



# **Biases in Hiring and Admissions: A Qualitative Study of Gender, Race, and Disability**

## **Authors**

**Mohammed Faizaan, Kashvi Mangal, Richard  
Odhiambo Okech, Vaibhavi Gunjan, Aparna  
Jha, Manishita Das, Ikpa Ochanya Euginia,  
Chrisma Gabriela**



## Abstract

Stereotypes in recruitment and admission continue to shape approaches for possibilities regardless of the developing commitments to inclusion, equality and equity. This abstract evaluates how biases based on - gender, race or disability influence the overall decision making processes in selection, recruitment and admission. Gender-based stereotypes often assume manifestations about lack of leadership quality, emotional capacity, commitment towards career, this results in the discriminative evaluation of candidates. Bias based on race controls through both obvious biases and subtle systematic biases such as name-based biases, hampering ethical screening and testing schemes, disadvantage towards individuals from marginalized communities who suffer from disproportionality in academics and professionalism. Disability based stereotypes, often overlooked, reflect an discriminative attitude that evaluates and correlates disability with incompetence or excessive infrastructural expense, leading to the aligned and structured way of exclusion of qualified candidates based on biases.

This abstract particularly further highlights the influence of unconscious bias which is exclusively rooted deep inside social and cultural conditioning of mindset and organizational cultures. Such stereotypes not only pulls from fairness and equity but also restricts organizational inclusivity, innovation and individual dignity. By neutralizing structural inequalities, these biases in hiring and admission results in long term organizational loss and underdevelopment. Using contextual terminologies like “racism” in western context, “castebased discrimination” in south Asian context and “ethnicity based” stereotypes in multicultural regions, the paper ensures the acknowledgement of accuracy and inclusivity in order to sustain the ethical and dignified representation.

The topic demands for the need of transparency, standard recruitment methods and inclusivity that actively challenge all such biases. Acknowledging biases is not only an ethical or legal obligation or duty but a crucial step for the upliftment of the entire society by instilling meritocracy, institutional diversity, justice, human policy and overall achievement of ethical organizational goals and objectives in both professional and academic fields.



## Introduction

Prejudices in recruitment and admission processes continue to pose a major structural challenge in modern institutions, even as global efforts push for diversity, equity, and inclusion. While many formal policies aim to ensure fairness, real-world studies clearly show that unfair patterns still shape how decisions are made. For example, audit studies find that resumes with "white-sounding" names get around 50% more callbacks than identical resumes with "Black-sounding" names (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). This demonstrates racial bias persists in systems that claim to evaluate candidates based solely on merit. Such results indicate that hiring outcomes depend not just on qualifications but also on social ideas about a person's identity and background.

Gender-based discrimination offers another clear example of how stereotypes influence judgments. Research shows that when identical applications carry female names, they are seen as less skilled and less suitable for hire, and evaluators suggest lower starting salaries for women than for men (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012). These biases tend to be subtle and unconscious, rooted in common assumptions about women's leadership skills, work commitment, or fit for certain jobs. In the end, this creates ongoing systemic hurdles that block women and gender-diverse people from equal access to jobs and career growth.

Disability-based discrimination is a vital but often ignored part of this problem in hiring and admissions. Studies reveal that applicants who share their disabilities get far fewer positive responses from employers compared to equally qualified people without disabilities (Ameri et al., 2018). These trends come from deep-rooted ableist views that tie disability to lower productivity, extra costs, or poor ability to adapt, even when evidence shows that's not true.

Crucially, these types of discrimination don't act alone—they intersect to create layered and complex disadvantages for people. Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality (1989) points out that those with multiple marginalized identities face special forms of exclusion that single-category analyses can't fully explain. Research on implicit cognition demonstrates that biases often operate automatically and outside conscious awareness, influencing judgment even among individuals who consciously endorse equality (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). These overlapping forms of discrimination reinforce one another, producing compounded disadvantages that cannot be explained through single-axis frameworks alone (Crenshaw, 1989). That is why we must view biases in hiring and admissions as connected issues, deeply tied to larger social power structures. All in all, these patterns show that discrimination in hiring and admissions goes beyond individual bad attitudes, it's built into institutions through both open practices and quiet judgment tools. Grasping these forces is crucial for creating truly fair and open systems for selecting and evaluating people.

The objectives intended to be discussed in this paper are as follows:

1. To examine how gender, race, and disability biases influence hiring and admission processes.
2. To analyse the mechanisms through which these biases operate within institutional decision-making.
3. To evaluate the role of intersectionality in shaping experiences of discrimination.
4. To propose structural and procedural strategies for reducing bias in recruitment and admissions.



## Literature Review

Discrimination in the labor field should not be viewed as several independent biases but as a historically established phenomenon embedded in systems of inequality and hierarchy. Recent studies indicate that multiple inequalities (gender, racial, disabled and caste) interact with one another and produce different types of discrimination. While previous approaches treated each category as a separate entity, contemporary research emphasizes its interconnectedness, putting the stress on processes and mechanisms of oppression rather than on individual acts of discrimination. It should be noted that while intersectionality serves as an appropriate framework for analyzing employment discrimination, it tends to generalize the matter in question. As a result, its practical applicability becomes an essential concern in discussions about labor discrimination. This paper critically engages with existing research on intersectionality in employment discrimination, highlighting key gaps in relation to ableism, disability inclusion, and the structural influence of patriarchy and caste.

### Ableism in Hiring:

**Intersectional Analysis The Construction of the "Ideal Worker":** The concept of the "ideal worker" acts as an important mechanism of exclusion in the labour market. According to Williams (2000), it refers to a worker who is constantly available and productive without any caregiving responsibilities, which tends to favour men. Acker (2006) builds on this by arguing that organisational cultures are shaped by gender norms, where male standards are treated as neutral and taken for granted. When ableism is considered, the limits of this idea become even clearer. Garland-Thomson (2002) uses the concept of the "normate" to show how labour markets tend to prefer individuals who fit able-bodied, white, and middle-class standards. In this sense, hiring practices are not just about evaluating skills but also about assigning value to certain kinds of bodies and identities. Although this framework is useful, it can sometimes become too broad, as it assumes similar patterns across all contexts. In reality, the idea of the "ideal worker" can vary across regions and industries. Even so, the key point remains that employability is socially shaped in ways that exclude those who do not fit dominant expectations. In this context, Meekosha's (2011) idea of "triple jeopardy" becomes especially relevant.

### Gendered Dimensions of Ableism:

As discussed earlier, gender and ableism are closely linked, and this connection becomes visible through everyday stereotypes and social expectations. Women with disabilities often face a double form of marginalisation: they are seen as dependent because of gender norms and as incapable due to ableist attitudes. Because of this, their chances of entering and sustaining employment are often reduced. For example, Frederick and Shifrer (2019) show that girls and women with disabilities are frequently pushed towards low-paying and traditionally female-dominated jobs. This indicates that employment discrimination does not start at the hiring stage but is shaped much earlier through socialisation and educational pathways. Another aspect that should be raised in this context relates to the ability of disabled women to overcome structural barriers. A more nuanced perspective would acknowledge both structural barriers and how individuals navigate and push back against these constraints.



## **Racialized Disability and Employment Discrimination:**

The intersection of race and disability challenges traditional ways of analysing inequality by showing how these categories are closely connected and shape each other. Bell (2006) criticises disability studies for largely focusing on white experiences, which overlooks how racial inequality influences both how disability is understood and how it is lived. Building on this, Erevelles and Minear (2010) argue that race can itself contribute to the production of disability through structural conditions such as environmental injustice, limited access to healthcare, and poverty. This shifts the focus away from individual impairments and towards broader systemic inequalities, highlighting the role of the state and economic structures in producing marginalisation. Empirical studies support this perspective. Hou (2020) finds that Black disabled individuals have significantly lower employment rates than their white counterparts, while Wilson-Kovacs et al. (2008) show that racial and disability biases interact in ways that deepen exclusion. However, while these studies clearly point to patterns of inequality, they often do not fully explain how these overlapping biases operate in specific organisational settings. This reflects a broader limitation in intersectional research where identifying patterns does not always lead to clear explanations of how discrimination actually works in practice

## **Inclusive Hiring Practices: Effectiveness and Limitations**

Evidence on Hiring Bias Intervention: Inclusive hiring practices are often presented as a primary solution to employment discrimination, yet empirical evidence suggests that their impact is limited. Resume audit studies provide compelling evidence of persistent bias. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) reveal significant racial discrimination, while Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) demonstrate gender bias in professional evaluations.

However, these studies are frequently critiqued for their methodological limitations. By isolating single variables such as race or gender, they may oversimplify the complex and layered nature of discrimination. Ameri et al. (2018) address this gap by incorporating disability, finding a significant “disability penalty” that varies across gender and occupational contexts. Despite their contributions, audit studies primarily capture early-stage hiring discrimination and may not reflect biases that emerge during interviews, promotions, or workplace interactions.

This suggests that while inclusive hiring policies are necessary, they are insufficient in addressing the full spectrum of workplace inequality.

More fundamentally, such interventions often operate within existing definitions of merit and productivity rather than challenging them. As a result, they risk functioning as corrective measures rather than transformative solutions.



## **Patriarchy and Sexual harassment in workplace**

Patriarchal power structures continue to shape workplace dynamics despite formal commitments to gender equality. The persistence of sexual harassment across diverse contexts suggests that inequality is not merely the result of individual misconduct but is embedded within broader systems of informal power that extend beyond formal organisational hierarchies. Women in positions of authority frequently encounter resistance and hostility, not due to a lack of competence but because their presence disrupts established gender norms. This indicates that workplace power is not solely determined by formal position but is also deeply cultural, operating through everyday interactions, expectations, and practices that reinforce male dominance. Although legal frameworks and institutional policies have been introduced to address workplace harassment, their effectiveness remains limited. This is largely because such measures tend to focus on individual incidents rather than addressing the wider organisational cultures that enable such behaviour. Furthermore, the normalization of harassment, often tolerated due to fear of social or economic consequences reflects the deep entrenchment of patriarchal values within professional environments. In this context, workplace harassment should not be viewed as an isolated or exceptional occurrence but rather as a mechanism through which existing gender hierarchies are reproduced and sustained.

### **Gender pay gap**

Women's behaviour in the workplace is also shaped by internalised patriarchy. It is a phenomenon where women adopt or internalize sexist beliefs towards themselves and other women. It is rooted in patriarchal structures which institutionalise male dominance through religion, family, legal and educational systems. Patriarchal attitudes, often practised at home, are also transferred to the organisational setting. This transfer enables men to maintain their status quo, whereby women are discriminated against and often placed in inferior positions. The gender pay gap remains a persistent feature of contemporary labour markets reflecting both structural inequalities and deeply embedded social norms. Although some progress has been observed over time, the slow pace of change indicates that the underlying causes are systemic and enduring. Structural explanations, including occupational segregation, unequal access to leadership positions, and biased evaluation systems account for a significant portion of this disparity. However, these factors alone do not fully explain its persistence. The concept of internalised patriarchy provides further insight by illustrating how societal expectations shape women's career choices, negotiation practices, and perceptions of authority. At the same time, an overemphasis on internalisation risks shifting responsibility onto individuals rather than addressing the structural conditions that constrain their choices. A more balanced analysis recognises that individual behaviour is shaped by broader institutional and social contexts.

Moreover, the gender pay gap does not operate uniformly but intersects with race and other forms of inequality resulting in more pronounced disparities for marginalized groups. This underscores that wage inequality is not merely an economic issue but is deeply embedded within wider systems of social stratification.



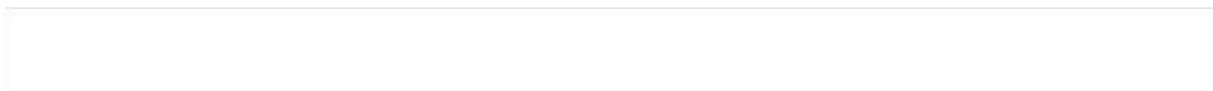
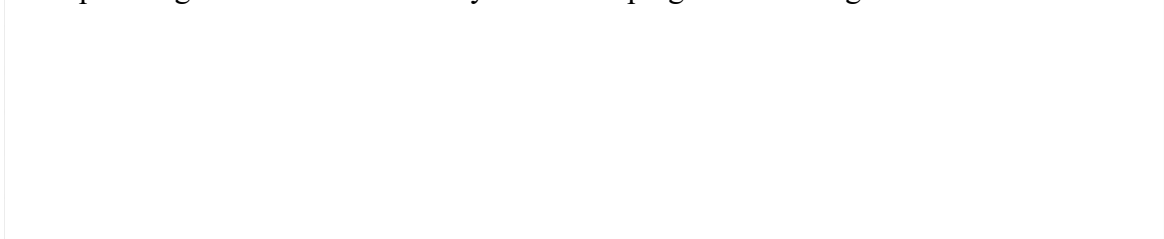
## **Caste based discrimination in hiring and workplace**

The Caste system in South Asia and particularly India, have existed for thousands of years which divides society into hierarchical groups by birth defined on a purity scale. Castebased discrimination continues to play a significant role in shaping labour market inequality, particularly in India. Evidence from resume audit studies shows that candidates from marginalized castes receive fewer callbacks even when they have similar qualifications. This points to the presence of bias right at the stage of entry into employment.

However, limiting the discussion to hiring practices alone does not fully explain the problem. Inequalities in access to education, regional location, and types of available work already place lower-caste groups at a disadvantage before they even enter the job market. In this way, caste inequality is not only reproduced at the point of hiring but is sustained through wider social and economic structures. There are also clear parallels with racial inequality in other contexts. In both cases, exclusion operates through a mix of direct discrimination and institutional processes that reinforce existing hierarchies over time. This suggests that different systems of inequality often follow similar underlying patterns. At the same time, research on caste and employment remains relatively limited compared to studies on race and gender. This highlights an important gap and points to the need for more detailed and intersectional work that treats caste as a central factor rather than a secondary concern.

### **Methodology:**

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine biases in hiring and admission processes related to gender, disability, and race. The case was selected due to its relevance to recruitment or admission decision-making and the presence of formal equality and non-discrimination policies. Data was collected from secondary sources and was obtained from institutional documents, including recruitment or admission guidelines, diversity policies, and relevant legal or policy frameworks. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding and identification of recurring patterns related to discriminatory practices and institutional bias. Ethical considerations were strictly observed. While the case study design limits broad generalization, it provides in-depth insights into institutional dynamics shaping bias in hiring and admissions.





## Case Studies:

### **Facebook hiring discrimination case (US DOJ, 2020 - 2021, publicly resolved 2021 - 2023)**

Between 2018 and 2019, Facebook created a separate hiring track for certain professional positions that were often filled with temporary visa holders, such as H-1B workers. Under U.S. law, employers are required to test the domestic labour market and consider qualified U.S. applicants before sponsoring foreign workers. However, in 2020, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) filed a lawsuit alleging that Facebook's hiring practices for these roles were deliberately structured to discourage U.S. applicants. The company relied on paper-only applications, limited job advertisements, and procedures that were significantly less accessible than its standard online recruitment systems. Although Facebook ultimately agreed to a substantial financial settlement and changes to its hiring processes, it did so without admitting liability. The alleged discrimination did not take an overt or explicit form. Rather than openly excluding U.S. workers, Facebook created a parallel and less visible recruitment channel that effectively restricted access. By avoiding widely used application platforms and introducing procedural barriers, the company reduced the likelihood that qualified U.S. candidates would apply or be considered. This illustrates a form of structural and procedural discrimination, where inequality is embedded within the design of hiring systems rather than expressed through direct statements or policies. This case demonstrates how organisational practices can produce discriminatory outcomes while maintaining formal compliance with legal requirements. It shifts attention away from individual bias and towards institutional design, showing that discrimination can operate through seemingly neutral procedures. The case also raises broader questions about regulatory oversight, as it suggests that existing frameworks may not adequately capture indirect or process-based forms of exclusion. Ultimately, it highlights the need to critically examine not only hiring outcomes but also the processes through which opportunities are distributed.

### **U.S. Supreme Court - Harvard & UNC admissions case (student for fair admissions v/s Harvard/UNC, 2023)**

In *Students for Fair Admissions (SFFA) v. Harvard* and *SFFA v. University of North Carolina*, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2023, plaintiffs argued that Asian American applicants were systematically disadvantaged in undergraduate admissions. Analysis of Harvard's internal data indicated that Asian applicants often had stronger academic and extracurricular profiles than many other candidates yet consistently received lower "personal ratings." These ratings, which assessed qualities such as leadership, likability, and character, were based largely on admissions officers' file evaluations rather than direct interaction. Given their significant weight in the admissions process, these subjective assessments played a crucial role in determining outcomes. The Court ultimately ruled against the use of race-conscious admissions policies, holding that they violated principles of equal protection.



In this case, discrimination did not operate through explicit exclusion but through patterns embedded in evaluative criteria. Asian applicants were not formally barred; instead, they were systematically rated lower on subjective measures compared to similarly qualified white applicants. These criteria were loosely defined and lacked clear standards; they allowed space for implicit biases and stereotypes, such as assumptions about personality or “well-roundedness,” to influence decision-making.

This case highlights the role of institutional discretion in reproducing inequality. The reliance on subjective evaluation frameworks combined with limited transparency and accountability, created conditions in which bias could persist without being easily identified. It also raises important questions about the limits of “holistic” assessment models, which, while intended to capture a broader range of qualities, may inadvertently introduce new forms of inequality.

The case illustrates how discrimination can be embedded within evaluative systems rather than explicit rules. It suggests that fairness in selection processes depends not only on the absence of overt bias but also on the design and monitoring of criteria used to assess candidates. For policymakers and institutions, this underscores the challenge of balancing diversity goals with the need to ensure that evaluation mechanisms do not produce unintended and unequal outcomes.

### **Findings:**

The results of this research show that bias in hiring and admissions procedures are not discrete and obvious discrimination processes, but rather processes that cumulate and are institutionally embedded and happen at a variety of decisionmaking levels. Instead of taking place at one specific location that can be determined, discrimination is created by the combination of screening criteria, evaluation practices, and institutional norms, which individually seem to be neutral, but together produce unequal results. This stratification of prejudice renders it hard to find out and confront because the accountability is spread out within the procedural steps instead of being concentrated within the decisions that are made.

One primary way in which bias functions is subjectivity of the evaluation criteria. The notions of merit, potential, personality and cultural fit are all interpretive spaces that make decision-makers base their judgments on a socially conditioned basis, instead of a standardized basis. Without clearly stipulated evaluation systems, people fall back to cognitive shortcuts that are influenced by prevailing social norms. These standards are traditionally associated with masculinity, upper-caste or racial privilege, and able-bodiedness, thus defining some identities as inherently more appropriate or competent. Consequently, subjectivity does not simply permit bias, but structures bias to reproduce it in a way that gives it a semblance of impartiality.



Notably, such evaluative processes do not work in the same way in all social groups but have differentiated and overlapping effects. Gender bias in leadership, power, and reasonability cloud leadership with masculine characteristics, which places women and gender diverse people at a disadvantage in terms of selection. At the same time, the racial or caste-based identities, i.e., names, accents, schools, or location of origin, serve as proxies of perceived competence and professionalism. Disability adds a further dimension, with applicants being judged not only by ability but also under the assumptions of productivity, adaptability as well as institutional cost. When such identities overlap, their impacts are not additive but compounding: a disabled woman who belongs to a marginalized caste or racial group will face stereotypes that exert their effects in a compounding manner that cannot be described as the addition of these categories alone.

The results also indicate that formally neutral policies and meritocratic structures tend to serve as structural channels of privilege. Referral-based recruitment, old-fashioned admissions, high-stakes testing, and algorithmic screening are some common practices that are often sold as objective selection practices. Nevertheless, the systems are incorporated in more expansive social inequalities that define resource access, networks, and opportunities. As a result, members of the dominant groups are over-targeted, not due to their higher ability, but because the institutional accounts of merit are constructed in ways that benefit the dominant groups. This illustrates that inequality may be reproduced even without the deliberate discriminatory intent since structural conditions favor one group against another in a predetermined way.

The other important finding is that institutional narrative plays a key role in justifying unequal outcomes. To explain the inequality in employment or admissions, organizations frequently cite outside influences like pipeline constraints, absence of prepared candidates, or personal inadequacies. Such framing dislocates the blame on institutional practices and hides the contribution of internal decision making structures in the generation of inequality. Such narratives create the appearance of naturalness or inevitability of outcomes and thus legitimize the status quo and discourage serious structural critique or reform.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes that prejudice is reinforced not only by the official procedures but also organizational culture and unwritten rules. Despite the official support of diversity, equity, and inclusion in institutions, long-held assumptions related to competence, professionalism, and fit still influence the process of decisionmaking. These cultural dynamics are intertwined with the workings of the procedures to produce a self-reinforcing system where exclusion becomes a norm and is perpetuated over the years.

The overall effect of such processes is the systematic marginalization of qualified persons within marginalized groups with broader consequences than individual performance. The institutions reduce their innovation, flexibility and ability to solve problems by eliminating different views. Simultaneously, the tenacity of these trends compromises the validity of meritocratic principles, showing that the opportunity system is designed not exclusively on the basis of aptitudes, but on the basis of conformity to socially dominant social categories of the past. Lastly, it can be seen that the findings have highlighted the significance of context-related types of stratification, including caste in South Asia, race in Western settings, and ethnicity in other locations. Such systems cannot be substituted, yet they are based on the unique historical and social processes that determine the ways bias is manifested and embedded. But in all these settings, a general pattern is found: institutional organizational settings project more widely held social ranks into decision-making procedures, instantiating inequality into processes that are supposed to be objective and merit based



## Discussion:

Hiring and admission systems are frequently discussed as meritocratic procedures aimed at the identification of the most competent applicants, but the results of the present study prove that these processes can be discussed as the organized social selection, where the institutional norms, evaluating standards, and cultural presuppositions play an active role in the final results. Instead of acting as a neutral filter of talent, these processes replicate already existing social hierarchies by entrenching bias in the very criteria of defining merit. One of the main lessons that can be drawn in the course of this analysis is that bias does not necessarily work in the form of explicit discrimination but rather through normalized decision-making practices. The subjective evaluation, informal judgment, and use of the so-called fit allow decision-makers to interpret the candidates in the socially conditioned frames without the illusion of objectivity. That is why discrimination continues even in the situations when people are aware of their support of equality: bias is not in the first place a failure of personal will, but a characteristic of institutional design that orders the making of decisions. This dynamic is especially well demonstrated with the concept of cultural fit. Although commonly explained as a strategy of maintaining cohesion within organizations, it, in reality, serves as a source of reproducing social similarity. The decision-makers are more inclined to consider the candidates who represent their backgrounds, values, and experiences, which strengthens homogeneity in the institutions. It is highly biased against members of marginalized populations, not due to incompetence, but rather because they do not conform to the dominant cultural norms that are implicitly considered a neutral standard.

Notably, the impacts of these processes are not homogeneous but intersectional, and the results vary depending on how gender, race, caste and disability interact. As an illustration, although women might encounter obstacles associated with beliefs regarding leadership and dedication, they compound with racial or caste-based prejudices that cast doubt on their ability or professionalism. Equally, disability-based bias is not a single phenomenon as it is intersected by gendered and racialized norms that cause less noticeable yet more deeply rooted exclusion. This is a reiteration of the weakness of single-axis analyses, which do not reflect the interaction of many systems of power to influence decision making processes. The ongoing nature of those trends also defies the belief that formal equality measures can be enough to guarantee fairness. Diversity and non-discrimination policies are not always consistent with practices that produce unequal results, which is an indication of the disconnect between institutional promises and operational facts. Such a gap is due to the fact that most interventions are aimed at altering the attitudes but do not reorganize the processes with the help of which decisions are made. Bias, as indicated by the results, is perpetuated in both procedural and structural processes, i.e., that surface-level solutions, e.g. awareness training, will not lead to much change as long as institutional change is not implemented on a grander scale.

Organizationally, the implications of such dynamics go beyond the question of fairness to institutional performance and flexibility. Organizations that filter people out of various social backgrounds in a systematic way restrict their access to a more diverse pool of perspectives, experiences, and ways of problem-solving. Studies have continuously revealed that diversity can positively affect the level of creativity, quality of decisions and innovations hence biased selection procedures not only disfavor individuals but also ruin the effectiveness of organizations in more dynamic and competitive contexts.



On a more general level, the results of these studies point to the role of hiring and admission systems as locations of reproduction and legitimization of social inequality. These processes are generally construed as processes of merit and as such, have with them an air of legitimacy that masks the structural conditions under which they are constructed. Underrepresentation of marginalized groups is frequently viewed as the manifestation of personal or group shortcomings, but not of systemic bias. By doing so, institutional practices play not only a part in the material inequality but also in the reinforcement of the narratives that legitimize and make normal the inequality. Lastly, the discussion identifies the significance of placing bias in particular social and historical circumstances. Although the mechanisms of stratification might vary, i.e., caste in South Asia, race in the Western world, and ethnicity in other places, the general pattern is the same: institutional procedures convert more general social inequalities into the result of the selection. This underscores the importance of context-specific reforms that deal with how inequality is patterned and recreated in various contexts, as opposed to general or one-size-fits-all solutions. Collectively, these observations imply that to overcome the problem of bias in hiring and admissions, one would need to stop thinking about the problem on a case-by-case basis and instead reestablish the institutional mechanisms. The absence of such changes means that systems purportedly based on the idea of merit will continue to reproduce inequality not as a beige, but as a natural progression of their design.

### **Scope:**

This paper will investigate stereotyping and bias in appointment and admission with particular emphasis on gender, disability, and context-dependent identity groups such as race, caste, and ethnic identity. This approach to the subject will be qualitative and interdisciplinary, relying on existing scholarship and case law to better comprehend discrimination on these grounds. The study employs a context-sensitive approach, where they apply concepts such as ‘race’ in Western countries, ‘caste’ in South Asia, or ‘ethnicity’ in multicultural or African countries to adequately identify inequality in each region. The study uses an intersectional approach that acknowledges that people may face multiple inequalities. This research also delves into how fairness in the hiring or admission processes can be impacted by stereotypes and suggests the importance of clear and equitable practices in institutions. This research attempts to apply the knowledge of these concepts to understand the construction of structural discrimination in academia and professional environments.

### **Limitations:**

While this study presents a detailed and intersectional examination of bias in hiring and admissions, several limitations must be acknowledged to ensure a fair and responsible interpretation of its findings.

### **Methodological and Data Constraints**

The study relies primarily on qualitative secondary sources such as academic literature, policy reports, and documented legal cases. Although this approach allows for a broad and contextually grounded understanding of discrimination, it does not provide the level of empirical precision that primary data collection would offer. The absence of original field experiments, surveys, or resume audit studies limits the ability to measure the relative impact of different forms of bias or establish causal relationships in a controlled manner. As a result, the findings should be understood as analytically interpretive rather than statistically generalizable.



### Limits in Capturing Unconscious Bias

Unconscious bias poses inherent challenges for academic investigation because it operates below the level of conscious awareness. Recruiters and admissions officers may genuinely believe they are acting objectively, even when their decisions reflect internalized stereotypes. This study therefore focuses on observable outcomes and documented patterns of exclusion rather than direct psychological measurement of individual attitudes. The lack of direct access to cognitive processes may constrain the depth of insight into how such biases are formed and reproduced in everyday decision making.

### Constraints of Regional Terminology

The use of context specific categories such as race, caste, and ethnicity strengthens the cultural and historical accuracy of the analysis. However, it also restricts direct comparison across regions, as these systems of social stratification emerge from different historical and legal foundations. The study may therefore not fully capture overlapping or hybrid forms of discrimination that occur in transnational, migrant, or globally integrated institutions.

### Disclosure and Invisible Identities

The analysis of gender and disability based discrimination is affected by the issue of non disclosure. Individuals with non visible disabilities or non normative gender identities may choose not to reveal these aspects of their identity due to fear of stigma or exclusion. Consequently, available data often reflect only those whose identities are visible or formally disclosed, which may lead to an underestimation of the scale and complexity of institutional bias.

### Limitations in Policy Evaluation

Finally, while the study highlights the need for transparent and standardized recruitment and admission practices, it does not assess the long term effectiveness of such measures. Institutional commitments to diversity may exist at the policy level without producing meaningful changes in everyday practice. The absence of longitudinal evaluation limits the ability to determine whether proposed reforms lead to sustained structural transformation. These limitations do not weaken the central argument of the study but instead highlight areas requiring further research. Future studies incorporating primary data, mixed methodologies, and long term institutional analysis would help deepen understanding of how entrenched biases function and how they can be effectively addressed within academic and professional settings.



## **Justification:**

Often, discussions and empirical studies on bias in hiring and admissions have focused on single dimensions such as gender, disability, or race, treating them as separate and isolated issues. This fragmented approach fails to capture the complex and interconnected nature of bias as it operates within institutions. In reality, individuals may be denied employment opportunities or admission into academic institutions not because of a lack of competence or qualification, but solely due to socially constructed characteristics such as gender, disability, or socially relevant identifiers like race, ethnicity, or caste. Such practices undermine principles of fairness, equal opportunity, and social inclusion. While gender and disability discrimination are universal, the form of social stratification varies by context: race is a primary factor in Western societies, ethnicity in Africa, and caste in South Asia. This ensures that the study captures both universal and context-specific biases, providing a more accurate and globally relevant analysis of discriminatory practices.

This study is therefore justified as it seeks to integrate gender, disability, and these context-specific dimensions under a unified analytical framework, offering a holistic rather than an isolated perspective on bias in hiring and admissions. By examining these dimensions collectively, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how discriminatory practices are embedded within institutional processes and makes it possible to identify gaps in existing policies and practices that may otherwise remain unnoticed. The research is not beneficial to a single group alone; rather, it cuts across multiple facets of society. It is particularly relevant to policymakers, as it provides evidence that can support the formulation of more inclusive and equitable policies. By adopting a holistic perspective, policymakers can develop frameworks that address all forms of bias simultaneously, ensuring that no segment of society is excluded. The study also serves as an important eye-opener for academic institutions and other organizations by highlighting the need for more inclusive, transparent, and fair selection processes.

The findings of this study have important practical and policy relevance for addressing biases in hiring and admissions processes. Practically, the research can assist institutions and academic bodies in identifying and correcting discriminatory practices within recruitment and selection systems, thereby promoting more inclusive, transparent, and merit-based procedures. At the policy level, the holistic approach adopted in this study provides evidence that can inform the formulation and review of equality and non-discrimination policies, ensuring that gender, disability, and context-specific identifiers such as race, ethnicity, and caste are addressed collectively rather than in isolation. The findings can also support institutional reforms and strengthen advocacy efforts aimed at aligning hiring and admissions practices with national and international frameworks on equality, inclusion, and human rights. Overall, this research is timely, socially relevant, and essential for promoting fairness, equity, and inclusion in institutional practices.



## **Conclusion:**

To conclude, biases around gender, race, and disability keep playing a big role in shaping hiring and admission outcomes, even with official policies for equality and diversity pushes. Solid evidence highlights ongoing gaps, such as different evaluations and hires by gender (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), lower response rates due to race (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004), and fewer job chances for those with disabilities (Ameri et al., 2018). These trends prove discrimination lives in institutional setups, judgment methods, and automatic mental habits—not just deliberate actions.

This reality tests the idea of pure meritocracy, since choices often follow social stereotypes instead of true measures of skill and promise. People from underrepresented groups thus deal with built-in obstacles that cut off opportunities and slow social progress. Tackling this demands far more than surface-level promises of diversity. Key fixes include uniform judging tools, clear decision processes, blind hiring methods, and ways to hold people accountable. Without these steps, biased patterns will likely continue in places that claim to value fairness. The persistence of such patterns across multiple empirical studies indicates that bias is not incidental but systematically reproduced through institutional practices and decision-making frameworks.

At heart, building equitable hiring and admissions isn't only an ethical duty—it's a practical must. Institutions that cut bias and embrace diversity set themselves up for greater creativity, flexibility, and success in a fast-changing, global world. Addressing these challenges requires sustained structural intervention, as evidence suggests that without systemic reform, biases continue to reproduce inequality even within formally merit-based systems



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