Hiring discrimination against ethnic minorities more marked for senior roles, resumé study finds

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A major study by Dr. Mladen Adamovic, Senior Lecturer in Cross-Cultural Management, and Dr. Andreas Leibbrandt, Professor in

Economics (Monash University), found that discrimination against ethnic minorities at the very first stage of recruitment for leadership roles is even more pronounced than that experienced with non-leadership roles.

The study found that applications for leadership roles that were submitted with English-sounding names were twice as likely to receive a positive response than those submitted with non-English names. The work is published in *The Leadership Quarterly* journal.

Dr. Adamovic's study, conducted in Australia, submitted over 12,000 job applications in response to more than 4,000 job advertisements. The applications used nearly identical resumés for fictional candidates, with the names altered to represent different ethnic groups. This 'resumé study' was the first to include leadership roles (such as management, team leader, and frontline leader positions) in its investigation of ethnic discrimination.

It examined six distinct ethnic groups to reflect Arabic, Australian Aboriginal, Chinese, English, Greek, and Indian backgrounds. The applications targeted jobs advertised in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane, across 12 different occupations.

For leadership roles, 26.8% of applications submitted with English names received positive responses, while only 11.3% of those with non-English names received positive responses.

For non-leadership roles, 21.2% of applications with English names received positive responses, while 11.6% of applications with non-English names received positive responses.

These results suggest that recruiters are more likely to perceive applicants with English names than those from ethnic minorities as

potential leaders.

Ethnic discrimination for [leadership](link) positions was higher still when the jobs required customer contact. For these customer-oriented jobs, 30.6% of job applications with English names received positive responses, while only 11.1% of applications with non-English names received positive responses.

In contrast, ethnic discrimination in recruitment was not influenced by the city, the sex of job applicants, or the types of attributes such as learning, creativity, and innovation required for the role.

"As well as violating anti-discrimination laws, businesses that are consciously or unconsciously rejecting people based on their name and not their qualifications and experience are reducing their chances of finding the right person for the role. It's clear that they need to look seriously at ways to reduce bias right from the first sift of applications," says Dr. Mladen Adamovic, senior lecturer in cross-cultural management.

More information: Mladen Adamovic et al, Is there a glass ceiling for ethnic minorities to enter leadership positions? Evidence from a field experiment with over 12,000 job applications, *The Leadership Quarterly* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2022.101655](link)

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