highlighted the urgent need for workplaces to foster environments that celebrate diversity in all its

forms, promoting body positivity and inclusivity. The implications of beauty bias extended beyond individual careers; they influenced workplace dynamics and organizational culture as well. Discrimination based on appearance led to negative stereotypes and assumptions, affecting team cohesion and collaboration.

Conclusion

This paper does not aim to address issues related to negative body image or challenge established notions of beauty and their link to labor market outcomes. Instead, it focuses on exploring perceptions of ideal body image among a specific group of individuals and examines how these perceptions influence labor market outcomes. This nuanced approach allows for a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between body image and professional experiences, providing valuable insights into how societal standards impact individuals in the workplace.

Discrimination based on physical appearance was not gender specific.

One notable finding of the research was that discrimination based on physical appearance was not gender specific. Both male and female employees reported experiencing discrimination, an observation that is often overlooked in studies examining body image. This gender-neutral aspect of lookism emphasizes the pervasive nature of appearance-based discrimination in various professional

contexts. The “carrot and stick” principle was found to operate, wherein individuals who did not conform to societal ideals of beauty faced discrimination and social penalties. In contrast, those who conformed enjoyed a range of benefits, such as enhanced self-confidence, improved social integration, invitations to exclusive events, promotions, and various other advantages. This dynamic illustrates how societal beauty standards can create a hierarchy based on appearance, significantly impacting career trajectories and workplace interactions.

Additionally, the research highlighted that success in one’s profession is influenced not only by physical appearance but also by intellectual capability. Most participants held at least an undergraduate or postgraduate degree and were employed, reflecting a critical intersection between education and self-perception. Interestingly, many participants reported that they had only begun to reflect on their body image in a meaningful way during this research. This realization speaks to the importance of fostering environments where discussions about body image and its implications are normalized, encouraging individuals to engage in self-reflection and growth.

Before delving into participants’ interpretations of body image, it is crucial to clarify their conceptualization of the term. Nearly all participants concurred that body image pertains to both how individuals perceive their own physical appearance and how they believe others perceive them. This dual perspective underscores the relational nature of body

image—it’s not only an internal dialogue but also a reflection of societal expectations and judgments. One of our key findings was the significant influence of financial stability in promoting higher levels of body positivity. Participants indicated that financial security often provided them with the confidence to embrace their appearance more fully. This relationship suggests that economic factors play a crucial role in shaping individuals’ self-perceptions and their responses to societal beauty norms.

The definitions of body image were found to be contextually variable, with individual perspectives differing widely. While some participants felt self-conscious about excess fat or flab, others expressed comfort with their appearance, contingent on how they chose to present themselves. This variability highlights the complexity of body image as a concept influenced by personal experiences, societal expectations, and the prevailing cultural narratives surrounding beauty.

Both male and female participants openly discussed the factors influencing their positive or negative body image. Importantly, the perceptions of beauty and body image that participants formed during adolescence often persisted into adulthood. These longstanding beliefs about appearance and self-worth can significantly shape an individual’s professional journey. However, many participants reported that their perceptions began to shift when they engaged in critical self-reflection or encountered transformative influences, such as feminist literature, which challenged conventional

beauty standards and promoted a more inclusive understanding of body image.

Participants also recognized the prevalence of “lookism” in the Indian job market, where individuals may face discrimination or be rewarded based on how closely their appearance aligns with societal beauty standards, as judged by recruiters and employers. This recognition speaks to the broader cultural context in which these individuals operate and underscores the urgent need for change. As the discourse surrounding beauty continues to evolve, industries and organizations must confront the biases embedded in their hiring and promotional practices. Implementing blind recruitment initiatives, providing diversity training, and committing to creating equitable workplaces are essential steps in dismantling the barriers that beauty bias erects. These measures can help shift the focus from appearance to merit, allowing individuals to be evaluated based on their skills, experiences, and potential.

Moreover, the cultural narratives surrounding beauty need to be challenged and reshaped. By expanding representations of beauty in media and professional contexts, we can begin to redefine what is considered attractive, promoting a more inclusive understanding that celebrates various body types, skin tones, and personal styles. This shift is crucial not only for the well-being of individuals but also for the advancement of organizations that thrive on diversity and creativity. Diverse perspectives and experiences can drive innovation and lead to more comprehensive solutions to complex problems.

In conclusion, addressing beauty bias is not merely an ethical obligation; it is a strategic necessity for organizations aiming to harness the full potential of their workforce. As we continue to navigate the complexities of professional environments, it is imperative to prioritize inclusivity and equity, ensuring that all individuals are recognized for their talents and contributions rather than their adherence to outdated beauty standards. Ultimately, fostering a culture that values authenticity over appearance will lead to richer, more innovative workplaces and a society that embraces and celebrates the diverse tapestry of human experience.

By challenging the status quo and redefining the parameters of beauty, we can pave the way for a more equitable future in the workplace and beyond. The journey toward inclusivity and body positivity is ongoing and requires collective action from individuals, organizations, and society at large. Through persistent efforts to combat discrimination based on appearance, we can create an environment where everyone can thrive, regardless of how closely they align with traditional beauty ideals.

Limitations

The analysis in this paper is based on self-reported data, which introduces the potential for subjectivity. Additionally, the findings are constrained by participants’ willingness to share their personal experiences on a sensitive issue. Future research could benefit from including participants from multiple cities across India, rather than limiting the sample to

Mumbai and Hyderabad, to provide a more comprehensive comparison of the findings.

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