



GANDA KA? - INFLUENCE OF PRETTY PRIVILEGE: THE SOCIAL CURRENCY OF PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS IN FILIPINO CAREER MOBILITY

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ABSTRACT

Social and career opportunities are greatly yet subtly influenced by pretty privilege — physical appearance frequently acts as a subtle yet potent form of social currency in the workplace. This study looked at how, in the Philippine work context, pretty privilege affects hiring, promotions, treatment, and general career advancement. The study used a descriptive phenomenological design, grounded in the halo effect theory, to document the real-life experiences of the study's participants that were purposefully chosen based on their exposure to the workplace and professional experience. The study also included HR professionals from a variety of industries where appearance is not a definite requirement. This phenomenon, known as pretty privilege, reflects the unspoken advantages granted to individuals deemed attractive. Despite its growing relevance, the subject has remained underexplored in the Philippines, where beauty often functions as a subtle form of social currency that most have experienced however its impact has yet to be fully understood. Data were collected using an expert-validated questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed thematically to capture recurring perceptions and their experiences. The findings revealed that beauty

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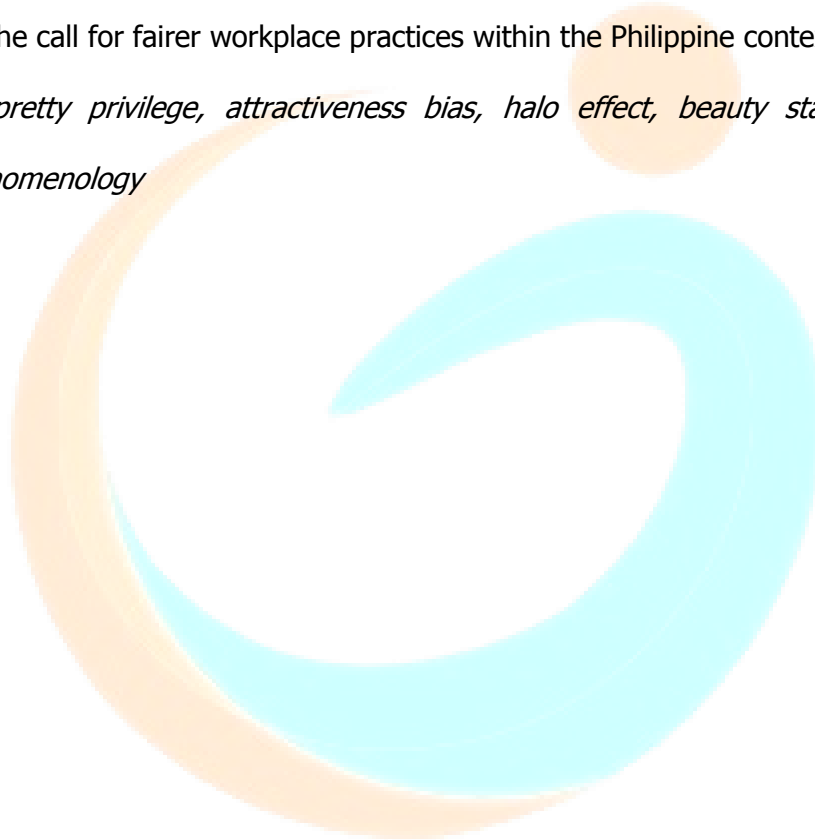
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standards strongly shaped perceptions of competence, status, and credibility in the workplace.

Working individuals who deem physically attractive features were often associated with positive traits and provided with more career opportunities, while those considered “less attractive” reported experiences of bias, exclusion, or underestimation. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on equity, inclusivity, and the Pretty Privilege phenomenon, emphasizing the call for fairer workplace practices within the Philippine context.

Keywords: *pretty privilege, attractiveness bias, halo effect, beauty standards, career mobility, phenomenology*



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