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Katrina Ferreira
Cornell University

Rachana Rao
Cornell University

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What is Meaningful to Students When Considering a Company - Are There Preferences Based on Ethnicity and Gender?

Abstract

[Excerpt] With a growing emphasis on diversity hiring for a more holistic organization, companies are advocating for diversity-consciousness. Students, in particular, are the main source of raw talent, coming in to an organization with fresh perspectives, adept academically with the current trends. In the research presented, we find that representation in leadership, perceptions of self-efficacy, equal opportunities, and mentorship greatly influence diverse students in making career and employment decisions.

Keywords

Human Resources, people of color, POC, gender, ethnicity, diversity, inclusion, diversity and inclusion, leadership development, role models, transparency, diverse community, flexibility, work-life balance, career development, diverse applicants, diverse candidates, STEM, efficacy, organizational climate, HR

Comments

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Executive Summary

Question:

What is meaningful to students when considering a company? What about people of color & women? Are there preferences based on ethnicity & gender or other criteria?

Overview:

With a growing emphasis on diversity hiring for a more holistic organization, companies are advocating for diversity-consciousness. Students, in particular, are the main source of raw talent, coming in to an organization with fresh perspectives, adept academically with the current trends. In the research presented, we find that representation in leadership, perceptions of self-efficacy, equal opportunities, and mentorship greatly influence diverse students in making career and employment decisions.

What factors are meaningful to diverse student candidates?

Diversity-conscious: Diverse student candidates, especially people of color and women, have a clear preference for employers who are diversity-conscious, and value this as one of the most important factors when choosing an employer. Candidates are interested in learning:

- How diverse is an employer's leadership team?
- Are there similarly-diverse positive role models in the company?
- How transparent is the employer about their diversity progress?
- Is the employer located in a diverse community?

Diverse students strongly value employers who are located in diverse communities, and a workforce and workplace which reflect the society in which it operates and fosters an inclusive talent environment.

Identity-related: Research suggests that diverse candidates' preferences for certain job attributes are directly tied to their identity, as perceptions of self-efficacy and opportunity structure are more relevant to minorities due to biases and historical injustices. These perceptions have a significant effect on both career aspirations and employer attractiveness:

- Recognizable employer 'brand' names and prestige
- Lucrative pay
- Development opportunities

Diverse candidate concerns are also important to recognize, as minority applicants may fear conforming to negative stereotypes, discrimination, and lack of support in a workplace.

Work: Both people of color and women highly value work **flexibility, work-life balance, and career development opportunities** when considering an employer, especially among career starters and millennials. Specific characteristics rated more highly by minorities, especially African Americans and women, than non-minorities are:

- Paid time off and working from home
- Professional development and mentoring
- Job security

How can Employers Attract Diverse Applicants?

The current strategies organizations have used to attract diverse and minority applicants include emphasizing similarities between applicant and recruiter, high-level diversity programs, and targeted recruitment and campus visits to identify target applicants. However, as more and more companies employ these strategies, it becomes increasingly difficult for diverse applicants to identify meaningful differences between employers as recruitment strategies conform. Diverse candidates want an accurate and honest impression of an employer's workplace and culture, as offering a real and genuine commitment to diversity, before accepting an offer.

Recruitment: When devising a strategy for diversity hiring, having a **combined focus on identity and efficacy** is important to weigh differences in job attribute preferences amongst candidates belonging to underrepresented minorities. Practices such as:

- Train recruiters and interviewers on implicit bias and inclusive recruitment strategies
- Use inclusive language which avoids implicit negative stereotypes in job postings
- Seek support and input from employee resource and affinity groups in diverse recruitment

A combination of the above practices are shown to have a significant positive impact on diverse recruitment efforts for 71% of employers who adopted such practices.

Development: Employers should provide **clear career development pathways** tailored to diverse employees, through mentorship and guidance from more senior employees of similarly diverse backgrounds, in order to foster deeper personal engagement and a workplace culture which supports diversity. Specifically for STEM career pathways, employers should develop comprehensive policies which encourage STEM aspirations and allow for employees to advocate for traditionally underserved populations.

Becoming a Good Employer of Diverse Candidates: Wharton's framework for "good" employers of diverse candidates focuses on four key elements (See Appendix A):

- **Representation:** Employ equitable percentages of women and people of color across all levels and units of the business, rather than "token" representatives only at high-visibility levels.
- **Pay:** Pay all workers an equitable wage, with equal pay for equal work regardless of gender or ethnicity- and track these metrics internally for accountability.
- **Health:** Provide support for women-specific or ethnicity-specific health concerns and needs, as well as highlight employee benefits which are most important to diverse groups.
- **Satisfaction:** Provide women and people of color with work which is satisfying, as opposed to menial or administrative tasks which could reinforce negative stereotypes- through variety, autonomy, and positive organizational climate.

Conclusion:

Companies are witnesses to significant benefits of hiring demographically and cognitively diverse candidates, especially in an era of globalization. However, their approach tends to be a 'one size fits all' strategy, seldom incorporating the attributes of organizational attractiveness. On reviewing the literature, it is clear that different attributes weigh differently for women and minority students affecting their career aspirations and employment decisions. Using the research and the recommendations presented, companies can strategize recruitment aligned with the respective attributes, in lieu of their identities and self-efficacy. However, companies must be careful in developing their strategy, keeping in mind the Equal Employment Opportunity laws, distinguished from affirmative action and quotas.

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Appendices:

Appendix A:

Four for Women: A Framework for Evaluating Companies' Impact on the Women They Employ

To identify the characteristics that make a company a good employer for women, we reviewed hundreds of academic studies of employment conditions, trends, and effects. Building on these studies, we propose the **Four for Women Framework**.

Companies that meet the **Four for Women** criteria are good employers for women. Their impact on the women they employ is positive and significant.

A company is a good employer for women if:

1. It employs a large percentage of women at every level and in every unit of the company;
2. It pays its employees at least enough to avoid poverty, pays equally for equal work, and has no gender pay gap;
3. It supports and protects the health of the women it employs (and the men, too); and
4. It provides satisfying working conditions for women (and for men, too).



REPRESENTATION

A good employer for women employs a large percentage of women at every level and in every unit of the company.



PAY

A good employer for women pays its employees at least enough to avoid poverty, pays equally for equal work, and has no gender pay gap.



HEALTH

A good employer for women supports and protects the health of the women it employs (and the men, too).



SATISFACTION

A good employer for women provides satisfying working conditions for women (and for men, too).

Appendix B:

ANOVA TESTS ON 21 JOB ATTRIBUTE DIMENSIONS, ETHNIC IDENTITY, EFFICACY
AND TOTAL JOB ATTRIBUTES BY RACIAL GROUPING

Variables	Caucasian		African American		F	p	η^2
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.			
1. Ample leisure time off	3.94	.93	4.10	.98	2.16	.14	.01
2. Requires working on problems of central importance	3.48	.82	3.91	.88	20.93	.00**	.06
3. Responsibility for taking risks	3.35	.90	3.69	1.00	10.16	.00**	.03
4. Allows you to make social contribution	3.91	.88	4.24	.81	12.34	.00**	.04
5. Opportunities for high income	4.22	.83	4.59	.71	19.63	.00**	.06
6. Encourages continued development of knowledge/skills	4.37	.77	4.72	.55	23.25	.00**	.07
7. Provides security	4.29	.86	4.47	.77	3.85	.05*	.01
8. Provides feelings of accomplishment	4.38	.69	4.63	.65	11.57	.00**	.03
9. Lets you develop your own methods for doing work	3.82	.81	4.10	.78	9.86	.00**	.01
10. Respected by other people	4.14	.76	4.54	.71	24.05	.00**	.07
11. Requires meeting and speaking with many people	3.48	.97	3.77	1.06	6.32	.01*	.02
12. Permits a regular routine in time and place of work	3.41	.98	3.73	1.12	7.25	.01*	.02
13. Clear-cut rules and procedures	3.44	.90	4.13	.93	47.24	.00**	.12
14. Satisfies cultural needs	3.57	.97	4.01	.95	17.33	.00**	.05
15. Intellectually stimulating	3.91	.81	4.36	.69	30.51	.00**	.08
16. Requires supervising others	3.41	.90	3.40	1.08	.026	.87	.00
17. Permits working independently	3.74	.87	4.05	.95	9.55	.00**	.03
18. Advancement to higher administrative positions	4.10	.87	4.48	.77	18.06	.00**	.05
19. Comfortable working conditions	4.30	.68	4.59	.70	14.06	.00**	.04
20. Change and variety in duties	3.82	.87	4.21	.79	17.91	.00**	.05
21. Requires creativity	3.53	.89	3.93	.97	14.75	.00**	.04
22. Ethnic Identity	2.69	.51	3.43	.43	200.28	.00**	.37
23. Self-Efficacy	4.56	.91	5.15	.91	34.15	.00**	.09
24. Job Attributes Total	3.84	.42	4.16	.47	43.34	.00**	.10

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

FIGURE 1
INTERACTION OF SELF-EFFICACY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY ON
JOB ATTRIBUTE PREFERENCES

