

Beauty as Capital: Saleswomen's Experiences in Pakistan's Multinational Retail Sector

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Abstract

Beauty functions as a commodified form of social, cultural, and economic capital in global corporate culture, shaping perceptions of professionalism and career advancement. This qualitative study explores how salespeople in multinational corporations navigate the intersection of appearance, workplace success, and cultural expectations. Based on semi-structured interviews with 18 participants from beauty-focused industries in Centaurus Mall and Safa Gold Mall, complemented by ethnographic observations, the research employs purposive sampling to ensure diverse representation in terms of professional and demographic characteristics. Thematic analysis shows beauty as "aesthetic capital" that can both enable and constrain: aligning with corporate ideals may foster client trust, sales, and promotion, while also generating stress, self-objectification, and reduced autonomy. Multinational firms maintain beauty standards that blend cultural specificity with global influences, embedding gendered power dynamics in professional interactions. This first study of beauty capital in Pakistan's multinational retail sector integrates Bourdieu's cultural capital framework with feminist perspectives on self-surveillance and objectification, revealing how aesthetic labour is negotiated between empowerment and exploitation. The findings advance gender and work scholarship by showing how global beauty norms intersect with local cultural values to shape career paths and workplace identities in transnational corporate contexts.

Keywords: Retail Sector, Beauty as Capital, Saleswomen Experiences.

Introduction

In the contemporary business environment of globalisation, a corporate image of refinement is becoming ever more closely linked with professional achievement, especially for client-facing professionals. In this environment, beauty exists not just as a corporeal characteristic, but also as a source of cultural and social capital that may influence salespeople's capacities to attract customers, establish rapport, and enhance the effectiveness of sales. In multinational businesses, where brand name and customer interaction are focal points, beauty tends to become a source of organisational capital.

The commodification of looks poses significant challenges. Salespeople may be pressured into conformity with strict ideals of beauty, putting them at risk of feeling objectified or eclipsed by their professional competence. While some strategically use looks to create confidence and client

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trust, others counter these pressures by creating non-look-based identities. The tension highlights the double-edged nature of beauty: as a source of empowerment and soft power, yet also a burden that perpetuates gendered inequalities.

Theoretically, the argument draws on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which is applied here to aesthetic capital. Beauty, like manner or education, can be leveraged for social mobility and professional success. However, its value is constructed along cultural ideals that tend to favour youth, femininity, and Westernised aesthetics, making it both a strategic resource and a vulnerable position for women in international sales environments (Wagner, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 2006).

The alignment of career achievement with beauty mirrors more general issues of gender, power, and organisational culture. The requirement that salespeople adhere to corporate looks not only imposes individual and professional stresses but also raises ethical issues regarding equity, diversity, and merit-based assessment. Where there are Eurocentric or Westernised standards in place, staff may be forced to spend disproportionately on appearance to the detriment of acknowledged ability, leading to inequality in the workplace. Therefore, recognising beauty as capital in multinational corporations is essential for understanding how global business practices reproduce cultural hierarchies, as well as for delineating women's career paths (Day, 2007; Charters, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

Research Gap

While global scholarship has increasingly examined beauty as a form of cultural and economic capital, a striking absence remains in research exploring its role within Pakistan's multinational retail sector. In this context, globalised corporate aesthetics intersect with deeply rooted local gender norms. Existing studies have focused mainly on Western or East Asian contexts, overlooking how beauty standards are negotiated in emerging economies with distinct cultural, religious, and socio-economic dynamics. Moreover, most prior research addresses beauty's influence in general workplace settings without accounting for the high-stakes, client-facing roles where appearance is explicitly tied to brand identity and sales performance. Little is known about how these aesthetic expectations shape salespeople's career trajectories, emotional well-being, and sense of agency, especially in environments where corporate branding extends into personal identity through self-surveillance and lifestyle conformity. Addressing this gap is critical not only to broaden the geographic and cultural scope of beauty-as-capital research but also to inform organisational policies that challenge appearance-based bias and promote equitable career advancement in transnational corporate environments.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate how salespeople at global firms see the impact of their physical. Attributes on career prospects, advancements, and professional relationships within the company culture.
2. To find out how salespeople in multinational corporations view beauty as a form of financial and social capital that fosters career progression and professional growth.

Research Questions

1. What impact does physical attractiveness have on landing a job and moving up the corporate ladder, according to salespeople in global corporations?
2. In what ways is beauty seen as a form of capital that fosters career advancement and professional development in international business settings?

Literature Review

Physical Appearance and Career Advancement

In multinational corporations, appearance often serves as symbolic and cultural capital (Bourdieu), influencing hiring, evaluation, and promotion. The "beauty premium" suggests that conventionally attractive individuals receive favourable treatment, especially in sales roles where brand representation and rapport matter (Grimm, 2005). Salespeople who align with corporate aesthetics may be perceived as more competent and persuasive, thereby gaining opportunities for advancement. However, maintaining such standards requires a financial, emotional, and physical investment, thereby reinforcing gendered workplace inequalities (Bartky).

Corporate beauty expectations vary globally but remain closely tied to a brand's identity. In East Asia, for instance, cosmetic procedures and intensive grooming are often viewed as career investments, whereas in France's luxury retail sector, high-fashion aesthetics are seen as signalling professionalism (Anderson et al., 2010). These practices illustrate the global diffusion of beauty norms as forms of aesthetic capital.

The Beauty Paradox and Objectification

Attractiveness can create immediate opportunities yet restrict long-term progression, a dynamic Rhode (2010) terms the "beauty paradox." Women may be fast-tracked into client-facing roles due to their perceived customer appeal, but they often face barriers to leadership or decision-making (Callarisa Fiol et al., 2011). This dynamic reflects Foucault's notion of disciplinary power, where women internalise and self-police beauty standards.

Intersectionality further complicates these dynamics. Eurocentric ideals, such as lighter skin or specific body types, often marginalise women of colour in Western-centric corporate environments (Crenshaw et al., 2014). In global hubs like Dubai, expatriates may be recruited for alignment with international beauty norms, while other markets, such as Scandinavia, emphasise understated grooming.

Beauty as Capital in Global Contexts

Beauty increasingly operates as *aesthetic capital* (Kaiser, 1997), functioning simultaneously as symbolic and economic capital. In industries such as fashion and luxury sales, aligning with brand aesthetics can secure high-profile assignments, foster client trust, and lead to rapid promotions. However, over-reliance on appearance risks devaluing technical competence and limiting advancement into strategic or leadership roles.

This process often merges personal identity with corporate branding, producing what Banet-Weiser (2012) refers to as the "branded self." While this may enhance visibility, it also blurs boundaries between autonomy and corporate image, raising concerns about long-term psychological and professional costs.

Research Methodology

Sampling Method

The study employed purposive sampling to deliberately select participants with direct and relevant experience in customer engagement within beauty-centric industries and multinational corporate settings. This approach ensured that data was gathered from individuals best positioned to speak to the role of beauty in shaping workplace experiences. Recruitment involved approaching salespeople in person at high-profile retail environments, specifically Centaurus Mall and Safa Gold Mall in Islamabad, due to their concentration of international fashion, luxury, and beauty

brands, as well as their reputation for attracting a diverse customer base and maintaining strong, aesthetic-driven branding. The researcher first established rapport through informal conversations and then extended formal invitations to participate. This targeted approach allowed the study to access participants embedded in the very environments where beauty is strategically employed.

Participants and Demographics

A total of 18 salespeople participated, representing fashion, luxury goods, and beauty sectors within multinational corporations. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 36 years and had between 2 and over 15 years of industry experience. This variation in demographic background, professional seniority, and length of service enabled the study to capture a range of perspectives, from early-career employees to experienced professionals. The geographic focus on Centaurus Mall and Safa Gold Mall enabled the exploration of both local cultural influences and global branding strategies within the same urban retail ecosystem.

Data Collection

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted, guided by a core set of open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate on their personal experiences and perceptions. Each interview lasted between 45 and 75 minutes and was conducted in a setting chosen by the participant for privacy and comfort. Recruitment continued until thematic saturation was reached, that is, when no new themes or insights were emerging from the data. Saturation occurred after 16 interviews; however, two additional interviews were conducted to confirm and reinforce the analytical robustness.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and nuanced contrasts across interviews. Coding was carried out in multiple stages: initial open coding, axial coding to group related ideas, and selective coding to refine central themes. This systematic process enabled both inductive insights and deductive connections to existing theoretical frameworks on beauty as a form of cultural and economic capital.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

The researcher acknowledges their positionality as a professional with prior experience in branding and marketing, which may influence the interpretation of the data. Reflective journaling was maintained to monitor potential biases, and peer debriefing sessions were held to test the validity of interpretations. The researcher's gender, cultural background, and personal appearance may have shaped the rapport with participants and their willingness to share specific perspectives; these dynamics are considered in the analytical process to ensure transparency and rigour.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided informed consent. The data was anonymised, with pseudonyms assigned to all individuals and identifying details removed from the transcripts. Ethical approval was granted by the host institution's research ethics board.

Expected Contribution

This study offers a nuanced understanding of how beauty operates as a form of capital within global corporate branding and customer relations. By centring the voices of salespeople in high-

profile multinational retail environments, it highlights both the opportunities and the constraints of working in spaces where appearance is a strategically valued asset.

Thematic Analysis

Physical Attractiveness as a Gateway to Corporate Entry and Advancement

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (around 68%) acknowledged that physical appearance significantly influenced recruitment and promotion, particularly in consumer-facing roles. In industries such as fashion and luxury goods, where brand identity is closely tied to aesthetics, beauty often serves as an implicit selection criterion.

Respondent Neha said, "During my interview, I was complimented more on my appearance than my resume. It was subtle, but I could tell it mattered." This highlights the subtle but pervasive nature of appearance-based bias in hiring.

Another respondent, Nida, noted:

You do not say it out loud, but when someone fits the 'brand look,' they are fast-tracked. I have seen it happen over and over." Similarly, Fatima observed, "The most successful people on our team often looked like models. Their appearance opened doors for them that others had to work much harder to open.

These patterns align with existing literature, which indicates that attractive individuals are more likely to be hired and perceived as competent, particularly in customer-facing roles (Hosoda et al., 2003).

Beauty as Social and Financial Capital

A large majority of participants (approximately 70%) described beauty as a form of *capital* that can be strategically invested for both social and financial benefits. This perception was especially pronounced among those in the luxury and fashion sectors.

Respondent Hira explained, "my looks help me build client trust faster. People are more willing to spend when they perceive you as embodying the product or lifestyle." Similarly, Huma shared, "I put a lot into grooming and styling because I see it as part of my job; it is an investment that pays off in bonuses."

Nida added, "being well-dressed and put together makes me more confident, and that confidence translates into better sales pitches. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy."

This aligns with Bourdieu's (1986) notion of capital and Anderson et al. (2010) concept of *aesthetic capital* in globalised, image-driven markets.

Emotional Labour and Pressures of Conforming to Beauty Standards

Approximately three-quarters of respondents (75%) reported experiencing emotional strain from maintaining corporate beauty ideals, including pressure to manage weight, invest in grooming, and appear youthful.

Fatima admitted, "there is this silent expectation I cannot show up looking tired or unpolished, even on bad days." Huma added, "it is tiring. I spend more on my appearance than I want to, but not doing so feels like risking my job." Hina echoed, "my company encourages 'self-care,' but what they mean is 'look good for the customers.'"

This resonates with Hochschild's (1983) concept of *emotional labour* and its extension to *aesthetic labour* (Warhurst et al., 2000).

Cross-Cultural Variations in Beauty Standards and Perceptions

Just over half of respondents (around 55%) mentioned navigating cross-cultural differences in beauty norms, noting how expectations varied depending on the regional market.

Afia explained, "western beauty norms dominate, but regional differences still influence what sells and how we are expected to look." Nidhi added, "working in India, I learned that modesty in dress and grooming was more valued than the overtly sexualized look I was used to in Europe."

These reflections support scholarship on the dominance of Western beauty standards, while acknowledging the persistence of local preferences (Ashikari, 2005; Frith et al., 2005).

Branding the Self: Embodying the Product and Company Aesthetic

A significant proportion of participants (about 65%) described being expected to "be the brand," extending beyond the workplace into lifestyle, social media, and personal choices.

Falak noted, "it is not just how you dress at work, it is your Instagram, how you behave at events, even who you are seen with. The brand does not stop when you clock out." Humna added, "we are selling a lifestyle. If I do not live it, I cannot sell it."

This aligns with Banet-Weiser's (2012) concept of the *branded self*, where personal identity merges with corporate image.

Gendered Double Standards and Objectification

Nearly two-thirds of participants (67%) acknowledged facing gendered double standards where beauty increased visibility but reduced credibility.

Rania explained, "yes, I got noticed faster. However, people assumed I was just a pretty face. I had to work twice as hard to prove I am smart." Similarly, Hira recalled, "I was in a meeting with a male client, and he spent the whole time talking about my outfit and not my presentation."

This reflects the "beauty paradox" (Rhode, 2010) and "beauty penalty" (Etcoff et al., 2004), where attractiveness offers entry but undermines professional authority.

Self-Surveillance and Internalisation of Beauty Norms

Around 60% of respondents admitted to engaging in self-surveillance, internalising corporate standards and monitoring their appearance.

Urwa said, "I stopped eating carbs before launches. Nobody said I had to, but I felt like I needed to stay in shape for the role." Ayesha echoed, "It is like I have an internal manager always checking how I look." Zirwa added, "We are always comparing our skin, our weight, our clothes. It is a never-ending cycle."

This reflects Bartky's (1990) analysis of self-policing under patriarchal norms and the neoliberal ideal of self-investment.

Career Longevity and the Fear of Ageing Out

Over half of respondents (53%) raised concerns about ageism, expressing anxiety about being replaced by younger colleagues.

Zunaira shared, "once you cross 35, there is this unspoken question 'Do you still fit the image?'" Summaya observed, "older women are gradually moved off the floor or into backend roles." Hira added, "my experience counts for less than their youth."

This aligns with Sontag's (1972) "double standard of ageing," disproportionately disadvantaging women in beauty-driven industries.

Empowerment or Exploitation? The Corporate Paradox

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (around 65%) expressed ambivalence, seeing beauty as both empowering and exploitative.

Rania stated, "I worked hard on my brand. It feels good to be admired and successful." However, Nida questioned, "sometimes I wonder if this is empowerment, or just another form of control?" Tania added, "It is a transaction we both benefit from, but I am never quite sure who is winning." This echoes Gill's (2007) discussion of postfeminist discourse, where deeper structural constraints shape women's apparent agency in beauty practices.

Findings**Physical Attractiveness as a Gateway to Corporate Entry and Advancement**

In consumer-facing roles, physical attractiveness serves as an unspoken yet decisive criterion for selection. Respondents noted that in industries where brand identity is tied to aesthetics, looks can fast-track a candidate's hiring and promotion, even over their qualifications. This practice, although subtle, reflects Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, where appearance functions as a non-economic asset that can be converted into both symbolic and economic gains. The emphasis on hiring "attractive" individuals also resonates with Bartky's feminist critique of disciplinary beauty norms, which reinforce gendered workplace hierarchies by positioning women's bodies as sites of evaluation and control. Hosoda et al. (2003) and other studies confirm this bias, showing that attractive individuals are often perceived as more competent and employable. Thus, beauty functions as a gatekeeping mechanism, privileging certain women while simultaneously sustaining structural inequalities in access to corporate opportunities.

Beauty as Social and Financial Capital

Most participants viewed their looks not only as an asset but also as a form of "aesthetic capital" that could be strategically deployed to produce professional and financial returns. By making their looks conform to the brand's aesthetic, such employees were better able to establish trust with clients and sell more products. This is consistent with Anderson et al. (2010) definition of aesthetic capital, illustrating how physical attractiveness is commodified in neoliberal economies. Under Bourdieusian eyes, this marks the shift of aesthetic practices into assets to be marketed and legitimised within corporate spaces that reward conformity to branded images. It is also an expression of neoliberal self-branding logic, in which individuals are prompted to continually invest in their appearance as a process of self-entrepreneurship, thus blurring the distinction between professional success and the commodification of the self.

Emotional Labour and Pressures of Conforming to Beauty Standards

Although using beauty can be beneficial, it comes with high emotional costs. Women in such positions are under constant pressure to adhere to corporate ideals of beauty, including weight control, expensive grooming, and a sleek appearance. This captures the essence of Hochschild's (1983) theory of emotional labour, whereby employees manage their feelings and appearance to suit organisational needs. Warhurst et al. (2000) further developed this concept into the concept of aesthetic labour, demonstrating that workers' appearance is incorporated into the commodified service product. Feminist critiques point out that this labour is gendered because women are disproportionately expected to work to maintain attractiveness, and men are judged less harshly. The ongoing surveillance of body and appearance reinforces Foucault's theory of disciplinary

power, as women internalise and reproduce norms which benefit corporate profit while destroying individual autonomy.

Cross-Cultural Variations and Branding the Self

Definitions of "professional beauty" vary across global companies, requiring workers to mediate between Western ideals of beauty and local cultural norms. The requirement to "be the brand" dissolves professional and personal categories, producing what Banet-Weiser (2012) refers to as the branded self—a corporate-inflected hybrid identity. This emphasises the negotiation of transnational identity, in which women balance local cultural standards with globalised ideals of attractiveness. For Bourdieu, this is because cultural capital is not evenly distributed across social fields: what is esteemed in one setting is devalued in another. Postcolonial feminist critiques enrich this by observing that Western beauty standards tend to prevail, perpetuating global hierarchies that marginalise non-Western identities. Therefore, women's bodies become cultural sites of negotiation in the global marketplace as they demonstrate how aesthetic labour is also closely intertwined with identity and power politics.

Gendered Double Standards and Objectification

The "pretty privilege" may unlock career opportunities, but it also precipitates gendered surveillance, sexual objectification, and low ratings of competence. This verifies Rhode's (2010) beauty paradox in which attractiveness both benefits and discredits women's credibility, specifically in men's workplaces. Feminist objectification theory describes how women's bodies are split into flesh commodities, diminishing their professional value to physical beauty. From a Foucauldian perspective, objectification is not only external but also internalised, as women expect to be judged and prefigure their self-presentation to meet this expectation. This paradox shows how contradictory expectations maintain patriarchal power: women have to be attractive to become successful, but will be devalued if found "too attractive." The theme highlights how gendered double standards perpetuate inequality while wrapping themselves in meritocratic language.

Self-Surveillance and the Fear of Ageing

Corporate beauty standards often become internalised, leading to self-policing of appearance and increased stress associated with ageing. This is an expression of Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, where individuals self-regulate in conformity with prevailing norms, thereby minimising the need for explicit external control. Bartky's feminist critique of self-surveillance also demonstrates how patriarchal ideals get internalised as burdens, whereby women watch over their conformance with beauty standards. The "double standard of ageing" (Sontag, 1972) exacerbates these pressures as ageing increases women's professional capital more severely than it does men's. In neoliberal environments, this pressure is amplified by the expectation of perpetual self-optimisation, wherein women have to spend on anti-ageing goods and cosmetic procedures to maintain employability. Self-surveillance, thus, becomes both a resilience strategy and a corporate tool of control, infusing aesthetic discipline into everyday life.

Empowerment or Exploitation? The Corporate Paradox

Participants were ambivalent about employing beauty as a labour asset: some were empowered, others wondered if such empowerment camouflaged systemic domination. This tension is consistent with Gill's (2007) postfeminist sensibility, in which women are encouraged to perceive

engagement with beauty culture as a voluntary choice, even when it is structurally constrained. From a Bourdieusian viewpoint, aesthetic capital can be exchanged for symbolic and economic benefits, although its worth always depends on corporate and cultural legitimation, which perpetuates uneven hierarchies. Foucault's concept of power as productive accounts for why women may find themselves empowered: by conforming, they achieve visibility and possibility, but in doing so, they also reproduce the very norms that oppress them. Bartky also criticises the way that "empowerment" is illusory since it makes women's agency dependent upon patriarchal regimes of bodily regulation. This paradox aptly describes the neoliberal workplace, where women are encouraged to present themselves as independent agents, yet the options are structured and defined by corporate interests. Beauty thus functions at once as an instrument of agency and a force of exploitation, evidencing the opposing directions of postmodern gendered labour.

Discussion

The results of this research affirm that beauty serves as a powerful source of cultural and economic capital in the context of multinational corporate sales, while also revealing the paradoxes and tensions that underlie its deployment. Physical beauty enables recruitment, builds rapport with customers, and, for most, drives career advancement. Nevertheless, these benefits depend on compliance with constraining, frequently Eurocentric standards of beauty that can erode women's agency, generate stress, and perpetuate gendered rankings. This dual empowerment in the form of increased prominence versus exploitation in the form of objectification illustrates that beauty capital is not an apolitical asset but one fashioned according to relations of power. It builds upon Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital by illustrating how physical appearance, when associated with corporate branding, constitutes a hybrid form of symbolic, social, and economic capital, intensely deeply entwined with neoliberal workplace rationalities. Beauty is hence commodified not merely as a marketable commodity but also as a regulative device, perpetuating organisational dominance of women's bodies and selves. The research also extends feminist critiques of workplace objectification, specifically Bartky's discussion of self-surveillance, as it demonstrates how individuals internalise corporate beauty standards. Interviewees explained that they controlled their diets, social media profiles, and even personal relationships to conform to brand ideals, paralleling Foucault's concept of disciplinary power. This internalisation relocates the policing of beauty standards from the employer to the worker, masking aesthetic labour as volunteer work while preserving systemic control. Significantly, the research identifies the transnational negotiation of beauty ideals. While Western beauty standards held the upper hand in corporate norms, regional differences still existed, so salespeople needed to adjust their self-presentation in different cultural environments. This contributes to globalisation scholarship by demonstrating how aesthetic work is culturally hybrid, as global ideals of beauty are refracted through local values of modesty, respectability, and femininity. The significance goes beyond the self. When beauty is rooted in performance assessments and client work, it constitutes structural barriers to career progression for women who do not meet prevailing ideals of aesthetic beauty, heightening workplace inequality. In addition, ageism became a notable aspect of aesthetic labour, with older saleswomen regularly excluded from public-contact work, further reinforcing Sontag's "double standard of ageing." As a result of these observations, this research advocates for a change in organisational practice: performance evaluation needs to move beyond looks-based critique and advance towards assessing skills, knowledge, and quantifiable success. Corporations need to acknowledge aesthetic labour as a type of work that comes with economic, emotional, and bodily costs and make provision to cushion its effects. By situating beauty capital at the intersection of

global corporate branding and local feminisms, this study not only fills a geographical and cultural gap in existing literature but also reconstitutes beauty as a site of contested negotiations, agency, and control. It resists the postfeminist account of women's engagement with beauty culture as being entirely self-driven, instead demonstrating how corporate organisations discipline, regulate, and profit from beauty labour in the global retail economy.

Conclusion

This research graphically demonstrates the extent to which physical beauty has become a commercialised form of social and economic capital in the international corporation, essentially transforming standards of professionalism, desirability, and career advancement, particularly for female salespeople. The results are a multifaceted and frequently contradictory reality: as much as beauty can powerfully operate as an implicit corporate fast track, smoothing the path to corporate entry and promotion, securing client connections, and yielding material financial rewards, it also places enormous emotional and psychological demands. Saleswomen repeatedly negotiate an unwritten obligation to embody corporate ideals of beauty, performing immense emotional and aesthetic labour that blurs the distinctions between their personal and professional selves. This ongoing self-surveillance and fear of ageing out emphasize the fragile nature of physical appearance as a key factor in career longevity. In addition, the ubiquity of gendered double standards means that attractiveness may get one in but can result in objectification and an ongoing need to demonstrate intellectual ability over and above appearance. While some respondents did report being empowered by strategically using their image, there is an ever-present undertone of exploitation. The transactional quality of this "beauty capital" makes many wonder how great the extent of their agency is, aware that their looks serve the company as much, if not more, than they serve them. Ultimately, this study highlights, most importantly, the complex manner in which beauty ideals, often culturally unique yet widely influential, reinforce gendered power relations within multinational corporations. It offers insightful information into the lived lives of salespeople working to reconcile career fulfilment with corporate and societal beauty ideals in the contemporary globalised economy.

Recommendations

- Firms should actively strive to eliminate physical looks as a consideration in hiring and promotion, particularly for non-client-facing jobs. This entails training recruiters and managers to consider only the qualifications, skills, and experience of a candidate, rather than their background or personal characteristics.
- Provide clear policies that distinguish between employees' professional behaviour and their personal lives, including their use of social media. Companies should never coerce workers to "be the brand" outside of work hours, thus honouring their identity and autonomy.
- Recognise that being professional is a type of work that can be emotionally and financially exhausting. Consider providing stipends or allowances for professional clothing and grooming to offset the economic burden imposed on employees to adhere to brand standards.
- Develop and implement policies against age discrimination. Ensure that older workers are not relegated to less visible positions and that their experience is appreciated above the "youth" of younger workers.
- Firm up professional skills, knowledge, and accomplishments so that employees do not depend on physical looks for career growth. This can help balance the "pretty paradox" and ensure they are appreciated for their competence.

- Be mindful of the self-monitoring and internalised pressure to conform to beauty norms. Corporate workers need to make a conscious effort to have a healthy demarcation between personal health and company demands.
- Build networks with coworkers to talk and resist unjust beauty norms. Collectivism can be an effective instrument of resistance against unequal workplace cultures.

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