

Employers prefer male managerial potential to female proven track record

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Male job applicants who are perceived to have high levels of leadership potential are rated as a better employment prospect than a female applicant with proven leadership track record.

This is the finding of a study by undergraduate student Fatima Tresh, Dr Georgina Randsley de Moura and Abigail Player from the University of Kent that will be presented today, Wednesday 6 May at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference in Liverpool. The study was funded by a 2014 BPS Undergraduate Research Assistantship Scheme. The scheme marks out a student as a future researcher and potential academic.

A total of 98 participants (39 women) participated in an online hiring simulation. Each participant was shown four potential applicants for a managerial role with roughly the same age. The applications differed by varying the applicant's gender and assessments of leadership potential and leadership achievement. Participants evaluated each applicant for how successful they thought each would be in their career and which had the most impressive CV.

Male applicants with leadership potential were most likely to be seen as successful and having the most impressive CV. Also, the findings suggested that men with leadership potential were rated higher than men with leadership performance. However, female applicants with potential were not rated higher than those with performance.

Abigail said: "The findings have implications for gender equality in the workplace and provide initial evidence that women's leadership potential is not recognised by potential employers. This is a significant barrier to career progression and success for women."

More information: Full poster presentation title: 'The Role of Gender in Hiring Situations: The Preference for Potential'.

Provided by British Psychological Society

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