

# **Biases in Recruitment and Hiring: A Literature Review**

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Bachelor of Science

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**Purpose/Motivation:** In the domain of hiring and recruitment, biases flourish, encompassing variables such as gender, race, physical appearance, and a multitude of other factors. Despite numerous studies exploring these biases, the existing literature suffers from a lack of cohesion and organization. The sheer volume of papers on the subject can be overwhelming, leading to a fragmented understanding of the issue.

To address this challenge, a literature review was undertaken, aiming to bring order to the wealth of available information. This review served as a scholarly compass, sifting through the multitude of papers, categorizing findings, and distilling key insights. By systematically synthesizing existing research, the literature review provided a structured framework for comprehending the complexities of biases in hiring and recruitment.

**Theories/Hypotheses:** The theory posits that biases exist in hiring and recruitment processes, influenced by factors such as gender, race, physical attractiveness, and other subjective criteria, leading to disparities in opportunities and perpetuating systemic inequalities within organizations.

**Approach/Methodology:** The methodology employed involved conducting a literature review to organize biases and integrate them into a structured framework (Siddaway et al., 2019; Summers et al., 2018).

In terms of inclusion criteria, all papers examining stereotypes, biases, or discrimination in hiring or recruitment processes were considered, resulting in a preselection of 121 papers. Exclusion criteria were established, excluding papers deviating thematically from the core topics, those primarily involved in computational modeling/simulations, strategies to mitigate biases, and perspectives of applicants. This process resulted in a subset of 57 articles for detailed analysis.

**Findings:** The literature review revealed six distinct bias categories, alongside one outlier, that permeate hiring practices: gender, racism, physical attractiveness, entrepreneurial background, disability, ingroup bias, and outlier, with each exerting its unique influence.

Findings indicated clear instances of discrimination against women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities (Chang et al., 2020; Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Colella and Santuzzi, 2022).

Contrary to expectations, attractiveness didn't consistently confer an advantage (Straus et al., 2001). Additionally, previous entrepreneurial ventures and tenure significantly affected reintegration into traditional employment (Waddingham et al., 2022). Surprisingly, an overabundance of experience and qualifications didn't universally enhance candidates' prospects (Wechtler et al., 2022). Furthermore, specific cues, signals, and the gender of recruiters wielded notable influence over job applications (Walker et al., 2012; Bradley et al., 2012; Castilla and Rho, 2023).

**Research Implications:** The extensive literature review on biases in hiring and recruitment has revealed various challenges and disparities in the selection process. It has identified opportunities to reduce biases, offering pathways for intervention and enhancement. However, these biases have far-reaching implications beyond immediate hiring decisions, impacting organizational dynamics, diversity, and societal equity.

**Practical Implications:** Addressing biases is not merely a matter of operational necessity but also an ethical responsibility to foster inclusive workplaces and mitigate systemic inequalities. As organizations strive for fairer and more effective hiring practices, acknowledging and addressing these consequences becomes essential for cultivating a diverse and equitable workforce.

Examples of strategies to minimize biases include blind auditions, machine learning algorithms, affirmative action programs, and others (Goldin and Rouse, 2000; Zhang et al., 2023; Levi and Fried, 2008).

**Contribution:** The literature review sheds light on the intricate landscape of biases, discrimination, and stereotypes in hiring and recruitment processes. It highlights the prevalence of biases, especially regarding gender and race. However, there are limitations in the current research, largely focusing on specific demographics and industries, mainly within the United States. Future studies should explore interactions between biases, examine various industries and regions, and investigate innovative hiring approaches. Furthermore, delving into biases' lasting impacts on employee retention and performance presents an intriguing avenue for further exploration. As organizations strive for inclusivity and fairness, a thorough understanding of biases is crucial for fostering equitable and effective hiring practices in diverse and evolving workplaces.

**Paper type:** conceptual

**Further readings:**

-Cohen, S. L., & Bunker, K. A. (1975). Subtle effects of sex role stereotypes on recruiters' hiring decisions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(5), 566–572. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.60.5.566>

-Summers, J. K., Howe, M., McElroy, J. C., Buckley, M. R., Pahng, P. & Cortés-Mejía, S. (2018). A typology of stigma within Organizations: Access and treatment effects. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(7), 853–868. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2279>