Effect of Beauty on the Economic Opportunities: A Truth Hidden in our Subconscious

# Abstract

Physical attractiveness is frequently dismissed as a superficial trait, yet its pervasive influence on economic outcomes is both striking and undeniable. The study explores the profound impact of physical attractiveness on economic opportunities, particularly within the context of employment and career advancement. Through a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative surveys (N=220) and qualitative interviews across diverse cultural settings, the research reveals that societal perceptions of beauty play a pivotal role in hiring decisions, salary levels, and long-term career progression. Quantitative data were analysed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine differences in economic outcomes (salary, promotions) across self-rated attractiveness levels. The NVivo software facilitated coding, ensuring systematic theme identification. Despite the focus on qualifications such as education and experience, the "beauty premium"—the advantage granted to physically attractive individuals—remains a significant and often subconscious factor influencing professional success. A striking 80% of respondents acknowledged that attractiveness affects their job prospects, with correlations found between self-rated attractiveness and higher earnings. The findings further highlight cultural and gender nuances, particularly in industries where personal presentation and public engagement are critical. This research underscores the need for greater awareness and mitigation of beauty bias in hiring practices, as well as the growing importance of fostering inclusive work environments that value diverse talents, regardless of physical appearance. Looking ahead, as workplace dynamics evolve with remote work and shifting cultural norms, the role of beauty in economic outcomes may transform, yet the persistence of attractiveness as a form of "erotic capital" in competitive markets remains a topic of concern. This study calls for continued research and policy interventions to ensure equity in economic opportunities, irrespective of beauty standards.

**Keywords**: beauty premium, erotic capital, workplace bias, economic outcomes, physical attractiveness, cross-cultural analysis.

# Introduction

"Research has shown that attractive people earn, on average, 10% more than their less attractive counterparts" (Hamermesh & Biddle, 1994) [1]. In a world that prides itself on meritocracy, where success is often attributed to hard work, intelligence, and skill, the existence of a beauty premium challenges our fundamental assumptions about fairness in the labour market. Psychologists, scientists, sociologists and researchers have previously studied this phenomenon, how it affects the social status of an individual, its influences on employment, work, and pay effects of the standard of beauty on the self and body esteem of women (Li & Zhang, 2021). The implications of this phenomenon are profound and multifaceted, affecting not only individual career trajectories but also broader economic structures and social dynamics. There is a rapidly growing body of research that focuses on analysing gendered consequences of perceived physical attractiveness (Kukkonen et al., 2024; Timming et al., 2021).

Physical attractiveness is frequently dismissed as a superficial trait, yet its pervasive influence on economic outcomes is both striking and undeniable. Indeed, although “internal” characteristics such as individual intelligence can have considerable influence on career success, evidence from organisational research supports the idea that physical attractiveness (i.e., symmetry, averageness, sexual dimorphism) that provokes opinions that individuals are physically pleasing can also provide an important factor in determining individual career success (Wolfe & Patel, 2024; Shapir & Shtudiner, 2022). Individuals deemed attractive often enjoy a range of advantages, from higher wages to more frequent promotions and better job offers. This correlation raises critical questions about the role of appearance in professional settings. Beyond mere looks, characteristics associated with beauty—such as grooming, poise, and charm—contribute to what sociologist Catherine Hakim describes as "erotic capital" [2]. This form of capital encompasses not only physical beauty but also social skills and personal appeal that enhance an individual's marketability in the job sector. Hakim's theory suggests that erotic capital functions similarly to more traditional forms of capital, like education or experience, thereby conferring a significant advantage upon those who possess it [3].

This paper seeks to explore a fundamental question: How does physical attractiveness, as a component of erotic capital, impact economic success? Can something as subjective as beauty genuinely alter one’s career trajectory, influencing income, job stability, and opportunities for advancement? Furthermore, what mechanisms allow this hidden bias to persist in professional settings, often unbeknownst to both employers and employees?

Understanding these dynamics is crucial in a society that claims to value merit and equal opportunity. The existence of a beauty premium illuminates deep-rooted biases that can undermine the very principles of fairness and equality in the workplace. In industries that prioritise personal interactions and client-facing roles, the impact of attractiveness can be even more pronounced. For example, studies have indicated that attractive individuals may not only be hired more readily but also may experience smoother career progression due to perceptions of competence and likability that are unconsciously associated with physical appearance [4].

Moreover, the implications extend beyond individual career outcomes; they touch upon broader societal issues, including economic inequality and the persistence of stereotypes. As organisations strive to enhance productivity and maintain competitive advantages, subtle factors such as appearance and personal charm can significantly sway hiring and promotional decisions, often in ways that remain largely unexamined. This raises ethical questions regarding the standards by which talent and potential are evaluated.

To investigate this multifaceted issue, a quantitative analysis will be employed to examine the correlation between physical attractiveness and various economic outcomes. By analyzing statistical data—such as wages, job promotions, and the frequency of job offers—this study aims to uncover the hidden forces that enable beauty to influence success in the modern economy. This analysis will provide insights not only into how attractiveness can shape individual careers but also into the broader implications for workplace equity and social justice.

In conclusion, the interplay between beauty and economic success presents a complex web of relationships that warrants thorough investigation. This paper endeavours to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the economics of beauty, seeking to shed light on the often-overlooked ways in which physical appearance can significantly affect one's professional journey and, ultimately, the fabric of our economic landscape.

# Literature Review

The link between physical attractiveness and economic outcomes, known as the "beauty premium," has been widely explored in economics, sociology, and psychology. Early work by Hamermesh and Biddle (1994) showed that attractive individuals tend to earn 5-10% higher wages than their less attractive peers [5]. This disparity is often attributed to systemic biases in hiring, promotion, and workplace dynamics, where attractive individuals are subconsciously perceived as more competent, personable, and capable of leadership. The "halo effect," a psychological bias where one positive trait influences perceptions of others, is a key mechanism driving this bias [6].

Building on Hamermesh and Biddle's work, other studies have confirmed the beauty premium across industries and cultures. For instance, Mobius and Rosenblat (2006) found that attractive individuals are not only paid more but also perceived as more intelligent and competent [7]. This advantage is especially pronounced in industries like sales, marketing, and entertainment, where interpersonal skills and physical appearance play crucial roles [8].

Theoretical frameworks like signalling theory suggest that physical attractiveness signals other desirable traits, such as confidence or social skills, which are particularly valued in customer-facing or leadership roles [9]. Catherine Hakim’s concept of "erotic capital" (2010) further expands this by highlighting the importance of physical beauty, charm, and social skills as forms of human capital [10]. Erotic capital, akin to traditional human capital, can be strategically leveraged in industries where personal appeal matters [11].

In sectors such as hospitality and retail, Frieze et al. (1991) found that attractive employees enjoy higher wages and more promotions due to their ability to enhance customer satisfaction [12]. Conversely, in technical fields like engineering or IT, the beauty premium is less pronounced, though attractive individuals may still benefit from indirect advantages, such as being seen as more competent for leadership roles [13].

Empirical research on the beauty premium primarily uses quantitative methods like regression analysis, controlling for variables like education and experience [14]. Qualitative studies, such as those by Heilman and Stopeck (1985), reveal that attractiveness can sometimes result in gendered challenges, where attractive women, despite their advantages, may face biases questioning their competence [15].

**The Halo Effect and the Beauty Premium**

The halo effect refers to the cognitive bias where one positive trait (like attractiveness) leads to positive evaluations in other areas, such as intelligence or competence. Research shows that attractive individuals often benefit from this bias in hiring and promotion decisions, reinforcing the beauty premium [16]. The halo effect enhances the economic advantages of attractiveness, creating a cycle where physical appearance boosts perceived competence, which in turn opens up further opportunities for advancement [17].

**Erotic Capital**

Erotic capital, introduced by Catherine Hakim, encompasses not just physical beauty but also social skills, charm, and presentation. It functions as a form of human capital that individuals can use to advance in the labour market, particularly in sectors where personal appeal is important [18]. Studies, such as Frieze et al. (1991) and Mobius and Rosenblat (2006), show that high levels of erotic capital correlate with higher wages, better performance evaluations, and more frequent promotions [19][20].

Overall, the beauty premium, halo effect, and erotic capital are interrelated factors that shape economic outcomes, emphasising the complex role that physical appearance and social appeal play in career success. While these dynamics can offer opportunities for some, they also contribute to social inequalities, particularly when hiring and promotion decisions are influenced more by appearance than by merit [21].

# Methodology

## 3.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore how physical attractiveness influences economic outcomes. Quantitative data from a structured questionnaire (N=220) and qualitative insights from 30 semi-structured interviews provide a comprehensive understanding of beauty biases in employment and career advancement across diverse cultural settings (Morocco, Nigeria, China, etc.).

**Sampling Criteria and Selection**

Stratified sampling ensured diversity in age (22–35), gender, and professional background (marketing, sales). Participants were recruited via online platforms and professional networks, targeting urban professionals. Of 300 invited participants, 220 completed the survey (73.3% response rate), and 30 were selected for interviews based on survey responses indicating varied experiences with beauty bias. This sample size and diversity enhance the study’s reliability and representativeness.

**Data Collection**

The questionnaire comprised three sections:

1. **Demographic Information**: Age, gender, profession, and socio-economic status.
2. **Self-Rated Attractiveness**: A 5-point Likert scale (1=not attractive, 5=very attractive) to assess perceived attractiveness.
3. **Economic Outcomes**: Questions on perceived impacts of attractiveness on salary, promotions, and hiring, using Likert scales and open-ended responses.

Semi-structured interviews, conducted in-person or via video calls, explored participants’ experiences with beauty bias. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes, guided by open-ended questions (e.g., “How do you perceive the role of appearance in your career?”). Interviews were recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

**Statistical Analysis**

Quantitative data were analysed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine differences in economic outcomes (salary, promotions) across self-rated attractiveness levels. ANOVA was chosen for its ability to handle multiple groups and control for variables like education and experience. Qualitative data was analyzed via thematic analysis, and coding transcripts to identify recurring themes (e.g., beauty as competitive advantage, gender disparities). NVivo software facilitated coding, ensuring systematic theme identification.

**Addressing Biases**

To minimize biases:

1. A standardized Likert scale ensured consistent attractiveness ratings.
2. Self-reported income was cross-verified with occupational norms.
3. Anonymity was guaranteed to encourage honest responses.
4. Interviewers were trained to avoid leading questions, ensuring neutral probing.

**Limitations and Contextual Relevance**

Self-reporting biases in attractiveness and income may affect reliability, though cross-verification mitigates this. The focus on urban professionals in customer-facing roles limits generalizability to technical fields like IT, where beauty biases are less pronounced. Cultural nuances were addressed by tailoring questionnaire translations and interview questions to local norms.

## 3.2. Subjective Analysis

The results from the questionnaire reveal a striking consensus among respondents regarding the influence of physical attractiveness on employment opportunities and career progression. Over 80% of participants acknowledged that physical attractiveness affects their chances of securing a job or succeeding in an interview. This finding underscores a pervasive belief that appearance plays a crucial role in the hiring process, suggesting that many individuals perceive physical Attractiveness as a competitive advantage in the job market.

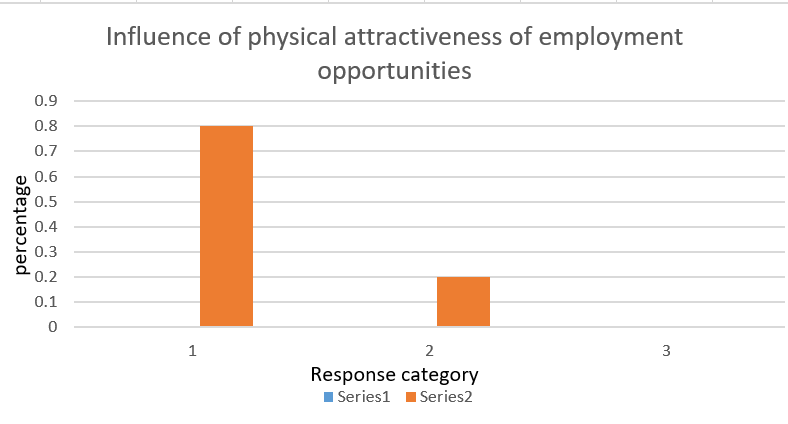


Figure 1: The influence of physical attractiveness on employment opportunities

Moreover, the correlation between self-rated attractiveness and salary levels further emphasises this point. Participants who rated themselves as attractive, averaging a score of 4 on a 5-point scale, were more likely to report earning higher salaries than their counterparts. This correlation may indicate that physical attractiveness not only affects initial job acquisition but may also have implications for long-term financial success and career advancement.

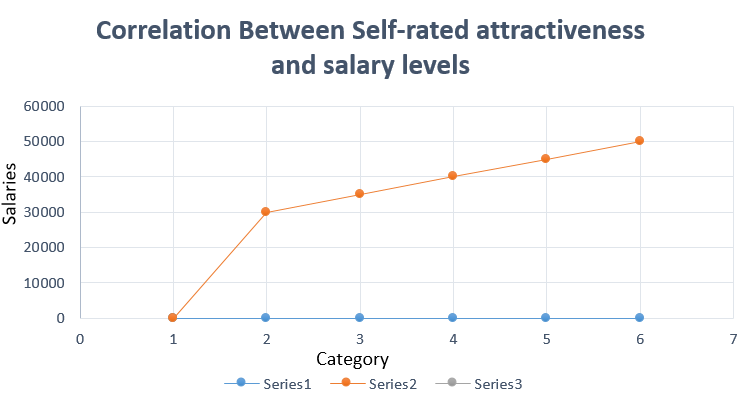


Figure 2: The Impact of Self-Rated Attractiveness on Salary Levels

Interestingly, a minority of respondents indicated that they do not consider their attractiveness in relation to job seeking. This highlights a spectrum of beliefs and experiences surrounding the topic, suggesting that while many acknowledge the importance of physical appearance, some individuals may not feel personally impacted by societal beauty standards in their professional lives.

When asked to identify the most critical factors for job acquisition, 70% of respondents placed greater importance on education and experience, indicating that traditional qualifications remain vital in the hiring process. However, the juxtaposition of this finding with the nearly unanimous belief (90%) that physical appearance provides an extra advantage in securing promotions or job opportunities reveals a complex relationship. This dual perspective reflects an understanding that, while educational qualifications and experience are essential, physical attractiveness can enhance one’s prospects in the competitive job market.

The data illustrates a nuanced reality where, despite a strong emphasis on qualifications, societal perceptions of beauty still hold considerable weight in shaping job opportunities and career trajectories. This suggests the need for ongoing discussion and awareness around biases in hiring practices, as well as the potential implications for diversity and equity in the workplace.

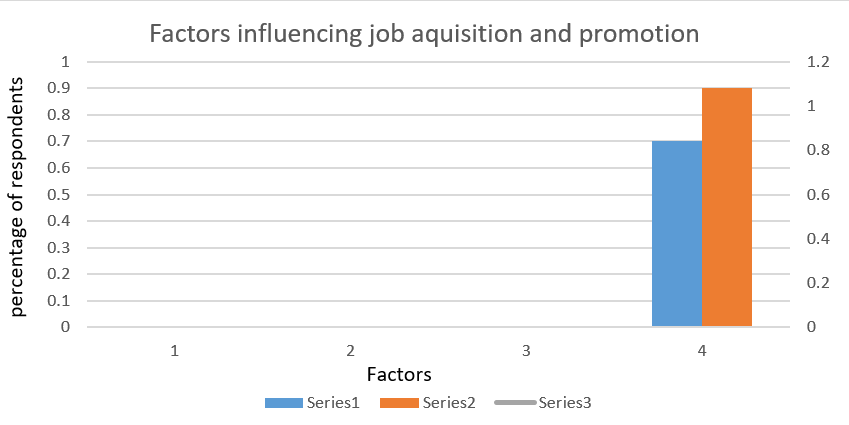


Figure 3: The factors influencing job acquisition and promotions.

The findings suggest that while education and experience are critical components of job acquisition, physical attractiveness is perceived as a significant, albeit controversial, factor that can influence both hiring decisions and career advancement. These insights highlight the intricate dynamics between beauty and economic opportunities.

# Result

The findings from the questionnaire reveal a significant consensus among participants regarding the impact of physical attractiveness on employment opportunities and career advancement. An overwhelming 80% of respondents acknowledged that their physical appearance plays a critical role in securing a job or succeeding in interviews. This indicates a prevalent belief that attractiveness serves as a competitive advantage in the hiring process. Furthermore, a notable correlation emerged between self-rated attractiveness and salary levels; participants who rated themselves as attractive—averaging a score of 4 on a 5-point scale—reported higher earnings compared to their less confident counterparts. This correlation suggests that physical attractiveness may influence not only initial job acquisition but also long-term financial success and career progression.

Interestingly, a minority of respondents expressed that they do not consider their attractiveness in relation to job seeking, revealing a spectrum of beliefs about the relevance of societal beauty standards in professional contexts. When evaluating the most critical factors for job acquisition, 70% of participants prioritized education and experience, reinforcing the notion that traditional qualifications are indispensable in the hiring process. However, this finding contrasts sharply with the nearly unanimous belief—90% of respondents—that physical appearance offers an additional advantage in securing promotions or job opportunities. This dual perspective highlights a complex relationship wherein while educational qualifications and experience are vital, physical attractiveness is also perceived as a significant factor influencing prospects in the competitive job market.

The data illustrates a nuanced reality: despite a strong emphasis on qualifications, societal perceptions of beauty still significantly shape job opportunities and career trajectories. These insights underscore the need for ongoing discussions about biases in hiring practices and their potential implications for diversity and equity within the workplace. While education and experience remain crucial components of job acquisition, physical attractiveness is perceived as an influential, albeit controversial, factor affecting hiring decisions and career advancement. This highlights the intricate dynamics between beauty and economic opportunities, necessitating further investigation into how these perceptions influence individuals’ professional lives and overall economic outcomes.

# Discussion

## This study highlights the significant relationship between beauty perceptions and economic behaviors, especially regarding hiring practices and career advancement. A majority of participants believe that physical attractiveness influences hiring decisions, reflecting a prevalent beauty bias in the labor market [22]. This finding aligns with existing literature indicating that more attractive individuals often receive preferential treatment in various contexts, potentially leading to unequal employment outcomes [23].

## The correlation between self-rated attractiveness and salary raises concerns about the long-term effects of beauty standards on economic success. While qualifications like education and experience are crucial, the advantage of attractiveness suggests organizations need to reassess their hiring practices to avoid reinforcing inequalities, particularly for those who do not fit conventional beauty ideals [24].

## Interestingly, some participants did not consider attractiveness in job seeking, indicating that individual perceptions of beauty can vary significantly. This diversity emphasizes the subjective nature of beauty and its impact on identity and self-esteem. Many respondents acknowledged the influence of beauty on career prospects while still prioritizing qualifications, revealing a complex view of meritocracy where both skills and attractiveness matter [25].

## These findings bring ethical considerations to the forefront regarding hiring practices and workplace equity. Organisations should implement measures to mitigate beauty bias and promote diversity, ensuring economic opportunities are equitable for all [26]. Further research is necessary to explore the implications of beauty perceptions across different demographic groups and to develop interventions that address these biases [27].

## Looking to the future, factors like technological advancements and shifting cultural norms will complicate the relationship between beauty and economic opportunities. The democratization of beauty standards, driven by social media, is broadening definitions of attractiveness and promoting inclusivity [28]. Body positivity movements are also encouraging self-acceptance, fostering environments where talent is recognized based on merit rather than appearance [29].

## 5.2. The Beauty Premium: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Appearance and Economic Opportunity

The data gathered from interviews and questionnaires across various countries, including Morocco, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nigeria, and China, reveals striking similarities and nuanced differences in how physical attractiveness influences employment opportunities and career progression. Across cultures, there is a shared recognition that while qualifications like education and experience are considered the primary factors in hiring decisions, physical appearance often provides an additional, unspoken advantage. In fact, more than 80% of respondents acknowledged that attractiveness affects their chances of securing a job or succeeding in an interview, with over 90% believing that it plays a role in promotions. This finding indicates a broad, subconscious bias favoring physical attractiveness in professional contexts, regardless of geographical or cultural differences.

In countries such as Morocco, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, where cultural norms emphasise modesty and professionalism, respondents tended to downplay the overt role of appearance. However, they subtly recognised that well-groomed individuals were often perceived more favorably during interviews and in public-facing roles. This dynamic is particularly evident in industries where personal presentation is critical, such as hospitality or sales. Similarly, in Bangladesh and Pakistan, respondents acknowledged that while education and experience remain the main criteria for employment, an attractive and polished appearance can provide a distinct advantage in client-facing or high-profile positions. In contrast, countries like Nigeria and China revealed a more direct acknowledgement of the role that appearance plays in career success, especially in urban and competitive sectors. Nigerian participants highlighted the significance of attractiveness in industries such as media and public relations, while Chinese respondents noted the growing importance of personal grooming and beauty, particularly in sectors influenced by social media and consumerism.

The analysis of cross-cultural data also revealed interesting gender dynamics. Across most countries, female respondents reported feeling more pressure to conform to specific beauty standards to succeed professionally, while men were evaluated more on experience and qualifications. In China, for example, women in corporate environments felt an expectation to be both competent and attractive, a phenomenon mirrored in sectors like retail and entertainment. Similarly, in countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nigeria, the societal expectations for women’s appearance in the workplace often exceeded those for men, underscoring gender-based biases in professional evaluations.

Beyond cultural and gender differences, economic contexts also play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of physical attractiveness in professional settings. In countries with high unemployment rates, such as Nigeria and Bangladesh, respondents indicated that physical appearance often served as a differentiator in highly competitive job markets. Attractive candidates may be seen as more capable or confident, especially in fields where interpersonal skills and customer interaction are essential. In China, respondents pointed to the rise of the "beauty economy" and the increasing visibility of physical attractiveness in professional networking, particularly in industries like tech, marketing, and sales. In this context, being attractive is not just an advantage but a strategic asset for building networks and gaining promotions.

The overarching theme that emerges from these diverse cultural and economic contexts is that, while traditional qualifications such as education, experience, and networking are universally acknowledged as the most critical factors for securing a job, physical appearance plays an undeniable, often subconscious, role in shaping professional success. This influence is particularly prominent in industries where public interaction, client engagement, and personal branding are key to career progression. Although the specifics of beauty standards and professional expectations vary between countries, the "beauty premium" — the idea that physically attractive individuals enjoy better job prospects, higher salaries, and faster promotions — is a globally recognized phenomenon. Even in societies where modesty or professional qualifications are prioritized, the subtle but persistent advantage of physical attractiveness remains a hidden truth in the job market.

This cross-cultural analysis demonstrates that physical appearance, while not openly acknowledged as the primary criterion for employment, is a powerful factor that influences hiring decisions and career advancement in both subtle and overt ways. The findings underscore the need to address unconscious biases in the workplace, as attractiveness can skew professional evaluations, creating an unequal playing field where physical traits can inadvertently overshadow merit-based factors like skills and experience. Understanding this hidden dynamic allows for a more comprehensive discussion about fairness and equity in global employment practices, highlighting the intersection between beauty and the economy on a worldwide scale.

## 5.3. Emerging Trends in the Intersection of Beauty and Economic Opportunity:

The future of beauty in the economy is poised for significant transformation, influenced by evolving societal norms, technological advancements, and shifting workplace dynamics. One key trend is the movement towards diversity and inclusion in beauty standards. As society increasingly values representation across various backgrounds, there is likely to be a shift towards embracing a broader range of appearances. This change will reflect cultural diversity, body positivity, and gender inclusivity, moving away from narrow definitions of beauty [30]. Alongside this, the natural beauty movement is gaining traction, advocating for authenticity and self-acceptance. This trend may result in a reduced emphasis on polished appearances in professional settings, particularly as younger generations prioritize genuine self-expression over conforming to traditional beauty ideals [31].

Technology will also play a pivotal role in reshaping perceptions of beauty in the workforce. The rise of virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) could revolutionize hiring processes, allowing candidates to showcase their skills and experiences without the bias of physical appearance. This technological shift may help level the playing field for individuals who might otherwise be judged based on their looks [32]. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into recruitment practices presents an opportunity to mitigate biases associated with beauty. Thoughtfully designed algorithms could prioritize qualifications and competencies, reducing the influence of physical appearance in hiring decisions [33].

The dynamics of remote work are another factor influencing the future of beauty in the economy. As remote work becomes increasingly prevalent, the focus on physical appearance is likely to diminish. Employers may prioritize performance, skills, and outcomes over how employees present themselves. This shift could foster a more meritocratic environment, where individual capabilities take precedence [34]. Additionally, the importance of digital presence is expected to grow, with personal branding and effective online communication becoming critical for professional advancement. In this landscape, the emphasis on physical beauty may give way to the value of a candidate's digital persona and their ability to navigate virtual interactions [35].

Despite these shifts, the concept of the beauty premium—where physically attractive individuals enjoy better job prospects, higher salaries, and faster promotions—may persist, particularly in industries such as fashion, entertainment, and public relations, where personal presentation remains paramount [36]. The beauty industry itself is expected to continue its robust growth, with increasing consumer demand for products and services that enhance appearance and self-image. This expansion may create economic opportunities in related sectors, further intertwining beauty with economic success [37].

As organisations become more aware of the implications of beauty bias, there will likely be an increasing focus on corporate responsibility and ethical hiring practices. Companies may implement training and policies designed to combat unconscious biases related to appearance, striving for a more equitable workplace [38]. Additionally, businesses may introduce beauty and wellness programs aimed at promoting self-care and mental health, recognizing that physical appearance is just one aspect of overall employee well-being and satisfaction [39].

Cultural shifts and social movements will also influence the future landscape of beauty in the economy. Advocacy for equal opportunities is expected to continue gaining momentum, leading to demands for fair treatment regardless of appearance. Social justice movements surrounding beauty standards and workplace biases could prompt significant changes in hiring practices and corporate policies [40]. As consumers become more socially conscious, they may favour brands that prioritise authenticity, inclusivity, and sustainability, further influencing hiring trends and workplace dynamics [41].

The interplay between beauty and the economy is likely to evolve significantly, shaped by cultural, technological, and economic factors. While traditional biases may persist, the increasing emphasis on diversity and inclusion, combined with advancements in technology, offers the potential for a more equitable landscape. In this future, beauty may become just one of many factors influencing economic opportunities, allowing merit and capabilities to take precedence over physical appearance in professional settings. By addressing and acknowledging the complexities of beauty bias, society can work towards a future where individuals are evaluated based on their skills, experiences, and contributions rather than their physical traits [42].

# Conclusion

# This study offers important insights into the influence of beauty perceptions on economic behaviors, especially in areas like employment and career growth. Through a mixed-methods approach—merging quantitative data from questionnaires with qualitative perspectives from semi-structured interviews—this research reveals the complex relationship between physical attractiveness, self-image, and professional opportunities [43].

# The results indicate a striking consensus among participants regarding the influence of physical appearance on hiring decisions, with over 80% acknowledging its importance in securing jobs and succeeding in interviews. This prevalent belief underscores the reality that, despite the emphasis on qualifications such as education and experience, societal perceptions of beauty continue to hold considerable weight in the competitive job market [44]. The correlation between self-rated attractiveness and salary levels further emphasizes this point, suggesting that physical appearance not only affects initial job acquisition but may also have implications for long-term financial success and career advancement [45].

# However, the findings also reveal a spectrum of beliefs surrounding beauty and its relevance to professional success. While many participants recognise the advantages of attractiveness, a minority expressed indifference, indicating that individual experiences and perceptions can vary significantly. This diversity highlights the subjective nature of beauty and its impact on personal identity, self-esteem, and professional confidence [46]. It also raises critical questions about how these differing perceptions can influence individuals' economic behaviors and decisions, particularly for those who may not conform to conventional beauty standards [47].

# The juxtaposition of the strong belief in the importance of qualifications alongside the acknowledgment of beauty as an additional advantage presents a complex reality for job seekers. It suggests a dual emphasis on meritocracy and the influence of subjective perceptions, where the ideal employee is seen as not only qualified but also attractive. This reality necessitates a critical examination of hiring practices and the potential biases that may arise from societal beauty standards [48]. Organizations must recognize the implications of beauty bias and strive to implement policies and training that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workplaces [49].

# Moreover, the findings have broader implications for discussions about social equity and the barriers faced by individuals who may not fit conventional beauty ideals. As the labour market becomes increasingly competitive, the stakes for those who do not conform to these standards can be high, leading to potential disparities in employment outcomes [50]. It is imperative for organisations to actively address these biases and cultivate an environment where diverse talents are recognized and valued, regardless of physical appearance [51].

# This research underscores the intricate dynamics between beauty and economic opportunities, revealing the pervasive influence of societal beauty perceptions on professional trajectories. While education and experience remain critical components of career success, the role of physical attractiveness cannot be overlooked [52]. As society continues to evolve, ongoing discussions about the implications of beauty bias are essential for fostering a more equitable workforce. Future research should further explore these dynamics across various demographic groups and contexts, as well as investigate effective strategies for mitigating the impact of beauty perceptions on economic behaviors. By addressing these issues, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and fair labour market that recognises the diverse capabilities of all individuals, independent of their appearance [53].

Limitations and Delimitations

**Limitations:** The study may be limited by self-reporting biases in income and attractiveness ratings, which could affect the reliability of the data. Participants may overestimate or underestimate their income or attractiveness due to social desirability bias. Additionally, the focus on urban professionals may limit the generalizability of the findings to rural populations, where the beauty effect may manifest differently.

**Delimitations:** This study will focus on professionals in specific industries (marketing and sales) to maintain a manageable scope. Participants will be limited to young professionals aged 22 to 35, which may exclude older individuals who may also experience the beauty effect in their careers. Furthermore, the study will only consider physical attractiveness as one component of erotic capital, excluding other factors such as social skills or personality traits.

Ethical Approval and consent

This study will adhere to ethical guidelines outlined by the American Psychological Association (APA). Ethical considerations are critical to ensure the integrity of the research and the protection of participants. Key ethical practices will include:

**Consent:** Participants will be provided with an informed consent form detailing the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They will be informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be maintained by anonymising participant responses and securely storing data. Personal identifiers will be removed from the data to protect participants’ identities, and only aggregate data will be reported in the final analysis.

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