

Are We under the Influence of What This Study See: The Power of Body Tattoos in a Job Interview

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Abstract. Fair treatment of employees is an important ethical question. With the increasing number of tattooed workers in the workplace and on the job market, their work experience and the treatment they receive deserve more attention. To date, however, very few studies have focused on such a niche group of employees. The intention of this study was to offer insights on the experience of tattooed individuals in job interviews. Using an experimental design, this study examined the influence of visible tattoos on hiring decisions and interviewers' evaluations. Participants (N=233) were recruited online, in China, and they were assigned to one of four experimental conditions: tattoo vs. no tattoo job applicant and entry-level vs. managerial positions. The results show that applicants with visible tattoos had decreased chances of being hired. Interviewers in the study were also more likely to perceive the virtual job candidate with tattoos as less competent, especially when hiring at the management-level position. These results serve to raise awareness around biases and stereotypes experienced by tattooed individuals seeking employment.

Keywords: Tattooed Workers; Fair Treatment of Employees; Biases and Stereotypes.

1. Introduction

Discussion of equal rights never ceased; the ongoing discussion of equal rights includes topics ranging from ethnicity to gender equality. With minority social groups' appeals for equal rights in various social settings, society has devoted much attention to addressing these inequities. Those appeals have extended to equal rights in the workplace, facilitating the emergence of laws and regulations, such as Title VII in 1964 in the United States, which prohibits discrimination against race, colour, religion, sex, and national origin in the workplace. To an extent, rules and regulations protect minority workers from employment discrimination. (*Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, 1964*)

In addition to studying employment discrimination for traditional minority groups, scholars have also studied inequality based on other features, such as appearance, in the workplace. Recent research has demonstrated the negative influence of appearance and body features, such as body weight and attractiveness, in the interview process (Dipboye et al., 1978; Larkin & Pines, 1979; London & Hakel, 1974; Pingitore et al., 1994).

An emerging physical characteristic that could alter one's appearance is the tattoo. Although nowadays, tattoos are usually for cosmetic purposes, they have a religious origin. In ancient times, tattoos usually symbolized healing or holy marks. With the spread and expansion of tribes, tattoos also became a sign to mark members of the same tribe (Hambly, 2009). Similarly, modern-day tattoos began symbolizing affiliations. More specifically, tattoos showed the wearer's identity and their belonging to particular groups (DeMello & Rubin, 2000). Military and gang tattoos usually serve to define the latter.

Today, tattoos carry less weight (Rush, 2005). Enthusiasts get tattooed for personal purposes, and the meanings have changed from the ancient time (DeMello & Rubin, 2000). However, these meanings are mostly overlooked, and the public still tends to remember when tattoos were mainly seen on gang members or soldiers. As a result, people with extensive visible tattoos can be the subject of negative stereotypes, based on their tattoos.

Tattoos today can still be perceived negatively and associated with traits such as violence or lack of self-control (Miller et al., 2009), with the actual quality of the candidates being undervalued. Researchers have demonstrated that body features and body features' negative impact in interviews (London & Hakel, 1974; Pingitore et al., 1994). On the other hand, scholars have also researched into aggressiveness and unfair treatment toward tattooed individuals in workplace (Foltz, 2014; French et

al., 2019; Timming, 2015, 2017). However, the influence of visible tattoos in interviews have not been specified in the past research. This study intends to fill the gap in the current literature in revealing the effect of visible tattoos in job interviews.

The first contribution of the current study is to specifically address the influence of tattoos on hiring decisions, based on simulated interviews. Specifically, the intention of this study is to confirm the effect of visible tattoos, which is defined as tattoos which cannot be covered by normal business attire, in job interviews. Based on how human's memory work, tattoos could send out information and trigger bias and stereotypical reactions (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

The second contribution of this study is to determine whether or not the type of position for which one is being interviewed has any effect on the hiring decision. Specifically, the intention is to know if the visible tattoo will impact hiring decisions for entry-level positions and management positions differently, since the general population has a particular perception of leaders (upper-level positions). Leadership prototypes refer to the perceptions that others have of "ideal leaders" (Popper & Druryan, 2001). This prototype suggests that interviewers are likely to have a concrete expectation of a leader despite their working abilities, which is not expected to include visible body arts. Moreover, managers and leaders hold the same stereotypes, whether or not they are themselves tattooed (Morton, 2017), which suggests that interviewers with tattoos are equally likely to hold stereotypical views of managers in an interview, just like other appearance and body features.

The third contribution of this study is to emphasize the importance of equality, elimination discrimination, and seeing beyond a person's appearance; this study also cares about hiring the right person for the right job. As this study try to evaluate candidates, is it possible that their "book cover" influences us? Past researchers examined difficulties faced by tattooed job applicants, including employment and wage discriminations experienced by tattooed workers (Foltz, 2014; French et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2009; Timming, 2015). Also, a great number of studies has focused on tattooed individuals in the services or customer-facing industries (Foltz, 2014; Miller et al., 2009; Timming, 2015). There is an urge to better understand the interview process, and not much attention devoted to the interview experiences of tattooed workers.

Given the prevalence of tattoo wearers currently on the job market or preparing to enter it, this study also holds important practical implications. It is important to examine whether tattooed workers are getting similar hiring chances in interviews as applicants without tattoos. The fourth contribution of this study is to shed some light on the difference of hiring rate between tattooed workers and workers without visible tattoos. Also, this study investigates the existence of bias induced by visible tattoos in the hiring process, a topic that currently lacks attention from scholarly groups. If the existence of this form of reactions is demonstrated, this study could inspire more research and the development of training tools to address these biases.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Stereotypes in Interview and Personnel Decision-making

Interviews are conversations with the intention of getting to know the interviewees better in a limited amount of time, in order to evaluate their qualifications for a position. Scholars have devoted efforts to preparing and designing interviews so that interviewers can make better hiring decisions (Huffcutt, 2010; Roulin et al., 2019). Despite these efforts in designing unbiased interview processes, the final Decision-making is still influenced by surrounding factors. The focus of this paper is on the influence of stereotypes in interviews and hiring decisions.

Past researchers have shown that the effects of stereotypes extend to personnel Decision-making (Fiske et al., 2018; Pingitore et al., 1994). Studies have shown that interviewers preferred physically attractive candidates, when faced with two candidates with similar qualifications and backgrounds (Jawahar & Mattsson, 2005). Acquired features could also influence perceptions in the workplace. Makeup has been shown to change perceptions, including abilities and health conditions, toward female workers (Dellinger & Williams, 1997). Bodyweight stereotype is another perception that

influences Decision-making. Obese individuals are more likely to be perceived as having poorer capabilities (Larkin & Pines, 1979) and less likely to be hired.

The literature on warmth and competence may offer an interesting framework to understand the influence of stereotypes in the hiring process. Perceived warmth and competence are ways in which individuals or groups are perceived (Cuddy et al., 2011). Researchers have studied how these two factors affect perceptions and influence Decision-making. Warmth indicates the level of affection toward the receiver (Cuddy et al., 2011; Howard & Ferris, 1996). Perceived competence influences the evaluations that the applicant will receive (Howard & Ferris, 1996). Unsurprisingly, perceived competence was shown to directly influence hiring decisions (Higgins & Judge, 2004; Howard & Ferris, 1996). In conclusion, traits and characteristics alter perceived warmth and competence toward the receiver, and thereby affect Decision-making, including during interviews.

Studies about stereotypes and biases around tattooed individuals in interviews are limited. For example, a laboratory experiment showed that participants preferred non-teamwork and separate compensation, when asked to work with a co-worker with extensive visible tattoos and piercings (Miller et al., 2009). The rationale behind their decisions is that tattooed coworkers are believed to be less competent and less effective collaborators. In another study, Ellis (2015) interviewed multiple individuals with extensive tattoos. It was found that numerous participants reported rejection, based on their tattoos, and the need to cover their tattoos and piercing in the workplace and during interviews (Ellis, 2015).

2.2 Leadership Prototype

Leadership prototype refers to the perception of managers and leaders (Popper & Druyan, 2001). Leaders are only considered effective when they match the viewers' perceptions of an "ideal leader" (Bradley et al., 2006). Past scholars have studied multiple factors, including gender and race, affecting hiring decisions for leadership positions (Kent & Moss, 1994; Xu & Leffler, 1992). Scholars have found that a classic white male figure better fits what the general recruiter may picture as a leader (Kent & Moss, 1994; Xu & Leffler, 1992). Generally, effective leadership is mostly connected with traditionally masculine traits and that have remained unchanged over the years (Brenner et al., 1989; Cann & Siegfried, 1990). For example, all raters are likely to act positively toward leaders with high-performance results (Bradley et al., 2006).

Social cognition theory suggests that people tend to use past knowledge and experiences to create "labels" which carry information about a group of people with specific characteristics, and who act, consciously or subconsciously, according to the labels presented (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Pennington, 2000). Stereotypes and bias induced by "labels" (e.g., characteristics and traits) and social roles are better explained by the role congruity theory. Social role refers to the socially accepted expectations of members who occupy certain positions or roles (Sim, 1982). Eagly (2002) suggests that stereotypes between social groups and social roles "exist when social perceivers hold a stereotype about a social group that is incongruent with the attributes that are thought to be required for success in certain classes of social roles" (p. 574). In general, stereotypes and biases toward the inked population might arise from the discrepancy between information implied by the group of tattoo wearers and the expectation of being a leader.

Because the implicit memory offers experience about received information, the unconscious mind could influence actions and Decision-making (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). As most interviewers and recruiters have a set of expectations on what a leadership position entails, visible tattoos carry a specific message, which may be contrary to these expectations of respectability and seriousness. Although the information is not entirely understood, the form carries a strong signal, which suggests a deviation from the anticipated criteria, hence potentially influencing perception (Miller et al., 2009).

3. Hypotheses

This paper aims to investigate a potential bias against people with visible tattoos in the interview process for both entry-level and management positions in the technology field.

With the growing number of people engaged in the art form, tattoos have become more prevalent in the workplace and, therefore, among job seekers. This trend has encouraged researchers to explore the environment around those tattooed workers. Some evidence has suggested that stereotyped behaviours may be induced by visible tattoos. This study wants to explore the specific topic of whether visible tattoos will also bring up negative memories and adversely impact the hiring result. This study expects that if the candidate has visible tattoos, they will be less likely to be hired than if he does not have visible tattoos, hence:

Hypothesis 1: The job candidate with visible tattoos will be less likely to be hired than the job candidate without visible tattoos with the same background.

Using a similar rationale, this study also expects that when the applicant has visible tattoos, he will be rejected for the position because he will receive lower ratings of warmth and competence. Specifically speaking, because of the history and traditional meanings of tattoos, visible tattoos will induce stereotypes and bias towards the applicant. Then those stereotypes and biases will cause the participants to dislike the tattooed applicants more and perceive the applicants as less competent than the non-tattooed applicant (Cuddy et al., 2011; Howard & Ferris, 1996), hence increasing the chances of rejection to the position.

Hypothesis 2: The job candidate with visible tattoos will be perceived to be less competent than the job candidate without visible tattoos.

Hypothesis 3: Level of affect towards the job candidate with visible tattoos will be more negative than toward the job candidate without visible tattoos.

Finally, this study wants to explore whether the job position in need of hiring would negatively influence the relationship this study proposed in the first hypothesis. As this study have argued that stereotypes form categorization from past knowledge, the question remains: “Given the expectations toward leaders, will the Decision-making process be further negatively influenced?” Studies have demonstrated that although leadership perception might vary depending on gender and culture (Elkaterina Omeltchenka & Armitage, 2006), that perception still influences human behaviour (Pophat per & Druyan, 2001).

Literature cited above suggests that expectations around leadership are clearly delineated. Most people expect to see a traditional masculine figure for a leadership position, and with that specific image embedded in their minds, Decision-making could be strongly influenced. Requirements for leadership positions tend to be higher than for entry-level positions. As such, extending the literature to tattooed individuals, this study expects that when hiring for a managerial position, the tattooed job candidate will be even more negatively affected than in the case of an entry-level position.

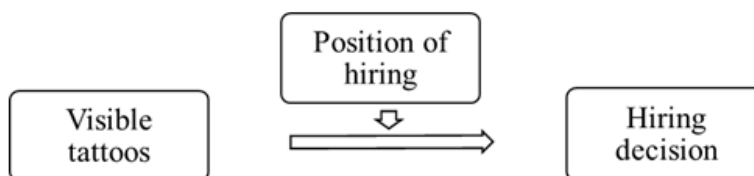


Figure 1. Final Model

Hypothesis 4: Hiring position will affect the relationship between visible tattoos and hiring decisions more negatively.

Under stricter evaluations, perceived competence and level of affect are expected to be further influenced. Specifically, visible tattoos in interviews could cause more server consequences because tattoos deviate greatly from the high expectations of leaders. With the contradiction between visible tattoos and high expectations, the receivers can react even more negatively towards job applicants

with visible tattoos. In this specific study, the attitudes of the interviewers will be measured in terms of perceived competence and levels of affect.

Hypothesis 5: In managerial position, visible tattoos will have more negative influence on perceived competence than in entry-level.

Hypothesis 6: In managerial position, visible tattoos will have more negative influence on affect than in entry-level.

3.1 Method

The study aims to examine whether extensive tattoos will influence Decision-making in interviews. The definition of extensive tattoos is borrowed from a previous study by Miller (2009) as tattoos that cannot be covered by standard business attire. This definition effectively considered candidates' behaviour to conceal their tattoos in interviews and focused on the tattoos that might be exposed during the interview process, including tattoos on the neck and hands.

3.2 Participants

A total of 285 surveys were collected and resulted in 233 valid surveys. This study first filtered out surveys which were answered by participants under the age of 18, as those participants were not allowed to answer. This study then removed the participants who refused to sign the consent form at the beginning of the survey; participants who indicated that they refused their data to be used in the end; and participants who took too little time to complete the survey.

All participants were Chinese and were recruited through a survey agency. Specifically, tattoos were used to identify criminals in ancient times, and perhaps this traditional negative image was inherited by modern generations (Foltz, 2014; Hambly, 2009; Reed, 2000). In total, there were 120 male participants, 103 female participants, and 10 participants refused to offer their gender information. Their ages ranged from 18 to 65 years ($M = 30.98$, $SD = 7.03$). Those participants also differed in terms of education, provinces of origin, and fields of work. The details of the demographics are shown in Table 1.

3.3 Manipulation and Design

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Demographics

	Age		Gender		Education Level	
	No Tattoos	Tattoos	No Tattoos	Tattoos	No Tattoos	Tattoos
Valid	121	105	118	105	123	106
Missing	4	3	7	3	2	2
Mean	30.75	31.25	1.45	1.48	2.12	2.09
Std. Deviation	6.24	7.86	0.50	0.50	0.51	0.38
Minimum	18.00	18.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	50.00	65.00	2.00	2.00	5.00	3.00

Note. Under Gender, 1 indicates male participants and 2 indicates female participants. Education Level indicates the highest education level attained by participants: 1 = high school and equivalents; 2 = bachelor's degree and equivalents; 3 = Master's degree and equivalents; 4 = PhD and equivalents; and 5 = post-doctoral and equivalents.

This study relied on an experimental design which was a 2 (position: management vs. entry-level) X 2 (tattoo: candidate with visible tattoos vs. without tattoos), completely randomized design. In other words, participants were randomly assigned to a hiring position (entry vs. management) and to an applicant with or without tattoos. In total, four videotaped interviews were produced, all with the same male actor. In two of the videos, the actor had visible tattoos and in two videos, two did not. He was interviewing either for a managerial or an entry-level position in the high-tech field. Résumés were produced for both position levels and job descriptions were also produced for both jobs.

3.4 Procedure

This study was conducted online. Participants were recruited by an online survey company, Wenjuanxing, in China. They were told that the questionnaire intended to examine the effectiveness of a designed interview process and were asked to imagine themselves as a recruiter looking for a senior project manager (or a mechanical engineer, for the entry-level position) in a high-tech company. This, to an extent, covered the real intention of the study. Consent was first obtained from the participants. They were then presented with the relevant job description, the candidate's résumé, and the videotaped interview of the job candidate (either tattooed or not tattooed). After watching the interview, participants were asked to score the applicants on competency and warmth, and to make a hiring decision.

3.5 Measures

Hiring decision. Participants were asked to provide their hiring decision as a binary choice: hire vs. no hire.

Perceived competence and affect. This was measured using eight items on the Howard and Ferris scale (1996). The eight items measure perceived work abilities and affect (four items for each aspect) on a 7-point scale, where 1 = totally agree and 7 = totally disagree. This scale includes reverse scored items, which were recoded prior to computing scale scores (e.g., "I would never have anything to do with this applicant"). Cronbach's alpha for affect and perceived competence was 0.75 and 0.85, respectively. In the case of perceived competence, a higher score indicates a lower evaluation of competence, and in the case of perceived affect, a higher score indicates more negative affect.

4. Result

4.1 Test of Hypotheses

Because the hiring decision had a binary outcome, a chi-square test was conducted separately to compare the hiring decisions of participants assigned to the two tattoo conditions. To test the hypothesis, these chi-square tests were computed separately for management and entry-level participants. The hiring decisions of the baseline version (applicant without tattoos) was used as the expected result, and the hiring decisions of the treatment version (applicant with tattoos) was compared to the baseline version, to determine if there was a significant difference between the two groups. Overall, participants assigned to the tattooed job candidate were less likely to recommend hiring the job candidate ($p = 0.003$), as opposed to participants assigned to the non-tattooed job candidate. This supports Hypothesis 1. To separately examine each condition, as show in Table 2, there is no significant difference in hiring decision between the two groups in the entry-level condition ($p = 0.61$), but there is a significant difference in hiring decision in the management-level condition ($p < 0.001$). This supports Hypothesis 4 and suggests that in the management condition, tattooed candidates may be more negatively affected in the management-level position than in the entry-level position.

To test if affect and perceived competence differed among the various conditions, this study computed a 2 X 2 ANOVA. As shown in Table 3, condition (tattoos vs. no tattoos) produced a significant difference in both affect ($f(229, 1) = 4.20, p = 0.04, \eta^2 = 0.02$) and perceived competence ($f(229, 1) = 7.41, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.03$). This supports Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3.

In terms of the interaction effect between tattoo condition and hiring position, it was very close to significance in the case of perceived affect ($f(229, 1) = 3.83, p = 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.02$) and it was not significant in the case of perceived competence.

Table 2. Summary of Chi-square Test

	χ^2	df	p
Entry-Level	0.26	1	0.61
Management-Level	15.15	1	<0.001*

* $p < 0.05$.

Table 3. ANOVA of Affect and Perceived Competence

Cases	Sum of Squares		df		Mean Square		f		p		η^2	
	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C	A	C
CONDITIONS	5.75	9.46	1.00	1.00	5.75	9.46	4.20	7.41	0.04	0.01	0.02	0.03
POSITION	0.79	0.11	1.00	1.00	0.72	0.11	0.53	0.09	0.47	0.77	0.00	0.00
CONDITIONS * POSITION	5.24	3.38	1.00	1.00	5.24	3.38	3.83	2.65	0.05	0.11	0.02	0.01
Residual	313.34	292.46	229	229	1.37	1.28						

Note: A = Affect, C = Perceived Competence.

4.2 Moderation Effect of Position

Because the interaction term was marginally significant in the case of perceived competence ($p = 0.11$) and level of affect ($p = 0.05$) and because this study had *a priori* hypotheses regarding interaction effects, this study conducted more detailed analyses to evaluate these hypotheses. Specifically, this study separated the data into entry-level and management positions, and compared tattoo vs. no tattoo conditions, with level of affect and perceived competence as independent variables. The results (Table 4) show that at entry-level, no significant difference is observed between tattooed and non-tattooed group, in both affect and perceived competence ($p = 0.95, p = 0.45$); however, there is a significant difference between the non-tattooed and tattooed groups at the management-level ($p = 0.01, p = 0.00$).

Table 4. Independent Samples T-test for Level of Affect and Perceived Competence Comparing Tattooed vs. Non-Tattooed Candidates in Entry-level and Management-level Positions

		t	df	p
Affect	Entry-Level	-0.07	112.00	0.95
	Management-Level	-2.86	117.00	0.01*
Perceived Competence	Entry-Level	-0.76	112.00	0.45
	Management-Level	-3.15	117.00	0.00*

Note: Student's t-test.

*Levene's test is significant ($p < 0.05$), suggesting a violation of the equal variance assumption.

Regarding the descriptive statistics (Table 5), at the entry-level, the applicant received similar scoring in average affect, with tattoos ($M = 2.94, SD = 1.18$) and without tattoos ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.15$). Perceived competence had a slightly higher difference in scoring in the tattooed group ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.21$) and non-tattooed group ($M = 2.92, SD = 1.05$). On the other hand, at the management-level, the tattooed applicant ($M = 3.14, SD = 1.33$) received higher scores in average affect than the non-tattooed applicant ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.01$), indicating that tattooed individuals were less liked. The same trend is also observed in the scoring of perceived competence, where the tattooed

applicant ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.23$) received higher scores than the non-tattooed applicant ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.01$).

Hence Hypothesis 6 is supported, and Hypothesis 5 is not supported. In general, tattooed applicants were perceived as less competent in both levels; however, the differences are not statistically significant. Moreover, tattooed applicants were slightly less liked in the management level, but the differences are also not statically significant.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Affect and Perceived Competence

Conditions	Position	Mean		SD		N	
		Affect	Perceived Competence	Affect	Perceived Competence	Affect	Perceived Competence
No Tattoos	Entry	2.94	2.754	1.175	1.210	63	63
	Management	2.52	2.468	1.011	1.011	62	62
Tattoos	Entry	2.95	2.917	1.151	1.051	51	51
	Management	3.14	3.114	1.330	1.226	57	57

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

Studies on the influence of tattoos are limited, perhaps because tattoos are considered to be a niche culture as opposed to a mainstream phenomenon. This paper sought to examine the influence of visible tattoos on hiring decisions. Specifically, this study examined the influence of visible tattoos on hiring decisions, perceptions of competence, and level of affect, in two different positions—entry-level and management-level. The results show that the influence of visible tattoos on hiring decisions is limited in the entry-level condition; however, the tattooed job candidate was negatively impacted for the management-level position. This phenomenon might result from the fact that tattooed applicants are more disliked than applicants without tattoos, especially for applicants at the management-level. Also, tattooed virtual applicants were also viewed as less competent, in both management-level and entry-level jobs.

At first glance, this may suggest that having visible tattoos may not be detrimental when applying to entry-level positions. However, a closer examination of the data suggests that tattoos might still have an influence. A number of participants indicated similar concerns about how the visible tattoos could leave a bad first impression to coworkers and potential customers in the entry-level position. The participants' ratings of perceived competence and affect provide us with a more complete picture underlying the hiring decisions.

The history and development of tattoos indicate that tattoos tend to carry negative connotations for the general public and the results support this. These findings offer evidence to support the stereotype toward people with tattoos and grounds to explain the differences in hiring decisions. As past researchers have indicated that affect and perceived competence toward the applicants influence hiring decisions (Cuddy et al., 2011; Howard & Ferris, 1996), this study conclude that, at least in the management-level position, visible tattoos decreased the participants' liking toward the job candidate, and consequently, their ratings of the candidate's competence decreased their likelihood of making a hiring recommendation.

5.2 Implications

From the experiment, this study conclude that visible tattoos have some influence on hiring decisions. The findings could also offer some practical implications. For the general public, this paper raises questions around the fair treatment of tattooed workers. Raising awareness around this issue, which was an objective of this paper, will serve to educate people in charge of personnel decisions around bias and stereotype behaviours toward tattooed individuals.

For interviewees, this paper reveals potentially unfair treatment in the workplace. Efforts have already been made in a great number of workplaces to develop fair and efficient interview processes. Just as many training programs have been developed to correct bias and stereotype behaviours, such as gender bias, training could also be developed to train interviewees to avoid such bias and stereotype behaviours. However, considering the small number of job applicants with visible tattoos, organizations should evaluate the costs and benefits of such analysis. Alternatively, and perhaps more reasonably, current training could mention biases around physical appearance, such as visible tattoos. At the very least, this paper may raise awareness about the existence of such phenomenon.

5.3 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to document empirically the actual existence of a suspected phenomenon. Although this study has long suspected the influence of tattoos on other people's perceptions and evaluations, those suspicions had not yet been demonstrated empirically. With the growing numbers of tattoo wearers, tattoos are no longer a niche culture. As those tattoo wearers enter the job market, their working situation becomes a topic worth documenting. In order to solve this problem, this paper used an experimental method to examine the influence of tattoos on hiring decisions in interviews.

From this experiment, this study learned that visible tattoos have a negative impact on hiring decisions, particularly in management-level positions. The results show that job candidates applying for entry-level positions suffer fewer consequences due to their visible tattoos. On the other hand, hiring decisions for management-level positions were adversely affected. As tattoos greatly contradicted interviewees' traditional expectations of a leader, applicants for management-level positions had a greater chance of being rejected. At the same time, at the management level, applicants with visible tattoos were less liked and perceived as less competent than the applicants without tattoos, even though, in this case, the same individual was participating in the interview (with or without tattoo). The only difference was the presence of visible tattoos. As researchers have demonstrated that tattooed workers are facing difficulties in workplace, including lowered compensation and discrimination in hiring (Foltz, 2014; Miller et al., 2009; Timming, 2015). This study shows that for the same positions, applicants with visible tattoos are less likely to be selected than applicants without visible tattoos with same qualifications.

6. Limitation and Future Research

This paper contains some limitations. A major limitation is that the result of this paper was derived from a pure experiment, where all factors were strictly controlled, except for the treatment of tattoos. This is a strength, in some ways, because it allows us to draw causal conclusions.

Future research could improve this particular paper by addressing the limitations mentioned above. To begin with, the efforts could also be spent in investigating other moderation factors that influence the strength between visible tattoos and hiring decisions. Varying the gender of the job candidate could also lead to some interesting insights into the differences in perceptions around tattooed individuals. Last but not least, the relationship between visible tattoos and other workplace outcomes could also be investigated, including, for example, the influence of tattoos on compensation, job assignments, or promotion opportunities. Similarly, whether gender or age moderates the strength of the bias could also worth examining.

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