Applicant Background and University's Impact on Hiring Decisions in China

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Abstract. Making hiring decisions without bias is meaningful for people that have the same ability but different backgrounds to have a fair chance to compete with job opportunities. There were previous studies show there are types of discrimination that exist during the hiring process. This study aimed to investigate the hiring bias in Chinese society, which has a different social hierarchy and culture compared to western studies. In an experiment with 2 × 2, domicile place × university, the between-subjects design was used to study the background and university-based hiring bias in China. The result shows that hiring bias does exist for both the location of domicile places and the ranking of universities of resumes. The future study is expected to apply the experiment to the real HR situation.

Keywords: Hiring Bias · Domicile places · University ranking

1 Introduction

With a previous study of the stability of ingroup and outgroup liking across cultures and development, we aimed to explore the hiring bias of Human resources in the Chinese cultural situation [1]. The bias of Human Resources, who makes hiring decisions, troubled some applicants. The existence of bias cause candidates loses job opportunities because of the groups they belong to instead of their ability or performance. For instance, the investigations on hiring discrimination help find the unfair treatment of people and groups due to their characteristics, which provides information for future implementation to improve the situation. This research was interested in the topic that is hiring discrimination about groups stereotypes or ingroup liking. In China, we observed that bias may exist in the applicants' undergraduate educational backgrounds and domicile places. People who got into the same level of the graduate program are weighted differently depending on their undergraduate educational background decided by the standardized National College Entrance Examination. Similarly, urban or rural backgrounds applicants are weighted differently in the hiring process too. We investigated the bias in two factors, background (domicile place is rural or urban) and university (undergraduate education background), in China using four kinds of resumes, and concluded that these two factors can separately affect people's decision-making processes.

M. F. b. Sedon et al. (Eds.): SSHA 2023, ASSEHR 752, pp. 792–797, 2023.
https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-062-6_102

2 Literature Review

According to the study discussed threatened egotism caused discrimination. The discrimination could be caused by the desire to keep low-status groups remain in their status. The research shows that Bayesian racism correlated negatively to the rationale and motivations of discrimination as desiring to maintain social hierarchy or the claim that stereotypes against the specific group help them make rational hiring decisions [2]. Besides, Chua & Mazmanian suggest that possibly invisible factors may contribute to hiring biases at technology companies, such as evaluators' assessments of fit and social class backgrounds [3]. We decide to investigate discrimination through two factors that consist of the implicit Chinese social hierarchy. Also, the analysis of gender and race base hiring discrimination. Through the experiment in this work, researchers applied research in five European countries and found the stereotype of the race group (which tends to overlap with signals of prototypical feminine masculine traits) may affect the hiring discrimination of one gender within the race [4]. The researchers argued that the chances for applicants depend on the match between their perceptions and the job's feminine or masculine traits [4]. By applying this argument, we extend our experiment under Chinese conditions and aim to analyze a factor that is associated with perceptions of traits that people think would affect workability.

Moreover, another work found that people have ingroup biases, particularly among religious groups, where they prefer people with similar religious or racial backgrounds. The results of this paper are relevant to discrimination in the workplace, hiring practices, and relations between religious and racial groups. Participants rated the suitability of applicants after viewing job applications with varying religious backgrounds (Christian, Muslim, or Atheist) and races (Black or White) [5]. We applied similar methodologies used in our experiments to examine discrimination in hiring decisions in Chinese society. Additionally, we aimed to have a 2×2 study enlightened by the method of 1996 research from Marlowe et al., and our participants would evaluate 4 resumes at the same time [6]. Another work investigates local and nonlocal hukou subjects. This work shows that Hukou identity affects perceived levels of trustworthiness, in which participants give more trust to those who have the same hukou identity [7]. This paper enlightens us to research the role that background plays in hiring discrimination.

In addition, there are several studies that show that domicile place bias exists when people make hiring decisions. In research from Jagannathan et al., "a significant number of these international funds hire managers who grew up in a country linked to the fund's investment mandate" [8]. A past literature review identified "17 factors that affect new graduate employability" [9]. Other studies that investigate the university's reputation's effect on hiring decisions had found that compared to the reputation of applicants' academic degrees, work experience is more crucial for hiring decisions [10]. We aimed to investigate the university rankings and domicile place factors based on hiring discrimination in China.

3 Method

3.1 Participants

One hundred undergraduates were randomly selected from a Chinese university. Then, we described the study procedures and participants then decided to participate in the study with informed consent.

3.2 Design

During the experiment, experimenters randomly assigned the participants in front of four resumes, and participants viewed four job applications from a fictional person who had applied for a position at a fictional organization. The applicants varied in both background and university, which resulted in a 2 (domicile place: [urban] or [rural]) × 2 (undergraduate education background: [Good university] or [Bad university]) between-subjects design. For the four resumes, we matched the confounding traits, such as past work experience, the same graduate program, or the effect of gender. The domicile places were selected in first-tier cities for urban and third-tier cities for rural. Similarly, the universities selected in a project 211/985 universities for good universities and non-first-batch for bad universities. Participants then chose one resume that was most suited for the job in their mind. Then, we asked them to rate how the two independent variables affected their choice on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 7 (determinant).

4 Result

When asked to choose one from the four resumes, 8.0% of participants chose Rural × Bad University, 18.0% chose Rural × Good University, 36.0% chose Urban × Good University, and 38.0% chose Urban × Bad University (Fig. 1).

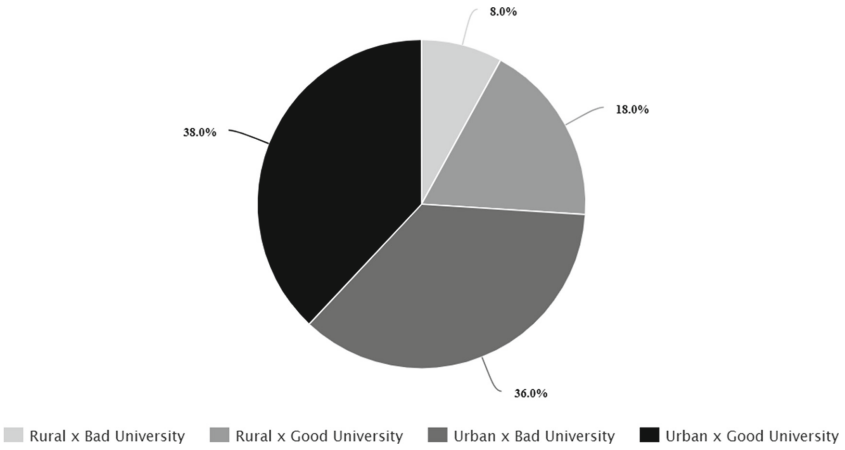

Fig. 1. Percentage of each resume being selected

Participants were then asked to rank the importance of undergraduate education background role in choosing a resume. For urban backgrounds × good universities were about 5.50. For rural backgrounds × good universities were about 5.31, urban backgrounds × bad universities were about 4.63, and rural backgrounds × bad universities were about 3.75.

Next, we used the Two-Way ANOVA Test to estimate the result. Table 1 shows that the factor undergraduate university (Factor A)'s p-value = 0.00001231. The difference between the averages of the two categories of the undergraduate university is big enough to be statistically significant. Additionally, the domicile place (Factor B) and the interactions both did not reach significance.

Afterward, participants were asked to rank the importance of the domicile place role in choosing a resume. For urban backgrounds × good universities were about 4.36, for rural backgrounds × good universities were about 3.94. For urban backgrounds × bad universities were about 4.72, and for rural backgrounds, × bad universities were about 4.00.

Table 1. Rate of undergraduate university background effect for the selection.

	DF	Sum of Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	F Statistic (df_1, df_2)	P-value
Factor A - rows (A)	1	21.7496	21.7496	21.2467(1,97)	0.00001231
Factor B - columns (B)	1	1.2725	1.2725	1.2431(1,97)	0.2676
Interaction AB	1	3.7412	3.7412	3.6537(1,97)	0.05886
Error	97	99.2961	1.0237		
Total	100	126.0594	1.2606		

Table 2. The rate of undergraduate domicile place affects the selection.

	DF	Sum of Square (SS)	Mean Square (MS)	F Statistic (df_1, df_2)	P-value
Factor A - rows (A)	1	2.2319	2.2319	2.1985(1,97)	0.1414
Factor B - columns (B)	1	6.6923	6.6923	6.5921(1,97)	0.01177
Interaction AB	1	−0.5866	−0.5866	−0.5778(1,98)	1
Error	97	98.3733	1.0152		
Total	100	106.8119	1.0681		

Then, we used the Two-Way ANOVA Test to estimate the result. Table 2 shows that the factor domicile place (Factor B)'s p-value = 0.01177. The difference between the averages of the two categories of domicile place is big enough to be statistically significant. In addition, undergraduate university (Factor A) and the interactions both did not reach significance.

5 Conclusion

This research investigated whether the background (domicile place) and university (undergraduate background) impact hiring discrimination in China. From the result, we predict that undergraduate education background and domicile place can separately affect people's decision-making processes, and there is no interaction between the two factors. This means that hiring discrimination does exist on both background and university factors. Moreover, we argue that group stereotypes exist in the discrimination toward the university and background because they are part of the Chinese social hierarchy.

5.1 Limitations

One of the most apparent limitations of this research is the participant selection, which randomly selected 100 undergraduate students from a university. In future studies, we could extend the sample size and the variety of participants. Also, undergraduate students do not have HR experience, and the result of the experiment may not represent the outcome of reality fully. In the future study, we expect to extend the research on the real HR situation. Also, gender is an effective confounding variable that should be paid attention to in the further study. One possible strategy to eliminate the impact of gender could be manipulating the marital status of the female. Moreover, directly asking participants to rank the importance of the factors for their choice may lead to participant bias.

5.2 Conclusion

Therefore, in future investigations, we could change our measurement method in order to prevent bias and confounding variables that could affect the result. What's more, people and researchers should pay more attention to focus on bias in the workplace, such as hiring and income. In this way, employees can develop their talents and professional knowledge under suitable specialties and improve the quality of work.

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