



Turun yliopisto
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Beauty – a premium or a penalty?

**THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL
ATTRACTIVENESS IN LABOUR MARKET
AND ITS INTERSECTIONAL OUTCOMES**

**Narrative literature review on appearance-based discrimination
in the labour market**

Taloussosiologian pro gradu -tutkielma
Master's Thesis
in Economic Sociology

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28.2.2025
Turku

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<input type="checkbox"/>	Väitöskirja

Oppiaine	Taloussosiologia	Päivämäärä	28.2.2025
Tekijä(t)	Ria Viitala	Sivumäärä	89
Otsikko	Beauty – a penalty or a premium? The role of physical attractiveness in labour market and its intersectional outcomes. Narrative literature review on appearance-based discrimination in the labour market.		
Ohjaaja(t)	VTT Pekka Räsänen & VTT Arttu Saarinen		

Tiivistelmä	
<p>The purpose of this thesis was to examine the multidimensional roles of socially perceived physical attractiveness and their outcomes in the labour market. I conducted the thesis as narrative literature review and utilised the chosen methodology to perform thematic analysis based on secondary data from existing literature. The thesis material consists of eleven international research articles found from two different databases. In the literature review, I compiled information on how physical attractiveness influences hiring decisions, wage disparities, career advancement, and overall labour market outcomes.</p> <p>This thesis has three research questions: 1) What role does physical attractiveness play in the labour market and how does attractiveness affect the socioeconomic outcomes in the labour market? 2) How and to what extent are social stratification and gendered double standards produced and maintained within labour market when it comes to physical attractiveness? 3) What other explanations could possibly exist to explain beauty effects in the labour market?</p> <p>The thesis aimed to achieve a deeper understanding of the intersectional factors influencing the consequences of attractiveness in the labour market. Additionally, when interpreting the material, I focused on the cultural implications of physical attractiveness in labour market outcomes. The emphasis is on the complex interplay between physical attractiveness, gender, race, and culture in shaping labour market outcomes.</p> <p>The findings reveal that physical attractiveness significantly impacts labour market outcomes, often resulting in a "beauty premium" for attractive individuals, who receive preferential treatment, higher wages, and better job opportunities. Conversely, less attractive individuals may face an "ugliness penalty," experiencing biases that hinder their professional advancement. The research highlights the gendered nature of these effects, with women often facing both rewards and penalties based on their attractiveness, while men predominantly benefit from a beauty premium. Women are more likely to face "beauty penalty", particularly in male-typed jobs, where attractiveness can lead to perceptions of a "lack of fit" in certain roles. Additionally, this thesis emphasises the intersectional consequences of attractiveness particularly for racial and ethnic minorities, who often face compounded discrimination due to Eurocentric beauty standards. Based on the material, darker-skinned individuals, especially women, face the steepest penalties in the labour market. The results prove that lookism is closely linked to colourism.</p> <p>The thesis also introduces a novel "cultural differences" explanation to account for discrepancies in existing literature suggesting that cultural norms, historical contexts, and regional beauty standards significantly influence the outcomes of physical attractiveness in the labour market.</p>	
Asiasanat	physical appearance, physical attractiveness, beauty standards, aesthetic capital, working life, labour market, gender inequality, lookism, colourism
Muita tietoja	

Table of contents

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	8
	2.1 Three common aspects of an attractive face.....	9
	2.2 Aesthetic capital as the fourth capital	11
	2.3 The existing ‘gaps’ in the labour market	13
	2.4 Racialisation of beauty.....	16
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	20
	3.1 Research questions	20
	3.2 Narrative literature review as a method	21
	3.3 Research process	22
4	RESULTS	29
	4.1 The role of physical attractiveness and its outcomes within the labour market	29
	4.1.1 Beauty premium – the price of beauty	29
	4.1.2 Beauty penalty – the punishment of beauty	39
	4.1.3 Three competing explanations for beauty premium	42
	4.2 Physical appearance and social stratification in the labour market	46
	4.2.1 Gendered nature of beauty premium and beauty penalty	46
	4.2.2 The judgements of beautiful women in working life scenarios	52
	4.2.3 Intersection of beauty: gendered and racialised essence of beauty in working life.....	60
	4.3 New possible explanations for beauty effects in the labour market	64
	4.3.1 Could cultural differences explain diverse outcomes of beauty premium?	64
	4.3.2 The Western World vs. non-Western world – cultural influence in judgements of beauty	66
5	CONCLUSION	75
	LITERATURE REFERENCES	84

1 INTRODUCTION

Imagine waiting in line at a coffee shop when a highly attractive person walks in, skips the wait, receives a warm smile from the barista and even gets their coffee for free, while others are still waiting in line to be served. A similar pattern can be seen at a nightclub, where an attractive person is allowed in without waiting, while others must pay or stand in line. Likewise, in a crowded bar, the most attractive individual draws the most attention and gets their drink order served first. There exist countless other examples of the preferential treatment of attractive individuals that occur in most social contexts and areas of life, for example social interactions, education and even in working life that affect the outcomes of everyday life. Preferential treatment of attractive individuals is seen as receiving various benefits and perks in the labour market scene as well as in other social contexts. The reasons behind preferential treatment lay in the concept of 'pretty privilege' and moreover in 'halo effect' (Kaplan 1978). Basically, the 'halo effect' is based on associating positive traits with attractiveness which, as noticed from examples above, is also seen occurring with pretty privilege. Pretty privilege is broadly observed social phenomena where individuals perceived as physically attractive receive preferential treatment and various of advantages than those considered less attractive (i.e. Rosenblat 2008).

One working life example of pretty privilege would be two waitresses working in a restaurant and one of them is receiving considerably more tips, not because they are working harder than her counterpart, but solely based on their attractiveness. Another example of similar matter would be a recruiter choosing the most attractive job candidate out of other more qualified but less attractive counterparts. It has been widely documented by existing studies that attractive people are more likely to be hired, earn higher wages, get promoted, and perceived as more competent, even when their qualifications are the same as or weaker than others (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). Monetarily benefiting from pretty privilege in working life context and having better employment opportunities compared to their less attractive counterparts is referred to as 'beauty premium'. (i.e. Rosenblat 2008; Hakim 2010.) Consequently, as an attractive person, one might encounter recurring positive interactions and feedback from others in social contexts and gain greater social capital more effortlessly (i.e. Hakim 2010). Furthermore, one could argue that the generational effects of preferential treatment could therefore lead to higher self-esteem and better quality of life.

On the flip side, however, since the predominant ideology stands that attractive people generally receive preferential treatment, conversely, individuals who are not perceived as attractive may face inferior treatment. Preferential treatment based solely on a person's physical appearance has a tendency to also lead to norm violations, lookism and even social stratification. This means that contrary to beauty premium, for the 'ugliness penalty', the opposite occurs. The 'ugliness penalty' suggests that individuals perceived as less attractive may face biases that restrict their professional development and opportunities (Hamermesh 2011; Rosenblat 2008.) Nevertheless, some researchers find that attractiveness can have detrimental effects in the labour market which can be referred to as 'beauty penalty' (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016).

However, it is notable to ask how is beauty evaluated? What contributes as an attractive individual? What are the facial characteristics making the face be perceived as beautiful? The detrimental effects of one's appearance go beyond just looks. For example, physical markers of race and ethnicity carry weight in the consequences of socially perceived attractiveness in our society (Monk, Esposito & Lee 2021). The concept of 'lookism' has complex nature over the dominant norms of what is considered beautiful and what is not which has historically been considered as Eurocentric. Here, the term 'colourism' comes into play (Monk et al. 2021). There seems to be somewhat cross-cultural agreement on what is considered as a beautiful face (i.e. Rhodes 2006; Little, Jones & Debruine 2011).

The role of physical attractiveness in shaping socioeconomic outcomes has long been of interest in academic research, yet consensus over the existing results has still not been reached. For that reason, this would mean that mechanisms behind these discrepancies in results are yet to be explained. What is more, there exists a gap in research knowledge for both intersectional effects of race and gender in the consequences of labour market as well as for cultural approaches. As far as I know, there has not been enough research on marginalised groups of different ethnoracial categories nor on the cultural influences possibly affecting these existing discrepancies in results. Addressing race, gender and different cultural approaches are crucial for understanding potential biases for example in hiring practices and wage distribution regarding physical appearance.

All in all, firstly, what role does physical attractiveness play in the labour market? How does physical attractiveness affect the socioeconomic outcomes in the labour market? Secondly, how and to what extent is social stratification and gendered double standards produced and maintained within labour market when it comes to physical attractiveness? Thirdly, what other explanations could possibly exist to explain beauty effect in the labour market? And ultimately, does the impact of attractiveness differ across cultures? Therefore, the aim for this paper is trying to find answers to the aforementioned questions. The goal here is basically aiming to provide more information on the subject that lacks consensus and provide intersectional and cultural point of views to socioeconomic outcomes of attractiveness. I will examine eleven (11) relevant research papers that are all investigating the role of physical appearance in labour market scenarios. I will be analysing the literature materials by comparing results and finding similarities and differences in order to identify patterns and correlations between attractiveness and labour market outcomes.

The thesis is structured by starting off with providing a theoretical background for physical attractiveness in the labour market in the next chapter. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including more detailed information about the literature used in the thesis and the execution of research. Chapter 4 represents the findings from existing literature. I will explore how attractiveness can influence for example through different salaries, hiring process, economic returns or earnings in both beneficial and detrimental ways. I will be also using discrimination, self-selection, and individual differences - explanations (see Hamermesh 2011) to illustrate the effects of physical attractiveness on earnings. 'What is beautiful is good' -heuristic (Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo 1991) and 'beauty is beastly' -effect (Heilman & Saruwatari 1979) are used to explain and demonstrate the meanings behind beauty premium and beauty penalty. Next, I will analyse the findings regarding double standards, job suitability, lack of fit, gendered within-category rivalry, jealousy and envy as well as social stratification and colourism, all of which carry their own role in the consequences of beauty in working life. Lastly, perceived beauty in different cultures will be further analysed and how they might convergence with the labour market outcomes. The cultural differences could possibly explain the existing discrepancies in literature and results concerning beauty premium and beauty penalty. Finally, chapter 5 will conclude this thesis by summarising the key findings in relation to cultural influences and recommendations for future research.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The world is often perceived as divided by class, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, among many other social divisions. Throughout history, certain groups have been seen as holding higher social positions than others. This hierarchical division in society is known as 'social stratification'. The concept originates from the 19th century classical theorists of sociology Karl Marx and Max Weber, both of whom contributed to the study of social stratification. In existing literature, it has been long considered that social stratification is unavoidable in societies. The idea of stratification has been adapted to describe the hierarchical "layers" of social groups, often perceived as stacked one above the other in various human societies. The social structure may reveal multiple layers of distinct social categories, for example upper classes positioned above middle classes, which in turn sit above lower classes. When analysing social stratification, one should concentrate on exploring how inequalities like these arise in the first place and how they persist or evolve over time, and their broader effects on other dimensions of social life. (Marx 1976; Weber 1968; Saunders 1990.) Here, it is evident that social stratification can be also identified operating on the basis of physical appearance which will be further explored in this literature review.

Pretty privilege could be considered as an umbrella concept for everything that falls under the generational effects of beauty that leads to preferential treatment compared to not as attractive peers. Pretty privilege, and overall division of physical attractiveness, creates a variety of inequalities in our society and is thus an important axis of social stratification when it comes to earnings, educational attainment, marital status and so on (i.e. Dion 1972). One of the relatively understudied parts of the effects of physical attractiveness is integrating both gendered and ethnoracial stratification into the research of the phenomenon (Monk et al. 2021).

However, at this point, it is important to ask what constitutes the hegemonic standard to be considered as an attractive individual? When talking about physical attractiveness, one should start by asking the question of what physical attributes and traits make a person attractive. Or more specifically, since face is the most eminent part of an individual, what makes a face seem attractive to others?

2.1 Three common aspects of an attractive face

Existing literature has comprised three common aspects that influence the attractiveness of the face that are academic beauty, charm of a face and facial expressions (i.e. Rhodes 2006; Little et al. 2011). The first aspect being academic beauty of a face refers to academically agreed beauty. More specifically, it means that researchers have generally agreed upon some key components of beauty. Researchers have found that there is a baseline standard for what individuals consider appealing across faces, countries and races. For this reason, socially perceived attractiveness of a face has some basic pillars that all countries have in common. This is often referred to as cross-cultural agreement. The most universal components of how academic beauty is measured are facial symmetry, averageness and sexual dimorphism. There are also additional components that fall under academic beauty such as facial proportions and adiposity. There are various evolutionary reasons behind cross-cultural agreement of facial attractiveness. For example, biologically based preferences on facial attractiveness can frequently reflect the quality of facial development. Therefore, facial symmetry can be considered as one of the principal components of attractiveness because of its association with genetic vitality and developmental consistency. For instance, based on evolutionary mechanisms on mating habits, it has been proven that humans prefer symmetrical features. (Spyropoulou, Pavlidis, Herrmann, Thimponis, Foroglou, Delimpaltas, Demiri & Cohen 2020; Rhodes 2006; Little et al. 2011.)

Averageness is the second component of academically measured attractiveness which refers to population's traits that represent the average face which is generally considered as more attractive. Similarly to symmetry, averageness is also a biological preference because it may signal resistance to diseases and genetic diversity. (Rhodes 2006; Rubenstein, Langlois & Roggman 2002.) Lastly, measuring the level of sexual morphism a face has is also one way to assess academic beauty. Sexual morphism refers to how feminine or masculine a face looks. In other words, meaning feminine traits in female faces and masculine traits in male faces increases attractiveness. Finding higher levels of sexual morphism attractive is rooted in evolutionary explanations where feminine and masculine traits correlate with reproductive fitness and hormone levels which enhance mate value. (Little et al. 2011). Examples of feminine features of a face include small chin, full lips and higher cheekbones which are consequently also considered to be parameters of an attractive face for a woman. The opposite features on

the other hand are considered to be more masculine such as strong jaws and smaller lips which may signal dominance and status. Existing studies have found attractive women to be rated more feminine and unattractive women vice versa have been rated less feminine. On the other hand, for male faces masculinity is considered attractive and is shown to enhance the perceptions of masculinity even though compared to female faces the effect of attractiveness is smaller. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Rhodes 2006.)

The second aspect that impacts the attractiveness of a face is charm. Contrary to biological preferences which are based on facial symmetry, minor asymmetries and distinctive features actually make the charm of a face, thus making it more memorable and adding individuality that increases attractiveness (Penton-Voak & Morrison 2011; Little et al. 2011). Facial expressions are the third main aspect existing literature has found to be influencing attractiveness. Facial expressions may enhance positive perceptions to others since they play an important role in other people's judgement. For instance, expressions such as a genuine smile typically makes a person appear more approachable, warm and trustworthy. In addition, different facial expressions might reflect other perceptions to others such as confidence, submissiveness or dominance. All in all, lively facial expressions significantly influence attractiveness. (Little et al. 2011; Rhodes 2006.)

Since some of the aforementioned preferences are found to have roots in different evolutionary mechanisms for instance in finding a suitable mate, nowadays these subconscious or conscious mechanisms are guiding us to find suitable partners in many other settings as well, such as within different labour market scenarios. The preference to favour attractive individuals is therefore argued to come from a "natural" human tendency. (Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila & Åberg 2024; Sarpila, Koivula, Kukkonen, Åberg & Pajunen 2020; Little et al. 2011.) The tendency to favour attractive individuals also creates a divide between people and certain opportunities in life. Therefore, physical attractiveness can be considered as a certain asset or "capital" in a person's life.

2.2 Aesthetic capital as the fourth capital

According to the research traditions, one of the sociology's classics, Pierre Bourdieu (1986), has originally set out three main forms of capital that are convertible with each other. The three forms of capital are economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. Economic capital refers to the resources and assets individual can use to generate financial profit meaning for example money or property. Social capital, on the other hand, refers to the resources that one can obtain from a person or by being a member in a group that can further access to other useful networks and relationships that generate more resources. Lastly, cultural capital refers to human capital that can be used to produce monetary gains in the labour market, meaning for example the skills, work experience and educational credentials that individual obtains. (Bourdieu 1986; Hakim 2012.)

Based on how pretty privilege operates in our society, it is evident that attractive individuals are overall favoured and get preferential treatment in various aspects of life such as in politics, media, justice system, sports, popular culture and working life. Thus, sociologists have progressively distinguished attractiveness to be considered as the fourth form of capital, often referred to as 'aesthetic capital'. Aesthetic capital can be seen as a convertible social resource in modern day societies. (Holla & Kuipers 2015.) Another term that was quite recently developed that points to similar systems as aesthetic capital is referred to as 'erotic capital' (Hakim 2010) which more specifically refers to the combination of physical and social attractiveness. Thus, in all social contexts, erotic capital comprises aesthetic, physical, visual, social and sexual attractiveness to other individuals within the society. (Hakim 2010, 2012).

Therefore, aesthetic capital, and more specifically, erotic capital, plays a significant role in labour markets. When looking at economic, social and cultural capitals, erotic capital is equally valuable personal asset (Hakim 2010, 2012). In order to fully understand social mobility, social interaction, economic and social processes, one needs to recognise the importance of erotic capital and how it operates within modern societies. Increasingly, erotic capital is becoming more and more valued for both men and women. Nevertheless, according to previous studies, women are found to have greater erotic appeal and have longer tradition of exploiting it compared to men. Additionally,

especially for women, there has been an increase in erotic capital during the past 30–40 years. (Hakim 2010; Borland & Leigh 2014; Anýžová & Matějů 2018.)

In general, as it is in the nature of the other three capitals, erotic capital is also unequally distributed across individuals. All capitals are unevenly divided amongst people which leads to increasingly complex stratification systems and inequality patterns, and as noted, erotic capital is no different than the rest. (Hakim 2010, 2012; Holla & Kuipers 2015.) Erotic capital, similarly, to social capital and cultural capital can be cultivated into financial benefits (Hakim 2012). For all that, the concept of aesthetic capital or more specifically ‘erotic capital’ is actually considered as a refinement of the term ‘beauty premium’ (Hakim 2010).

Another way to demonstrate pretty privilege especially in labour market context is through the concept of ‘beauty premium’. People who benefit from pretty privilege most likely benefit from it in labour market scene as well, when it can be more specially referred to as beauty premium. Therefore, beauty premium is basically direct product of aesthetic or erotic capital. Since it is claimed that people have a natural tendency to favour attractive individuals, as previously demonstrated, more attractive individuals possess greater amount of aesthetic capital which puts them automatically in advantageous position in many aspects of life, including the labour market. The preferential treatment of attractive individuals, especially in labour market scene is the epitome of the term ‘beauty premium’. Preferential treatment of attractive individuals in labour market is reflected by for example gaining variety of resources such as higher earnings which is where the concept beauty ‘premium’ also originated from. In fact, as noted previously, women have a long tradition for developing erotic capital as well as stronger sexual appeal. Since erotic capital is the refinement of beauty premium, consequently, beauty premium has also been argued to be the strongest for women. (Rosenblat 2008.)

Fundamentally, much like how pretty privilege operates, beauty premium is based on the ‘halo effect’ which means that positive traits are associated with more attractive individuals (Kaplan 1978). People often assume that more attractive individuals are for example more capable and more intelligent. Hence, through the tendency to link positive impressions of an attractive person, beauty can signal also for example charisma, productivity, resourcefulness, assertiveness, confidence and basically other

traits that are seen as beneficial also specifically in the labour market. (Rosenblat 2008.) Essentially, the halo effect is rooted in the ‘what is beautiful is good’ -heuristics which are explicitly used to explain how beauty premium operates within the labour market (Dion 1972; Eagly et al. 1991). What needs to be noted is that since people associate other positive traits to attractive individuals, attractive people have most likely received preferential treatment in different situations throughout their whole lives (i.e. pretty privilege) which can cause them to be more confident in social contexts. Because of the repeated positive social interactions and preferential treatment, attractive individuals might also appear more capable from employers’ perspective which might lead employers to be willing to pay them more than their less attractive counterparts. (Kukkonen et al. 2024; Rosenblat 2008.) Thus, leading into the situation where beauty premium ends up being an indirect result of the halo effect (Rosenblat 2008).

2.3 The existing ‘gaps’ in the labour market

As it has been established, economic, cultural, social capital as well as aesthetic capital, are unevenly divided across people. Consequently, uneven distribution of aesthetic capital accumulates beauty premium to only certain people, thus creating social stratification in the labour market referred to as the ‘beauty gap’. In essence, ‘what is ugly is bad’ is the parallel notion for ‘what is beautiful is good’ -ideology (see Eagly et al. 1991) and by considering both notions it equally demonstrates both sides of appearance related effects. Beauty premium demonstrates the benefits of attractiveness, however, ugliness penalty on the other hand demonstrates the penalties and downsides of falling short of societal standards of beauty. The penalties unattractive individuals face, such as getting paid less than their more attractive peers, in labour market is called ‘lookism’, meaning taste-based discrimination or prejudice that is directly based on physical appearance. (Hamermesh 2011; Rosenblat 2008.)

However, there are diverse outcomes of being beautiful as well. Even if beauty premium and ‘what is beautiful is good’ ideology are widely accepted by researchers and it has been evident that beautiful people are preferred by employers, coworkers and even customers, there are also detrimental effects of beauty. Although, appearance discrimination against unattractive individuals have been proven in the past, ‘beauty

penalty' is the opposite concept for beauty premium and refers to the detrimental outcomes of physical attractiveness in the labour market. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.) When beauty premium can be explained by halo effect and the 'what is beautiful is good' -heuristic, beauty penalty, on the other hand, can be explained by 'beauty is beastly' effect (Heilman & Saruwatari 1979). Even though it has been argued that women benefit generally more than men from attractive appearance, beauty has paradoxically its downfall effects also specifically for women. For women, it seems that the effects of attractiveness are context-dependent. (Holla & Kuipers 2015). For instance, 'beauty is beastly' effect is seen in certain hiring situations for female job applicants. 'Beauty is beastly' effect was first witnessed by Heilman and Saruwatari (1979) and Heilman and Stopeck (1985) when they found attractive women being seen less hireable and less likely to be promoted for male-typed managerial jobs compared to less attractive women and men of any level of attractiveness in general. However, the results for 'beauty is beastly' effects are still somewhat inconsistent between studies. Meaning that most studies related to the topics of attractiveness, sex and job suitability have found more evidence for 'what is beautiful is good' heuristics. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

Nonetheless, evidence for beauty penalty has been found and should not be neglected especially when it comes to job suitability of women for male-typed jobs. Heilman's (1983) lack of fit theory further explains the 'beauty is beastly' effect by comparing the differences in perceived agency and suitability of genders for male-typed jobs. The reasoning behind suitability lays in masculinity and femininity. Attractiveness has been shown to emphasise the use of gender-related personality stereotypes (i.e. Heilman & Saruwatari 1979). Furthermore, previous research has shown that attractive women were rated more feminine while, on the other hand, unattractive women were rated less feminine (i.e. Heilman 2001), and accordingly, attractiveness tends to amplify perceptions of men's masculinity (i.e. Scheib, Gangestad & Thornhill 1999). Moreover, as men's attractiveness increases so does the perceptions of their agency and suitability for male-typed jobs. According to the 'lack of fit' -theory, the opposite is true for women. Meaning that as women's attractiveness increases, so does their "lack of fit" in the eyes of the recruiter for a male-typed job. The perceived "lack of fit" occurs because women's attractiveness (and femininity that comes with it) re-enforces the gender-related personality stereotypes that women are less suitable because they were seen as

lacking the agentic characteristics associated with male-typed jobs. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

The perceived lack of agency or “lack of fit” of women amongst several other factors contribute to gender inequality and the struggles women face in working life scene. The history behind gender inequality travels back into the time when women were not allowed to work but to stay at home while men were at work. Thus, it takes a lot of effort for society to build a stable and equal labour market participation for both genders which has still not been fully reached. According to the statistics from the European Commission (2022), the ‘gender employment gap’ was 10.7 % in 2022 between men and women. More specifically, meaning that across the European Union, 69.3 % of women are employed compared to 80 % of men.

In addition to the gender employment gap, there exists a ‘gender pay gap’ of 12.7 % which means that across the EU women earn 13 % on average less per hour compared to men in 2021. However, it is important to note that there are substantial differences between the EU countries. For instance, the gender pay gap varies from more than 17 % in Austria, Estonia, Germany and Hungary to less than 5 % in Belgium, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Poland and Romania. Nevertheless, lower gender pay gap in certain countries does not necessarily reflect the gender equality of the country. For instance, countries with lower employment rate for women can lead to lower gender pay gap since mostly women with better education and thus correspondingly with higher earning potential enter the labour market. (European Commission 2022.) The gender pay gap as well as the so-called ‘glass ceiling’ are some of the main concrete consequences of gender discrimination occurring within the labour market regime. Within companies and organisations, the ‘glass ceiling’ refers to the vertical discrimination against women and barriers that restrict and prevent women from climbing to higher positions regardless of their achievements or qualifications. (Babic & Hansez 2021.)

Correspondingly, racial minorities in the labour market also face the same aforementioned ‘glass ceiling’. Even a qualified person can be prevented to climb the company ladder upwards due to discrimination often based on sexism or racism. (Babic & Hansez 2021.) Similar to gender pay gap, colourism works through corresponding mechanisms and the concept of ‘race gap’ is comparable to the ‘gender gap’. Race gap

is explained by skin tone stratification and is a direct consequence of the way colourism operates in labour markets. Simply put, skin tone stratification or more broadly known as ‘colourism’, refers to the discrimination against people based on their skin colour. In the labour market, colourism can be seen as a “gap” in the earnings between the historically dominant ethnoracial category (Whites) and other races. (Monk et al. 2021.) For instance, according to Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) every dollar earned by a White person, a Black person is estimated to earn 87 cents. Similarly to gender pay gap, this would mean a 13-percentage point ‘race pay gap’. The ‘beauty gap’ could be considered to “add up” to gender pay gap and race pay gap since they are all linked to each other and therefore operate in similar manner in the labour market. (Monk et al. 2021; Mobius & Rosenblat 2006.)

2.4 Racialisation of beauty

The history behind skin tone stratification can be traced back to the time period of colonialism and thus, is originally based on the views of ‘white supremacy’. By its redefined meaning, colonialism refers to overseas racialised domination and has become also a synonym with imperialism. (Arneil 2024.) Originally, the concept of ‘white supremacy’ is rooted in an ideology where having a darker skin was associated with working in the fields having their skin exposed to sun and thus, belonging to lower class. On the contrary, having a light skin was associated with staying inside and belonging in higher class. (Chen, Lian, Lorenzana, Shahzad & Wong 2020.) Thus, correspondingly the same juxtaposition ideology was occurring at the time of colonialism between colonisers and the ones being colonised (Arneil 2024).

Even if the history of colonialism goes all the way back to 1500th century, and more broadly during the time of European imperialism in the 1700th and 1800th century, skewed attitudes towards dark skin tones and discrimination are still prevalent to this day (Arneil 2024). For instance, due to European imperialism and the modern day political, economic, geographic and technological dominance of Europe and its overseas empires have created the concept of ‘eurocentrism’ that demonstrates the global influence of Western cultures. The broadly used term of the ‘Western culture’ typically refers to the social norms, traditions, religious beliefs, political systems and technologies prevalent in such Western societies. The Western civilisation, commonly

consisting of Europe, North America and Oceania, are considered Eurocentric because of their apparent similarities when it comes to for instance beauty standards, job markets and media coverage. In other words, eurocentrism is seen as a norm, and it narrowly views the world through the perspective of Western societies and European values while neglecting the experiences of non-European cultures. (Drew 2022.)

Therefore, based on how colourism has been able to flourish to this day of age, eurocentrism has significantly shaped the perceptions of beauty globally. As a result, eurocentrism is seen to dominate global beauty standards. For example, because of the history in white supremacy, having light skin and straight hair can be considered as global beauty standards. Thus, westernised beauty standards can be also seen as ‘White beauty standards’ since physical markers of the dominant ethnoracial group, such as white skin and smooth straight hair, are the ones that are preferred the most. (Drew 2022.) Moreover, previous studies have found abundant of evidence that skin tone is a remarkable predictor of perceived attractiveness and thus, proving the racialisation of beauty (see Monk et al. 2021, 214).

Generally speaking, ethnoracial minorities and especially African-Americans (or overall individuals of African descent), might not be perceived as “living up to” the Eurocentric standards of beauty, since dark skin tone and other physical markers of race, such as Afrocentric facial features and hair type have been generally perceived as aesthetically inferior to Eurocentric physical traits. Thus, by not matching with these aesthetic norms maintained by the dominant ethnoracial members of society, the overwhelming majority of individuals within the stigmatised group will face steep penalties. Consequently, the members of dominant ethnoracial categories are more likely to also be “the gate-keepers” in the labour market which means that ethnoracial minorities might be considerably more prone to be perceived as unattractive compared to the lighter-skinned individuals belonging to the dominant ethnoracial categories. (Monk et al. 2021.)

Furthermore, as it has been evidently established, socially perceived attractiveness is unevenly distributed across both gender and race. Genders and the racialisation of perceived attractiveness interacting together yield even more complex patterns of inequality. Problematically, because of the aforementioned racialisation of beauty, stereotypical traits associated with Blackness have been viewed as inherently more

masculine and sometimes even “dangerous” regardless of gender. Thus, correspondingly especially dark-skinned Black women are more likely to be penalised for not being perceived as attractive because of not being perceived feminine enough by Whites. Equally, Black men may be seen as relatively unattractive from the hegemonic viewpoint of the Eurocentric aesthetic norms. However, based on the perceptions of perceived attractiveness, Black men might not be as harshly penalised compared to Black women. Therefore, one of the problematics of the labour market lay in the fact that members of dominant ethnoracial categories (Whites) are often seen to gatekeep ethnoracial minorities (i.e. Blacks) from the basis of lookism even if in this case lookism is actually rooted in colourism and the perception of beauty maintained by Whites. (Monk et al. 2021.)

In essence, perceptions and attitudes around physical aesthetics and skin colour are never neutral and they are a function of power relations and ethnocracial domination. Since lookism is discrimination based on physical appearance and colourism is discrimination based on skin colour, they happen to have conjoint consequences in the labour market. However, the difference between the two in labour markets is that ethnocracial and gender discrimination is illegal, and lookism is not. Technically, colourism can be seen linked to lookism because of the evidence found between perceived attractiveness and skin colour. Therefore, in addition to lookism’s consequences for everyone regardless of their gender and race, perceived physical attractiveness may technically operate as a legal channel for ethnocracial inequality to be maintained on the labour market. (Monk et al. 2021.)

Even with the existence of the cross-cultural agreement on facial attractiveness and the prevalent Eurocentric perceptions of perceived beauty across the globe, variations also exist as a result of cultural influences. This means that studies have found that beauty standards do not only vary between genders but also between cultures as well (i.e. Kuipers 2015; Sarpila et al. 2020). Researchers of social studies have had a long tradition to believe that beauty standards are based on cultural traditions (Rhodes 2006). The evaluation of appearance is shown to differ by the cultural context of the country even within Europe (Kuipers 2015). Thus, recognising the substantial role of culture is important when it comes to judgements of beauty. Especially since after observing significant cultural differences in beautification practices even Darwin had favoured this view (Darwin 1998/1874; Rhodes 2006).

What also needs to be remembered is that standards themselves shift through space but also over time. However, one aspect of the role of culture on somatic norms is the fact that as long as ethnoracial and gender hierarchies exist, judgements of beauty are still likely to be racialised and gendered and will continue to shape the judgements of beauty (Monk et al. 2021). Nevertheless, the shift to stronger cultural influences in judgements of beauty might be arising in the future. On reflection, what is at utmost importance for the purpose of this study is to further look into existing literature on how beauty is evaluated accounting for both cross-cultural and culture-specific viewpoints. Also not forgetting about the varying consequences for individuals differing both in race and gender in the labour market scene.

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Socially perceived physical attractiveness and its outcomes in the labour market have been of interest among researchers from social science, economics and psychology for a while now. The subject is of significance firstly because of its widespread global nature, and secondly because of its diverse consequences in labour market. The ways in which physical appearance is perceived affects how inequality is produced and maintained in the world and moreover in working life aspects. Normative beauty ideals in societies render inequality that surpasses both genders and the marginalised groups of ethnoracial categories. Unfortunately, however, existing research has not yet focused enough on the relevance of combining ethno-racial categories and gender in labour market outcomes. Even if the effects of physical appearance could potentially and most likely affect marginalised groups the most. Additionally, to my knowledge cultural explanations have not been considered when examining labour market outcomes. The aim here is to try to fill in the gap in relevant research subject and combine both intersectional approach and cultural influence into investigating physical appearance and labour market outcomes.

3.1 Research questions

This study uses a qualitative research approach, utilising a narrative literature review type to explore the effects of physical attractiveness in the labour market. The research material is international. The purpose of this methodology is to combine and critically analyse existing academic research on the topic, providing a comprehensive overview of findings from the past decade. Thus, the objective of this thesis is to cover the existing gaps in research and look into the intersectional and cultural effects of attractiveness in working life. Therefore, my research questions are the following:

1. What role does physical attractiveness play in the labour market? Moreover, how does attractiveness affect the socioeconomic outcomes in the labour market?
2. How and to what extent are social stratification and gendered double standards produced and maintained within labour market when it comes to physical attractiveness?

3. What other explanations could possibly exist to explain beauty effects in the labour market?

The first question aims to uncover the roles of physical attractiveness that surface in existing literature and how attractiveness influences on the socioeconomic outcomes of labour market. The second question is dedicated to examining social stratification happening within labour market scene regarding physical appearance. This means investigating gendered effects from literature when it comes to job suitability and attractiveness as well as inequality related to colourism. The third question searches for a novel alternative explanation for beauty effects in labour market. In the field of social sciences, one of my main interests has always been about uncovering the shortcomings of social stratification and identifying inequality in all its forms. As a result of the high rise of digital era and social media during the last couple decades, physical appearance has become increasingly important in the 21st century (i.e. Hakim 2010). It is about time to evolve past from narrowed Westernised ways of thinking into more culturally inclusive perspectives of the world. By tackling the shortcomings and filling in the gaps of the most overlooked point of views in literature regarding ethnoracial and cultural perspectives provides the most reliable and wholesome understanding of the channels that inequality operates through.

3.2 Narrative literature review as a method

The design of this thesis is qualitative in nature and utilises narrative literature review type as its research method. In this thesis, I will be focusing on analysing secondary sources to provide insights into how physical attractiveness influences hiring decisions, career advancement, wage disparities and much more. Qualitative research approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination from secondary sources, emphasising interpretations, themes and patterns derived from previous research. This approach is especially useful for understanding meanings more deeply and exploring complex issues. Qualitative research has been described as an approach to research that is interpretative, humanistic and soft and focuses on understanding social phenomena, human behaviour and experiences based on the specific aim of the study (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018). Research literature review overall in itself is a systematic, reproducible and explicit method that bases its conclusions on the original work produced by

researchers and scholars. Moreover, literature review evaluates, identifies and combines existing body of recorded work (Fink 2005.) Overall, there are three main research literature review types, according to Salminen (2011). Grant and Booth (2009) have listed out various other types of literature review as well; however, for clearer view, the three main types listed by Salminen (2011) already create the necessary understanding of literature review types.

The first one is called either ‘traditional literature review’, ‘narrative literature review’ or solely ‘literature review’ which is also chosen as the literature review type for this thesis. In this thesis, I will be referring this type as ‘narrative literature review’. Narrative literature review is one of the most used literature review types and it does not have strict or specific rules that it needs to follow. The materials used are extensive, and the selection of materials is not restricted by methodological rules. However, the studied phenomenon can be portrayed comprehensively and its characteristics categorised if necessary. (Salminen 2011.) The second one is called ‘systematic literature review’, and it seeks to systematically search for, assess and synthesise research evidence while following specific guidelines of a review. Systematic review aims for exhaustive and comprehensive searching. (Grant & Booth 2009.) The third one is called meta-analysis, and it can be either qualitative or quantitative in nature (Salminen 2011). To sum up, overall meta-analysis aims for exhaustive searching and statistically combines the results of quantitative studies to provide more comprehensive and detailed results (Grant & Booth 2009).

In this thesis, the narrative literature review is used as the primary research method because its nature is to explore relationships, gaps and trends in literature. A narrative literature review also aims to provide a summary of the relevant literature and integrate findings from various sources in analytical and interpretative ways. (Grant & Booth 2009.) All aforementioned intentions of narrative literature review are favourable for the purpose of this study on the effects of physical attractiveness in the labour market.

3.3 Research process

In narrative literature review, the goal is to increase the understanding and knowledge of the research topic in question. In the process of making a narrative literature review, both gathering and analysing the materials are somewhat intertwined with each other.

The purpose is to create sufficiently precise research questions that are part of both the theoretical and the conceptual framework (Kangasniemi, Utriainen, Ahonen, Pietilä, Jääskeläinen & Liikanen 2013, 293-295). The execution of this research follows Fink's (2005) research literature review guidelines. According to Fink (2005), the process of literature review can be divided into seven tasks. The first task is to formulate precise research questions which will guide the review (Fink 2005). I established my research questions by formulating them in a manner that comprises both generalised effects of beauty in labour market overall but also more neglected perspectives meaning intersectional social stratification effects of physical appearance in labour market. Additionally, the last research question is focused on finding new alternatives that might cause the discrepancies concerning the existing evidence on appearance discrimination in labour market. As a result, I eventually established three research questions which are 1) What role does physical attractiveness play in the labour market and how does attractiveness affect the socioeconomic outcomes in the labour market? 2) How and to what extend is social stratification and gendered double standards produced and maintained within labour market when it comes to physical attractiveness? and 3) What other explanations could possibly exist to explain beauty effects in the labour market?

Second stage is about selecting databases, websites, and other sources that are suitable and align with the research questions (Fink 2005). I utilised databases and selected sources that addresses the research questions. I completed my first search on February 2024 but since I changed the trajectory of my last research question, I completed the second and last search in the beginning of March 2024. For the search, I used University of Turku database Volter, Google Scholar, ESCBO and Social Sciences database. In the third stage, specific search terms are selected, which can be words or phrases (Fink 2005). Accordingly, I chose the search terms based on the framework of the research questions. The terms that are relevant to the research questions were: appearance, beauty, looks, standards, stereotypes, beauty norms, aesthetic capital, working life, occupation, line of work, field of work.

Thus, I established multiple variations of these aforementioned terms and comprised with the following search sentence: (appearance* OR beauty OR looks OR ulkonäkö OR kauneus OR viehät* OR aesthetic* OR attractiv*) AND (norm* OR attitude* OR value* OR stereotyp* OR standard* OR ideolog* OR ennakkoluul* OR “behavioral norms”) AND (“working life” OR occupation OR “field of work” OR “line of work”

OR ammat* OR työala* OR employee*). This yielded either too much or too little sources, so I needed to make it shorter. My search terms are very broad and cover multiple concepts in both English and Finnish, which is why the search results came from many different perspectives, most of which are not relevant to my topic. Therefore, I took out some of the terms that were not as relevant as well as the terms in Finnish since my literature review is international in nature. Therefore, I ended up with the following sentence: (appearance* OR beauty OR looks OR aesthetic* OR “aesthetic capital”) AND (“beauty norm*” OR norm* OR attitude* OR value* OR stereotyp* OR “beauty standard*” OR standard* OR ideolog*) AND (“working life” OR occupation OR “field of work” OR “line of work”).

The fourth stage of the search process involves structuring the practical screening criteria. Since a vast number of sources may be found, but only a few are truly relevant to the study, screening the sources is a crucial step. This phase involves selecting sources that correspond to the research question while excluding those that do not. The literature should be screened by setting criteria for inclusion into and exclusion from the review. (Fink 2005.) From Volter, the results yielded 41 results from which 7 were relevant. From Social Sciences Database, the results yielded 7 results from which 4 were relevant. On the other hand, Google Scholar yielded an enormous amount of results, which is why I had to exclude most of the sources and found 8 relevant studies. Thereafter, at this point I gathered 19 studies. Once the essential sources for the research are gathered, the fifth step is to apply the methodological screening criteria (Fink 2005). These criteria include assessing the suitability of the research material for the study, determining its comprehensiveness, and evaluating whether it meets the standards of high-quality research. After the exclusion criteria, the academic databases from which selected sources were gathered end up being Volter and Google Scholar. A total of 11 studies eventually met the inclusion criteria and were selected for the analysis.

The exclusion criteria were the following:

- Studies published before 2014
- Academic articles printed in languages other than English
- The material in question is something other than a report or a peer-reviewed research article
- The material is not fully available. Summaries or reviews of the materials are not included

- Studies that are not relevant or otherwise suitable for my research (i.e. focus is primary on examining non-labour market -related attractiveness outcomes or the focus is on aesthetic labour or beauty work)

The sixth stage is doing the review (Fink 2005). The start of doing the review involved gathering key information from each study. This included summarising all the main findings, research methods and conclusions. Then, in thematic manner, I categorised and interpreted all findings. Recurring themes such as gendered beauty effects on beauty premium and beauty penalty were categorised accordingly. After, I started comparing and contrasting also meanwhile making observations and interpretations from findings based on their other specifications. Seventh stage of conducting a literature review is forming an overall synthesis (Fink 2005). The synthesis presents the research findings based on the compiled material which I divided into three subchapters aligning with my research questions. The final synthesis presented the results showing commonalities and differences across different contexts in the effects of physical attractiveness in the labour market and the interpretations I made according to the findings. According to Fink (2005, 7): “Descriptive synthesis are interpretations of the review’s findings based on the reviewer’s experience and the quality and content of the available literature.”

There should not be any ethical concerns in this thesis since the research material used here is only based on secondary data analysis. However, ethical research practices were maintained by ensuring proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources used. Additionally, studies included in this review were carefully assessed for credibility and academic integrity. In order to further examine the reliability and the validity of any research is to see if the study would produce the same results if repeated under the same conditions and if the study measures exactly what it is supposed to measure. (Green, Johnson & Adams 2007, 109-111; Marttinen 2021). The validity of the study is enhanced by linking research findings to theoretical knowledge which I have done by ensuring a clear presentation of connecting general research knowledge and my findings together. Additionally, I believe that the reliability of my literature review would yield similar results if conducted under the same conditions since other related literature reviews have come to similar conclusions about general beauty effects in the labour market in recent years (i.e. Kukkonen et al. 2024).

While this research provides valuable insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The study is limited to published literature from the past decade, more specifically from 2014 until 2024, which may exclude older but still relevant research. Additionally, new research during the last year after March 2024 might have been published which would have brought additional insights to this literature review. Even if this literature review contained secondary data conducted internationally, however, not all continents were involved. Unfortunately, no relevant studies from South America nor from Africa were found on the matter of beauty effects in labour market. Lastly, the selected research literature examined beauty effects in labour market from multiple perspectives and few differentiating methods which might affect the outcomes of results.

However, various perspectives do also allow more broad and in-depth insights into the topic. By using studies that comprehend the subject from various perspectives also connected to the related theory framework, I aimed to assure high validity of my literature review. The covered topics in studies used in this literature review comprised the overall role of attractiveness in labour market outcomes, the effects of beauty premium and beauty penalty (i.e. job accessibility, employability and wage disparities), gendered attractiveness differences in hiring judgments and socioeconomic outcomes, double standards in utilisation and accumulation of aesthetic capital, global research on attractiveness and ethno-racial returns to attractiveness. All aforementioned research perspectives of the topic made the literature review as comprehensive as possible while answering the research questions.

Lastly, the table of selected research materials in this literature review can be found below.

Table 1 List of the research materials used in the narrative literature review

Authors (country)	Year	Title	Method	Main results
Anýžová, P. & P., Matějů <i>(Czech Republic)</i>	2018	Beauty still matters: the role of attractiveness in labour market outcomes	Quantitative research, follow-up questionnaire survey, face-to-face interviews	The wages of people with above-average attractiveness are higher than those of below-average attractiveness workers. Beauty premium is markedly higher among prime-aged women than men. Beauty penalty is higher for prime-aged men.
Deng, W., Li, D. & Zhou, D. <i>(China)</i>	2019	Beauty and job accessibility: new evidence from a field experiment	Quantitative research, empirical field experiment	Taste-based pure appearance discrimination exists at the pre-interview stage. Having better educational credentials reduces appearance discrimination among men but not among women. Attributes of the labor market, companies, and vacancies matter.
Kanazawa, S. & Still, M. C. <i>(United States)</i>	2018	Is there really a beauty premium or an ugliness penalty on earnings?	Quantitative research, longitudinal survey, face-to-face interviews	Very weak evidence for the beauty premium, and it disappeared completely once individual differences were controlled. The data provided strong support for the individual differences' hypothesis and contradicted the discrimination and self-selection explanations. There was some evidence for the ugliness premium.
Ruffle, B. J. & Shtudiner, Z. <i>(Israel)</i>	2015	Are good-looking people more employable?	Quantitative research, empirical field experiment	Beauty discrimination occurs at the earliest stage of job search. Employer callbacks to attractive men are significantly higher than to men with no CV picture and to plain-looking men. Women with no CV picture have a significantly higher rate of callback than attractive or plain-looking women.
Doorley, K. and Sierminska, E. <i>(Germany)</i>	2015	Myth or fact? The beauty premium across the wage distribution in Germany	Quantitative research, social survey, face-to-face interview	The male beauty premium is present throughout the wage distribution. The female beauty premium is concentrated at the bottom of the wage distribution. The male and female beauty premia are high for those with college education. There is a beauty penalty for women with low education. Beautiful people also have other characteristics which increase their wage.
Paustian-Underdahl, S. C. & Slattery Walker, L. <i>(United States)</i>	2016	Revisiting the beauty is beastly effect: examining when and why sex and attractiveness impact hiring judgements	Quantitative research, a review of previous studies and two field experiments	Applicant's sex is related to job suitability for a male-typed job through the indirect effect of perceived agency, which is moderated by applicant attractiveness. Beauty penalty found for women and beauty premium for men. Women only benefit when attractiveness is seen important to the job.

Authors (country)	Year	Title	Method	Main results
Monk Jr, E., P., Esposito, M., H. & Lee, H. (<i>United States</i>)	2021	Beholding inequality: race, gender, and returns to physical attractiveness in the Unites States	Quantitative research, longitudinal survey, face-to-face interviews	The slope of the returns to perceived physical attractiveness is steepest among Black women and Black men. Black women have the lowest and White men the highest earnings.
Sarpila, O., Koivula, A., Kukkonen, I., Åberg, E. & Pajunen, T. (<i>Finland</i>)	2020	Double standards in the accumulation and utilization of aesthetic capital	Quantitative research, split-ballot questionnaire survey	A double standard in accumulation means more approval of women's behaviour, whereas a double standard in utilisation implies more disapproval of women's conduct, especially in working life contexts.
Kukkonen I., Pajunen T., Sarpila O. & Åberg E. (<i>International review</i>)	2024	Is beauty-based inequality gendered? A systematic review of gender differences in socioeconomic outcomes of physical attractiveness in labour markets	Systematic literature review	Attractiveness is a rather universally beneficial for men, whereas it may be more context-dependent for women. Both genders generally benefit from attractiveness, but the outcomes of attractiveness are gendered. Only women get penalised for being attractive.
Kukkonen, I., Åberg, E., Sarpila, O. & Pajunen, T. (<i>Finland</i>)	2018	Exploitation of aesthetic capital - disapproved by whom?	Quantitative research, split-ballot questionnaire survey	Experienced unattractiveness is associated with disapproving attitudes towards the exploitation of physical appearance-related assets for both women and men. Women are more prone to endorse the double standards against each other. Women who do not perceive themselves attractive are likely the ones to hold double standards against other women, especially in job-related situations.
Borland, J. & Leigh, A. (<i>Australia</i>)	2014	Unpacking the beauty premium: what channels does it operate through, and has it changed over time?	Quantitative research, longitudinal face-to-face survey	Beauty significantly affects total household income – via respondents' probability of employment and their hours of work and hourly wage, and whether they have a partner who contributes income to the household. Stronger beauty effect on males was found. The effect of beauty was constant across 1980s and 2000s. However, importance of attractiveness and erotic capital has been increasing amongst women.

4 RESULTS

In this chapter, I will further explore the results of my research questions. I will investigate and explain in the light of my literature review materials what role does physical attractiveness play in the labour markets and how attractiveness affects the socioeconomic outcomes of the labour market. The overall goal for this literature review is to understand better and in a deeper level all the roles attractiveness plays in working life dimensions. This means taking gendered, racialised and also cultural approaches into consideration when investigating how physical attractiveness operates within the labour market.

4.1 The role of physical attractiveness and its outcomes within the labour market

Based on existing research, it is clear that physical attractiveness plays a significant role in the outcomes of the labour market. In more ways than people might even realise. First and foremost, what needs to be acknowledged is that the roles that physical appearance play in labour market are context- and gender-dependent. However, in this first chapter the goal is to understand the role of beauty in more general level. For explaining the general outcomes of beauty, I will be investigating the discrimination, self-selection, and individual differences -explanations (see Hamermesh 2011) that are used to illustrate the effects of physical attractiveness on earnings. One of the most important concepts in terms of the role of physical attractiveness in labour market are beauty premium and beauty penalty. ‘What is beautiful is good’ heuristics and ‘beauty is beastly’ effect are used to explain and demonstrate the meanings behind these concepts.

4.1.1 Beauty premium – the price of beauty

Overall evidence for the existence of beauty premium was found in majority of the studies, eight (8) out of eleven (11), used in my literature review (i.e. Kukkonen et al. 2024; Monk et al. 2021; Deng, Li & Zhou 2019). On the other hand, overall evidence on beauty penalty was found from six (6) out of eleven (11) of the studies (i.e. Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Ruffle & Shtudiner

2015). Some of the studies in this literature review found support for both the beauty penalty and the beauty premium because of the contextual or gendered differences. For example, some researchers have found support for beauty premium, but it primarily existed for men (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016) while others found evidence for beauty premium primarily for women (i.e. Anýžová & Matějů 2018) or support for beauty penalty was found only existing for women (i.e. Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015) or only for men (i.e. Anýžová & Matějů 2018). The second chapter will dive deeper into the gendered and intersectional aspects of beauty in working life scene.

In their research, Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) used both ‘what is beautiful is good’ -heuristic and ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect to test out how beauty premium and beauty penalty might operate within the labour market regime. To recap, ‘what is beautiful is good’ -heuristic is based on the idea where physical attractiveness of the applicant has a positive influence on hiring decisions. This heuristic is similar to the ‘halo effect’ which is based on the claim that people generally tend to associate positive traits to good-looking people (Kaplan 1978). On the other hand, the ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect can be explained by the idea where rather than being beneficial, beauty can be detrimental – mostly for female job applicants – in certain hiring contexts. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.) Most of the studies in this literature review acknowledge ‘what is beautiful is good’ -heuristic to the least in their theory sections (i.e. Monk et al. 2021; Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015) and as they do the same on ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect (i.e. Monk et al. 2021; Deng et al. 2019; Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015). Previous research has found support for both theory lines, but results differ in their popularity for supporting beauty premium or beauty penalty which will be explored further next.

As Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) summarised in their research paper, more attractive individuals are believed to be more highly qualified, obtain more favourable hiring recommendations and receive higher compensation than less attractive individuals as shown consistently by previous studies. These examples are ways to more explicitly explain the framework of the ideology in which generally good traits are attached to attractive and beautiful people which can lead to socioeconomical gains as previously demonstrated. Thus, ‘what is beautiful is good’ theory will be used to explain the existence of beauty premium. The studies that found support for beauty premium demonstrated how physical attractiveness can influence in labour markets for

example through job accessibility (Deng, Li & Zhou 2019), wage distribution (Doorley & Sierminska 2015), the hiring process (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015) and hiring judgements (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016), earnings (Kukkonen et al. 2024; Anýžová & Matějů 2018), being employed and to total household income (Borland & Leigh 2014). Also, evidence was found to support for differing economic returns to beauty premium by gender and race (Kukkonen et al. 2024; Monk et al. 2021). One way to look at physical appearance operating in labour market is to consider it partially influencing human capital formation and functioning as a signal in working life sphere. Although, comprehending attractiveness as a capital can easily lead to appearance discrimination which is harder to legislate against compared to disabilities, gender or race because of the challenge in establishing objective criteria on appearance. However, when it comes to investigating the existence of beauty premium and signalling, there are some problematics of omitted variables, meaning for example unobserved factors with productivity. Meaning that previous studies have had extreme difficulties to identify a causal relationship. (Deng et al. 2019.)

According to Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) most studies have focused on measuring the impact of beauty premium or appearance discrimination on labour market outcomes via different salaries (i.e. Hamermesh 2011). This is why Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) themselves used different approach by using identical resumes but with different facial features and implemented a multi-layered stratified randomisation delivery process in their experimental design to find out if pure taste-based appearance discrimination already exists at pre-interview stage in China. In practice, they randomly selected resumes from the sample pool of the nationwide financial sector and later restricting the real resumes into standardised template that differed only in ID photo. To avoid unobserved contamination from work experience their sample comprised only fresh graduates with bachelor's or master's degrees. However, in China the universities are stratified into groups according to their reputation and quality. Meaning that graduating from high-quality university signals higher ability and all in all better human capital. Hence, this study has categorised the universities accordingly in order to investigate the educational variation sufficiently. (Deng et al. 2019.)

Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) were able to send a total of 4,946 pairs of applications for 15 finance-typed vacancies in five large Chinese finance-centred cities. The vacancies were from seven company types that were insurance companies, investment companies,

securities companies, banks, financial consultancy companies, internet-based financial companies, and other financial companies. In other words, relatively high-skilled occupations (i.e. industry analyst, fund manager, investment adviser and securities analyst) compared with what has previously been studied. Altogether, this type of stratified randomised experiment provided sufficient variation. Ultimately, the most fascinating part of the study was the way the ID photos were comprised and examined. This experiment was conducted in 2016, before Artificial Intelligence (AI) high-end technology development in 2020s which means the artificial ID photos implemented in the resumes were created with Adobe Photoshop software and the portrait synthesiser. Yet, they managed to create ordinary and attractive looks by using photos of four entertainment celebrities. Since beauty is subjective, creating differentiating ID photos artificially can be tricky. Hence, the validity of the designed ID photos was ensured by conducting an online survey that asked respondents to rate the attractiveness of the photos which supported the validity of the attractiveness of ID images. (Deng et al. 2019.) Given the quickly advanced AI technology, it would be interesting to replicate this type of research in other countries based on their culturally specific beauty standards and compare the results with other countries.

Not to their surprise, the data suggested appearance discrimination in the labour market. They found out that attractive individuals are 5.6 percentage points more likely to be called for an interview. Important to note that callback rates can also be stratified by employer features since attributes of the labour market such as vacancies and companies matter. Moreover, according to Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) beauty premium is larger for vacancies with higher salary. Private companies in finance are generally more likely to discriminate against ordinary-looking applicants compared with for example state-owned enterprises and foreign firms in finance. This could be potentially because state-owned enterprises have more HR-practices protecting them from such appearance discrimination compared to private companies. Nevertheless, in general, attractive individuals are more likely to be called for an interview no matter the educational level. Although, having better educational credentials overall reduces appearance discrimination for the whole research sample. This result does not come as a surprise since attractiveness works as a hedonistic value that enhances other valued attributes such as educational attainment. (Deng et al. 2019.)

Furthermore, company can be located in first-tier or second tier cities depending on the level of regional economic development of the city. Location of the company does not influence appearance discrimination in terms of receiving an interview in the whole sample and male subsample. Based on the results, however, women do encounter much stronger appearance discrimination in first-tier cities than in second-tier cities. As the researchers also suggested, increased competition in first-tier cities could be a potential reason. Since men are not seen to encounter similar appearance discrimination, gender-biased discrimination might be result of historically differentiating treatment of genders in working life scene. Nevertheless, in this research Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) suggested the reason being that there are more women than men in big cities worldwide because of better marriage markets and better work opportunities. They also add that in more competitive markets, women are more likely to be favoured (Deng et al. 2019). All this might be true, nevertheless, it does create unequal platform in the job markets.

It seems that ordinary-looking applicants would have more interview opportunities in second-tier cities. Nonetheless, in this study, characteristics of employers, position features, and individual unobserved specifics were controlled for, so that pure taste-based appearance discrimination in interview opportunities could be identified. In other words, diverse beauty premium exists between different labour market scales, features of posted positions and types of companies, even though evidence is weak for some cases. Already based on this study alone it is evident that appearance discrimination results in unequal interview opportunities in the labour market. Contrary to other studies that have not controlled for example city, company, vacancy and individual, here the causal effect of looks could be identified, and seen that pure facial feature taste-based discrimination exists. (Deng et al. 2019.)

Conveniently, Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) also found clear implications from their field experiment results that beauty does distort the hiring process already at the earliest stage of job search. Moreover, their findings make clear that attractive and plain-looking candidates are not treated equally. Their research method was somewhat similar to Deng, Li and Zhou's (2019) field experiment. There were similarities both similarities and differences in these two studies. Both studies conducted a field experiment by sending out CVs to advertised job openings and both included attractive and plain-looking ID images to investigate beauty premium. Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) conducted their study in Israel and sent out 5,312 CVs in pairs to 2656 advertised

vacancies. In every pair, there was one CV with a picture of either an attractive female or male or a plain-looking female or male, whereas the second CV was almost identical but without a picture. They included a no-picture CV in their experiment and collected the attractive and plain-looking males and females ID images on resumes from the headshot pictures of one Israeli university students. Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) formed a panel of eight judges, equal number of male and female ranging in professions to rate the physical attractiveness, intelligence and likely ethnicity. The highest mean attractiveness ratings of four male and four female pictures were selected as the attractive candidates and vice versa the lowest mean attractiveness ratings of four male and four female pictures were selected as the plain-looking candidates. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Comparing to Deng, Li and Zhou (2019), here they also confirmed the validity of the attractiveness categories of selected ID photos by recruiting student subjects to rate the attractiveness, intelligence, and ethnicity of the ID images which did not statistically differ from those of the judges. Deng, Li, and Zhou (2019) study sent out CVs that targeted mainly financial vacancies, where Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) sent CVs to vacancies in ten different fields, also however including finance. The fields differed in relevance of beauty as well. Meaning that beauty might contribute to the productivity in some fields such as sales, compared to for example computer programming. In addition, it is important to note that none of the job ads required or even requested a picture CV. For all that, checking the validity of the attractiveness in ID images in both studies are definitely prerequisite because of the subjectivity of beauty. These two studies make it clear that attractiveness validity check should be done in future related studies as well to ensure consensus of attractiveness.

It should be noted that both studies are conducted in two different countries, so differing cultures and ethnicities need to be considered accordingly. For instance, since Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) study was conducted in Israel, the ethnicity rating is necessary to include alongside with the ratings of attractiveness and intelligence because of considerable discrimination against Jews of Middle Eastern and North African origin, also known as Sephardic Jews, compared with Ashkenazi Jews who are of European origin. As a result, the photos of students whose ethnicity could be immediately identified were eliminated. Consequently, to avoid possible discrimination of ethnicity, each candidate was given a popular Jewish Israeli first names as well as family names

that date back predating the Ashkenazi-Sephardic distinction. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.) This study in question, shows the importance of considering the history context of that the country holds.

However, much like in first-tier cities (see Deng et al. 2019), job competitiveness affects increasingly to beauty premia which means that if a vacancy requires previous experience, it makes them more competitive and meaning they are more likely to accentuate the effects of observed beauty (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015). Similarly, in their study Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) also noticed a positive indirect effect for more attractive applicants when it comes to hiring judgements on job suitability. Furthermore, Doorley and Sierminska (2015) found out in their study that beauty premium varies across the wage distribution, especially at the tails. Much like in Deng, Li and Zhou's (2019) research, Doorley and Sierminska (2015) also found higher educational levels increasing beauty premia, especially for the ones with college education.

Conversely, Doorley and Sierminska (2015) did find that differences in characteristics, such as labour market attributes, age and family composition between plain and beautiful contributing to the beauty premium and isolating characteristic effect from the unexplained effect leads to smaller beauty premia. Meaning that attractive individuals have other characteristics which can increase their earnings. In fact, some other British (Wong & Penner 2016) and American studies (i.e. Kanazawa & Still 2017) also showed how beauty premium disappears in their results once individual differences such as, cognitive ability, health, grooming and personality are controlled for. For instance, in order to investigate attractiveness, Kanazawa and Still's (2017) American study analysed nationally representative and prospectively longitudinal sample from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to test the three competing explanations regarding discrimination, self-selection and individual differences about the beauty premium which will be examined further later in this chapter.

Moreover, Kanazawa and Still's (2017) research used large nationally representative data from Add Health of young Americans from high schools and middle schools with different regions, urbanicity, school type and size as well as ethnicities. Add Health had conducted four waves of home interviews between 1994 and 2008. Add Health

interviewer rated the respondent's attractiveness in each wave. Kanazawa and Still's (2017) study did not check the validity of the beauty ratings through a survey, instead they used computer program to test out the validity of judges' attractiveness ratings via face symmetry since physical attractiveness is known to highly correlate with bilateral facial symmetry. All the factors that could correlate to physical attractiveness such as health, general intelligence, height, Big Five personality traits, demographic and socioeconomic factors were considered in this study. Incidentally, their analysis suggested that physical attractiveness was not in fact at all associated with earnings once all other factors were controlled for. (Kanazawa & Still 2017.) Therefore, these results suggest that individual differences make up the existing beauty premium.

However, when comparing to Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) research methods they resemble Kanazawa and Still's (2017) methods but still result in complete opposite findings of beauty premium. For instance, both studies investigate if the association between attractiveness and earnings disappears once individual factors are statistically controlled for, both conduct different waves of face-to-face interviews and both consider Big Five personality factors and other characteristics in their study. Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) research was also based on exceptional longitudinal methods, and it was placed in times between 2012 and 2015. The first wave in 2012–2013 was carried out by interviews and second wave was in 2015 from the same original Czech survey data file (PIAAC) which focused especially on attractiveness, personality traits, educational attainment, income, cognitive skills, occupational status and other related detailed data to extend the depths of the researched phenomenon. In this research, the respondents rated themselves and were also evaluated by the interviewers right after the face-to-face interviews. According to the Czech study the effects of beauty did not disappear even after controlling for all other factors. (Anýžová & Matějů 2018.)

Nevertheless, the opposite results between the two similarly conducted studies can be explained by few reasons. Firstly, one is conducted in the United States, and another is in Europe, specifically in Czech Republic, so cultural differences in valuing beauty is possible. Secondly, the American study was conducted a decade earlier between 1994–2008 compared to the Czech study which was in the mid of 2010s. Thirdly, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) research included wider range of age groups that could explain the differences. Their research model is divided into three age groups which are up to 30 years, 30 to 50 years and above 50 years separately for women and men. This age group

division is based on the assumption where the greatest success in the labour market in regard to attractiveness is at its peak in the prime-aged group of 30 to 50 years. Kanazawa and Still's (2017) study only investigated the earnings of the individuals until the ages of 24 to 32, in other words, right before their prime age. Hence, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) results could provide more extensive results between ages and thus also might make the results more valid considering beauty premium.

Using facial images when determining and rating attractiveness was the most used research method in most of the studies covered here (6 studies). Other methods rated physical attractiveness based on face-to-face interviews (5 studies). The method of rating attractiveness through interviews was used in studies conducted in the United States, Czech Republic, Australia and Germany. Since in these studies physical attractiveness was rated based on face-to-face encounters, it is essentially important to note that other observed factors are possibly affecting the rating. To recall, in addition to the academic beauty of a face, facial expressions and charm of a face all contribute to the aspects that influence attractiveness of the face, according to the existing literature (see p. 9–10). For example, facial expressions can reflect different perceptions such as trustworthiness, warmth, dominance, submissiveness, approachability, confidence and so on. (i.e. Rhodes 2006; Little, Jones & DeBruine 2011). Additionally, certain personality traits are known to increase perceived attractiveness and thus, all in all respondents' erotic capital can be seen beyond just plain looks combining both physical and social attractiveness when interacting face-to-face (i.e. Hakim 2010, 2012). As Anýžová and Matějů (2018, 7) note that people come more alive while answering questions, and thus, generally receive higher scores at the end of the interviews.

Since attractive individuals might also have other characteristics which can increase their earnings, Anýžová and Matějů (2018) note that conversely people with higher wages are not only more attractive but can also choose to invest more into their own attractiveness. Thus, the relationship between the variables have been modelled in a way that they are not only independent factors in a wage equation but also their structure of covariance to trying to avoid a causal interpretation (Anýžová and Matějů 2018). Yet, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) results also provide strong evidence that generally more attractive people have greater chances of gaining a higher socioeconomic occupational status and a higher income than less attractive people. Although, according to their empirical analysis data from nationally representative Czech follow-up questionnaire

survey from 2015, their evidence of a positive impact of the attractiveness of the workers on their earnings is suggestive and not strong. Even so, more importantly, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) findings show that the visible effect of attractiveness does not disappear even when education attainment, cognitive skills, social background, and individual characteristics such as height, BMI, self-esteem, grooming and personality, are taken into consideration.

Conveniently, in their literature review results Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) also agree that attractive individuals are socioeconomically favoured, meaning that attractiveness affects the overall socioeconomic outcomes of the individual. Their research as well as Monk, Esposito and Lee's (2021) take an intersectional approach to beauty in the labour market the outcomes and found support for beauty premium. In contrast to other related studies, both studies take a deeper dive into the effects of beauty considering both race and gender. 'What is beautiful is good' and the related notion that 'what is ugly is bad' -heuristics (see Eagly et al. 1991) are used to demonstrate the diverse outcomes of beauty premia. (Monk et al. 2021.)

When moving beyond labour market regime, beauty has additionally been found to affect significantly to total household income (i.e. Borland & Leigh 2014). Additionally, Borland and Leigh (2014) showed that there is quite strong evidence that beauty is significantly related to a person being employed. In other words, the likelihood of an individual to be employed is found to be positively related to their beauty (Borland & Leigh 2014). Although, this effect initially derives from a negative effect on having below-average beauty and the probability of employment. When the study was conducted in 2009 the negative effect of below-average beauty and being employed was up to 12–18 percentage points. Borland and Leigh (2014) have found, similarly to previous research, that beauty affects the hourly wages or as they call it the 'price' a worker receives from their labour in Australia. Results are also found to be of a similar magnitude to other countries (Borland & Leigh 2014).

Borland and Leigh (2014) found an extra positive effect of beauty on household income from their research respondents who have a partner via the relationship between their beauty and their partner's income. Although, this effect of beauty on household income appears weaker than the effect on marital status. In general, it appears that more attractive respondents have partners with higher levels of income. In other words, a

respondent's beauty seems to be positively associated with their partner's income. This way, partner's income contributes to household income and thus, the overall association between beauty and total household income. To conclude, the relationship between beauty and total household income derives from the association between beauty and employment, beauty and hourly wages, beauty and hours of work or the 'price' of work, as well as the income of the partner. (Borland & Leigh 2014.)

To sum up, it is evident that even within studies that find evidence for beauty premium there is a discussion over whether other characteristics such as personality, social background, educational attainment, contribute to increasing the beauty premia. Even if attractiveness has effects in all educational levels, it seems that education is still an important accelerating factor in beauty premium (see Deng et al. 2019; Doorley & Sierminska 2015). There seems to be roughly an equal number of studies finding evidence for "pure" beauty premium and "indirect" beauty premium as I call them. The former means the support found for the effects of beauty which does not disappear even after controlling for other characteristics that could possibly influence labour market outcomes (Deng et al. 2019; Ruffle and Shtudiner 2015; Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Borland & Leigh 2014). The latter, referring to the so-called "indirect" beauty premium, finds support for beauty premium which becomes either smaller (i.e. Doorley & Sierminska 2015) or even disappears (i.e. Kanazawa & Still 2017) when controlling for these individual characteristics.

4.1.2 Beauty penalty – the punishment of beauty

Conversely, beauty penalty simply refers to the opposite of beauty premium where beauty causes detrimental effects in the labour market outcomes. 'Beauty is beastly' - effect can be used to explain beauty penalty and its different forms. Beauty penalty has gendered nature which means 'beauty is beastly' can be seen one-sidedly affecting one gender while the other remains unaffected depending on context. That being said, this type of "heterogeneous" beauty penalty was found from most of the studies in this literature review that also found support for beauty premium. (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Ruffle and Shtudiner 2015; Doorley & Sierminska 2015). In this literature review, up to six (6) out of eleven (11), meaning most of the studies, acknowledged beauty penalty to some extent and showed how physical attractiveness

can also be detrimental in some cases. Similarly to beauty premium, the cases where heterogeneous beauty penalty was found were related to for example socioeconomic outcomes (Kukkonen et al. 2024; Anýžová & Matějů 2018), hiring process (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015) and hiring judgements (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016), wages (Doorley & Sierminska 2015) as well as to gender and racial differences in economic returns (Monk et al. 2021).

Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) note that the majority of existing research on attractiveness, job suitability and sex has found less support for ‘beauty is beastly’ effect and more on ‘what is beautiful is good’ effect. This could be because of number of reasons. According to Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) one of them being the fact that ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect has been researched very little in the past and the support for it has been inconsistent. Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) argue that this imbalanced support also could be because of the lack of examining the effect for jobs considered to be male-typed or not examining the effect for male-typed jobs in which attractiveness is not important for success. Moreover, their study aimed to fill in this gap in research and to do so they first performed pilot study of an exhaustive review of studies which have previously tested the ‘beauty is beastly’ effect and test and provide explanations for previous inconsistencies in the literature. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

Furthermore, they conducted two studies on ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect using corporate types of jobs and as an explanation for the effect they empirically tested ‘lack of fit’ -theory (Heilman 1983). ‘Lack of fit’ -theory is used to explain the ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect more specifically. To sum up, they used data from their pilot study to include jobs which vary in their sex-type and in how significant attractiveness is for the job. Both studies used fictitious job applicants and simulated hiring vignettes to assess the influence of applicants’ sex and attractiveness on job suitability perceptions for various kind of jobs. The first study had a total of 429 participants from a sample representative of the US adult population including information on gender, age, race and ethnicity, region in the USA and level of education. The study also manipulated job sex-type by including a male-typed and a female-typed job, while controlling for the importance of attractiveness in these jobs. The second study contained a total of 166 participants recruited through the Career Centre who were corporate recruiters. Most of the participants were Caucasian and majority of the participants identified themselves as

HR professionals. Second study manipulated the importance of attractiveness for male-typed jobs. Both studies asked the participants to rate each applicants' attractiveness and their agency for the job. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

All in all, what their research found was a negative and significant indirect effect of sex on job suitability through perceived agency for less attractive applicants, and a positive indirect effect for more attractive applicants. Therefore, support for beauty penalty was found and it was gendered since this relationship was negative for women, implying that attractive women are seen as worse fit for male-typed jobs. (Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker 2016.) Based on their extensive research method of including a pilot study and two field experiments, it would be safe to say that the results raised from this study can be considered relatively valid. Although, the diversity might not be in place here, since most of the participants were Caucasian. Nevertheless, conducting another similar research with more inclusiveness during the current decade would reassure the validity of this particular research. Keeping also in mind that 'beauty is beastly' -effect has been less researched compared to 'what is beautiful is good' -effect, duplicating similar research would be beneficial in order to gain more knowledge of beauty penalty's existence.

Consequently, Doorley and Sierminska (2015) found that occupations may value beauty differently and that could be why beauty influences differently across the wage distribution. As Doorley and Sierminska (2015, 32) put it: "The type of jobs where high and low educated women are present may also be responsible for the stereotypical view that beautiful women are less intelligent". Thus, implying that beauty penalty is seen more as a gendered phenomenon. Similarly, Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) findings of beauty penalty in hiring process were also gender-biased and beauty penalty was found in results in a form of penalisation of attractive women relative to women who do not embed a picture in their CV. Penalisation of attractive women could be traced back to unequal treatment between genders, within the dominating norms of the society which in this case could be the perspective of the Israeli population. Both Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg's (2024) and Monk, Esposito and Lee's (2021) studies demonstrate the role contextual power relations play in determining beauty-based outcomes and economic returns.

Similarly to Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016), Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) conducted an extensive systematic literature review to investigate whether the socioeconomic outcomes of physical attractiveness are gendered. In practice, they reviewed a total of 58 articles after searching through up to five databases and identifying relevant articles. The number of relevant articles provided in this research increases its validity especially since it has taken most of the continents into consideration, except Africa and South America which did not have relevant studies available. They found attractiveness being socioeconomically beneficial for both genders in most of the studies. Thus, their comprised results are siding the ‘what is beautiful is good’ -theory. While evidence on ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect is found mostly in gender differences where attractiveness can be seen detrimental. Moreover, their research suggested that unequal outcomes related to attractiveness and contextual power relations perhaps have the same influence in labour market as do individual characteristics. (Kukkonen et al. 2024.)

4.1.3 Three competing explanations for beauty premium

Before, based on existing literature I explored how attractiveness can influence for example through different salaries, hiring process, economic returns or earnings in both beneficial and detrimental ways. Consequently, Hamermesh (2011) has provided three possible explanations to untangle the effect of attractiveness on earnings which has been referred to the beauty premium and alternately the ugliness penalty. All three explanations have had support to some extent by previous studies (i.e. Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). The first explanation is called the ‘individual differences’ -explanation. As mentioned before, paradoxically to some studies who supported the so-called “pure form” of beauty premium, few others supported the claim where other individual characteristics have a significant role in explaining and influencing to beauty premium. Two studies from this literature review, both Kanazawa and Still (2017) and Doorley and Sierminska (2015), supported individual differences -explanation, and their studies found that differences in characteristics contribute significantly to beauty premium. In fact, according to this explanation, beauty premium is basically based on illusion. More specifically, the explanation suggests that more attractive people earn more money because they are more intelligent, more productive, healthier and have personality traits that help them to

higher earnings. Individual differences add up to the attractive traits and this is why attractiveness is a confounding factor and its effect on earnings disappears after other unobserved characteristics are statistically controlled. (Kanazana & Still 2017.)

The second explanation is ‘discrimination’. Discrimination based on one’s appearance can explain the existence of ugliness penalty and beauty premium. As in the whole concept of the beauty premium, physically more attractive workers are favoured and paid more accordingly, and equivalently according to ugliness penalty less attractive workers are discriminated against and paid less – thus, creating the base for appearance discrimination -explanation. Appearance discrimination can come from employers, other coworkers or even customers. As discussed, discrimination can occur already during the hiring process (i.e. Ruffle and Shtudiner 2015) and through hiring judgements (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016) from employers’ side, and furthermore, discrimination can occur if co-workers prefer working with more attractive colleagues. The same situation can occur when customers or clients prefer dealing with physically more attractive employees. (Kanazawa & Still 2017; Hamermesh 2011.) These types of customer discrimination or employer discrimination in some occupations are based on the before mentioned ‘halo effect’ where the assumption lays in cognitive biases where there is a positive association between beauty and productivity (Kaplan 1978).

Discrimination resulted in being the main explanation for the effect of attractiveness on earnings in majority of the studies covered here (i.e. Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015). Anýžová and Matějů’s (2018) research results suggest employers, co-workers and clients’ discrimination being the most plausible explanation on the role of attractiveness in labour market in Czech Republic. Their analyses actually show positive association between attractiveness and earnings and the effect does not disappear once occupations, personalities and cognitive skills are statistically controlled for. Support on discrimination explanation was also found by Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) at the earliest stage of job search. Similarly, when it comes to call back rates, Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) find 5.6 percentage point difference for attractive individual to be called for an interview compared to less attractive individual which in its own reflects appearance-based discrimination. Thus, their results also suggest unequal interview opportunities no matter the gender, education or the scale of the of the market (Deng, Li & Zhou 2019).

On the other hand, according to my interpretation, Borland and Leigh's (2014) results mainly suggests discrimination as their explanation and also individual differences - explanation to some extent since they found discrimination and productivity being the main reasons that beauty might affect labour market outcomes. They believe in the before-mentioned claim about attractiveness influencing positively to productivity, in some circumstances. According to Borland and Leigh (2014), most of the beauty effect is due to appearance, with only a small portion due to self-confidence. In their research, Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) found that there was a negative and significant effect of sex on job suitability through perceived agency for less attractive applicants and vice versa positive indirect effect for more attractive applicants. This means that an attractive man applying for a "male-typed" job may imply them being more agentic than an unattractive man in the eyes of the person responsible for the hiring decision. Thus, leaving women applicants being discriminated against and reflecting some of the existing gendered power struggles in the labour market. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). The literature review which Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) conducted, found that context and beholding power relations play a role in determining attractiveness-related outcomes. The power relations in our society displayed in research can be skewed in terms of social class, gender, age and race. They suggest that these unequal outcomes could contribute as much to contextual power relations as to individual characteristics in explaining beauty premium. (Kukkonen et al. 2024.)

Similar to Kanazawa and Still's (2017) American study, Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) also used the same Add Health data in their American study to analyse the consequences of socially perceived attractiveness in labour markets. The data includes different ethnoracial backgrounds and has rich information on socioeconomic status as well as physical appearance which makes it beneficial for their analysis. Important to note that in the fourth wave, all participants were between the ages of 24 and 32. As mentioned previously, Add Health rated attractiveness from face-to-face interview encounters with participants and interviewers who judged participants' appearances. (Monk et al. 2021.) Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) note that power relations include the dominant views of beauty which are racialised in our society. Socially perceived attractiveness combines other status characteristics such as race and gender and they also modify the effects of perceived beauty. Thus, individuals belonging to ethnoracial minorities, especially the ones with darker skin, receive penalties for not reaching the

‘dominant norms of beauty’. Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) point out that even if discrimination against gender and race is illegal, ‘lookism’ is actually legal. For example, their results found out that consequences of socially perceived physical attractiveness in labour markets are intersectional. Meaning that the penalties as well as the rewards for perceived attractiveness are actually strongest among African-American men and women. (Monk et al. 2021.) This phenomenon should be further researched since existing research lacks in depth as well as repetitiveness. What is true is that physical appearance, race and gender create overlapping effects which can result in intersectional discrimination in the labour market. This particular research of Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) is significantly unique because of its intersectional perspective of physical appearance in the labour markets. Race, gender and ethnicity have been also included in previous related studies but not necessarily further examined and explained thoroughly and together.

The third explanation is called ‘occupational self-selection’. This means that occupational self-selection could explain the existence of beauty premium in the absence of discrimination by the employer, colleagues and clients. According to this explanation, beauty premium and ugliness penalty exist and are apparent especially when people sort themselves into different occupations with different earnings based on their attractiveness levels (see Kanazawa & Still 2017). There should be a positive association between attractiveness and mean earnings across occupations if more attractive individuals are more likely to choose occupations that have higher mean earnings, and if less attractive individuals are more likely to choose lower mean earning occupations. This explanation does not suggest that attractiveness has an influence on earnings within certain occupations, it only suggests that there is a difference between certain occupations with different salaries that are in fact reflecting people’s attractiveness levels. In other words, individuals choose their occupations based on their own levels of attractiveness. In order to find out if beauty premium could be explained primarily through occupational self-selection, effect of beauty premium should disappear after controlling for occupations of the workers in question. (Kanazawa & Still 2017.) Nevertheless, it would seem that none of the studies that has been covered here found any clear support for the occupational self-selection -explanation.

4.2 Physical appearance and social stratification in the labour market

In this chapter, the focus will be on explaining the ways and the extent to which gendered double standards and social stratification are produced and maintained within the labour market regarding physical appearance. Previous research has shown no clear consensus on the phenomenon. Thus, it is important to first explain the main discrepancies found from existing results and then move on further exploring the gender differences in labour market regarding perceived physical attractiveness more specifically. Norm differences of accumulation and utilisation of aesthetic capital between men and women in different life spheres will be discussed as well as the influence it has in working life which can lead to gendered appearance discrimination. Lastly, this chapter takes an intersectional approach by integrating gendered and racial issues to be able to fully understand how socially perceived physical attractiveness and appearance discrimination in labour markets operate.

4.2.1 Gendered nature of beauty premium and beauty penalty

As discussed in the previous chapter, gender differences are explaining why researchers find evidence for both beauty penalty and premium from one study alone (i.e. Monk et al. 2021; Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). This means that in different spheres in life, especially related to working life, norms are different depending on sex and physical attractiveness of the individual. Previous studies somewhat agree that all attractive individuals are socioeconomically favoured but when it comes to gendered outcomes research results are inconsistent. The comprised results gathered by this particular literature review show that mostly women are both rewarded and penalised socioeconomically for being attractive. For women, outcomes of attractiveness seem to be context-dependent, and women are most likely to be disapproved of exploiting aesthetic capital (i.e. Kukkonen et al. 2018). After taking consideration of race and ethnicity, beauty premium and the penalties derived from lookism were found the strongest amongst Black men and women (Monk et al. 2021).

Majority of my research literature found beauty penalty for women (5 studies) when beauty penalty for men was clearly only found in one (1) study. On the other hand, higher beauty premium for men was found in five (5) studies when higher beauty

premium for women was found in only two (2) studies. Based on the results, it seems that beauty premium is found the most among men and beauty penalty is found the most among women. These uneven outcomes of physical attractiveness in labour market between genders could possibly yield from for example general attitudes towards accumulation and utilisation of aesthetic capital between genders, different reasons that lay behind discrimination against attractive women or different effects of sex and attractiveness on job suitability.

Even if most of the studies investigated here have detected higher beauty premium for men than for women (5 studies), one study conducted in Czech Republic found this effect to be the other way around. In Czech Republic, gender differences in returns of attractiveness, meaning higher beauty premium, are detected on women while the beauty penalty is paradoxically greater for men than women (Anýžová & Matějů 2018). Additionally, one American study also detected similar evidence on beauty premium for women. Even though, Kanazawa and Still (2017) only found very weak evidence on beauty premium, their results suggested that the beauty premium was greater for women than for men. One of the main findings from Anýžová & Matějů's (2018) study is that prime-aged group of 30 to 50 years Czech women capitalise on attractiveness far more than men. In their study, Anýžová and Matějů (2018) find that this income premium of attractiveness on success in the Czech labour market is notable especially for women, and even after controlling for education attainment, cognitive skills, social background, occupation status, and individual characteristics this effect does not disappear.

The findings of Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) study note that in addition to the fact that more attractive women achieve better job positions than less attractive women, they also earn more. Prime-aged women capitalise on their attractiveness directly in the financial reimbursement of their work as well as indirectly through better-paid job positions and education. The reason why prime-aged people, especially women in this case, are having the best reimbursements of work is because attractiveness has the greatest effect in the labour market when individuals are reaching career peaks. Based on the evidence provided in this study, during those prime-aged years of 30 to 50, men's and women's attractiveness might be treated differently in the labour market. For this reason, there is a beauty premium in wages for above-average attractiveness that is much higher than the penalty for prime-aged women. (Anýžová & Matějů 2018.)

However, when it comes to call back rates for interviews, according to Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) study, attractive women received the lowest callback rates compared to attractive men who enjoyed the highest beauty premium in employer callbacks. Another similar and interesting finding arises from Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker's (2016) research where men also enjoy the most beauty premium overall, but women only benefit when attractiveness is seen important to the job. This effect is found to be based on the combination of sex and attractiveness on job suitability perceptions for different types of jobs. The clearest finding was that for men, attractiveness was beneficial whether or not attractiveness is seen as relevant to the job. This is a contrary effect of what was found on women. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

Moreover, Borland and Leigh (2014) found stronger evidence of the effects on beauty benefits for men than for women. These effects comprise for example income premium on the matter. What is more, Borland and Leigh (2014) findings suggest that the effects of beauty on household income are gendered. The results show effects of beauty on household income, and more specifically significant effects for men in particular. They agree with Hamermersh (2011) on the matter where the gender difference could be explained by selection effects. More specifically meaning that a higher proportion of men than women in the labour market causes larger dispersion in beauty ratings for men than women, they argue. (Borland and Leigh 2014.)

While it is true that there is higher proportion of men than women in the workforce, 80 % of men and 69.3 % of women to be exact according to European Commission's statistics (2022), the structural differences between genders in labour markets do not stop there. To recall from theory chapter, in addition to labour market participation difference, according to European Commission's statistics (2022) women earn 13.0 % on average less per hour than men. Meaning that in 2021 the gender pay gap still stands at 12.7 % in EU countries (European Commission 2022). Thereafter, as stated in theory, gendered differences vary also by country. Consequently, Anýžová and Matějů (2018) state that Czech women earn approximately up to 20 % less than men. However, their study found that women of above-average attractiveness and competence have the same income as their male peers of above-average attractiveness and competence (Anýžová & Matějů 2018).

There is additionally a difference of how educational attainment is perceived between genders. For instance, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) research shows that generally educational attainment is the key to gaining higher income. Their results state that every year of education increases income by 6 % for men and 7 % for women. Consequently, cognitive skills have similar results as education. However, what is interesting is that the income difference found between above-average and below-average skills is around 11 % for men and up to 30 % for women. In other words, women would be in more favourable position than men when it comes to both attractiveness and cognitive skills when competing for higher income. (Anýžová and Matějů's 2018.)

Accordingly, Doorley and Sierminska (2015) detected higher beauty premia for those with college education. Based on their results, when examining how beauty premium varies by education level, they witnessed high beauty premium for educated women but incidentally at the bottom of the wage distribution. Thus, beauty premium for women at the bottom of the wage distribution is 2 %–4 %. Yet, for men the average beauty premium is 5 %–7 % and beauty premia are present throughout the wage distribution. In conclusion, this means that beauty premium exists for both skilled and unskilled men, but female beauty premium is mainly concentrated at the bottom of the wage distribution for educated women. In this particular study, there is no characteristics gap found for men; however, it is found for women. (Doorley & Sierminska 2015.) Characteristics gap perhaps signals that attractive women need to prove their competence with other characteristics more than men in the labour market. Meaning that for women, only a pretty face might not suffice.

Based on the literature review results here, it is evident that beauty penalty is divided between genders. Women face beauty penalty far more often than men. Up to five (5) studies have found beauty penalty for women and only one (1) study has detected beauty penalty for men, excluding one intersectional American study that found beauty penalty for both African-American men and women. Nevertheless, the aforementioned shows a clear contrast between genders. Additionally, as mentioned, educational attainment has its effects on attractiveness in the labour market. In regard to the discussion of attractiveness and education levels the correlation was generally considered positive. However, surprisingly, Deng, Li and Zhou's (2019) found that there can also be detrimental gendered effects of educational attainment. According to their study, by improving educational credentials men can ease

appearance discrimination but women do not face similar benefits. Meaning that women with better education are actually more likely to encounter appearance discrimination (Deng et al. 2019). These results somewhat resonate to Doorley and Sierminska's (2015) study that found female beauty premium being mainly concentrated at the bottom of the wage distribution for educated women. Nonetheless, they did find a beauty penalty for women with low education as well. (Deng et al. 2019.) On the whole, this means that both beautiful and educated as well as beautiful and non-educated women are worse off. Theoretically concluding that it seems that women in general can receive penalties no matter the educational level.

The ways in which educational levels affect income between genders, there are also varying effects between genders and attractiveness when it comes to both job suitability perceptions and call back rates for interviews. Previous studies have shown that in both situations women are the ones who suffer the most. For instance, according to Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) women face beauty penalty in different kinds of jobs on the basis of sex-typed job suitability perceptions. Additionally, according to Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) women are better off by sending their CVs without a picture. This way women can avoid facing appearance discrimination based on their attractiveness and are most likely to receive a call back for an interview. This is because women with no picture CVs actually have significantly higher call back rates than attractive or plain-looking women. For men, however, the employer callbacks operate the opposite way. Attractive men have the highest call back rates compared to plain-looking men and men with no picture included. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Paradoxically to other related studies covered here, however, in Czech Republic beauty penalty is greater for men than women. Even if attractiveness has been stated to be a weak predictor of men's income, according to Anýžová and Matějů (2018), the beauty penalty is greater for prime-aged men and the effect of attractiveness is found to be statistically significant. After controlling for education and cognitive skills, there is no beauty premium for men but the penalty for below-average attractive men is more than women for below-average attractiveness (9 % of income drop for men and 6 % for women). The reason for the phenomenon is that based on

this analysis, it is clear that women capitalise on attractiveness in ways that pays off more for women than for men. (Anýžová & Matějů 2018.)

On reflection, Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) have made the clearest summary of the discrepancies in existing research results on beauty penalty and beauty premium between genders. In a nutshell, when it comes to the benefits associated with attractiveness, no clear differences have been found between genders. In other words, there are no clear pathway to understand the discrepancies in existing literature regarding the gendered attractiveness differences. Except by analysing the conclusion of many existing research results in two ways in which Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) did in their literature review. Firstly, no evidence was found to support the general claim where attractiveness would be more beneficial especially for women. Thus, showing that the attractiveness is generally socioeconomically beneficial for both genders. Indeed, according to their most recent findings, Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024) actually found an almost equal number of studies in their literature review indicating that attractiveness is more beneficial for men (20 studies) as they found studies stating attractiveness being more beneficial for women (19 studies). On the other hand, according to my literature review, I found more studies reporting that attractiveness is more beneficial for men (5 studies) and considerably less studies reporting that attractiveness is more beneficial for women (2 studies). Secondly, they found that the outcomes of attractiveness in the labour market are gendered (Kukkonen et al. 2024). More specifically meaning that the outcomes of attractiveness have been found to be more beneficial for men than for women which also goes in line with my findings.

Three studies in Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg's (2024) review found that for either men or women plainness may be beneficial but none of the studies made a clear statement that plainness would be considered generally rewarding. Consequently, meaning that plainness does not necessarily have remarkable effects in labour markets. However, the most evident gender differences are seen in cases where beauty acts as detrimental property which is referred to the already familiar beauty is beastly -effect (Heilman & Saruwatari 1979). In their review of 58 articles, they reported that five (5) studies found attractiveness to be more detrimental for women but not a single study detected attractiveness having more detrimental effects for men. These results of gendered differences in detrimental effects somewhat reflect similar to what I have

observed from my own literature review. Beauty was found detrimental for women in also five (5) studies but for men beauty was clearly found detrimental in one (1) study. What is interesting here is that the only study (see Anýžová & Matějů 2018) that found paradoxically beauty penalty greater for men was also included in the literature review of Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg (2024). However, their research literature review findings did not acknowledge it.

4.2.2 The judgements of beautiful women in working life scenarios

In order to understand these aforementioned results, one needs to first understand all main factors that are operating in the background and possibly influencing the phenomenon. Next is to analyse the possible reasons behind the existing unequal appearance discrimination happening between genders in the labour market. Many of the prevailing norms in our society are behind the reasons why some rules are stricter and more context-dependent for women. More precisely, different rules and attitudes exist for example when it comes to accumulation and utilisation of one's looks. The studies I am about to further examine on this matter, together comprise an entity to better understand the unbalanced gendered nature of beauty in working life. The topics that I am about to investigate will entail double standards, job suitability, lack of fit, gendered within-category rivalry, jealousy and envy as well as social stratification, all of which carry their own role in the consequences of beauty in working life.

First and foremost, when analysing the reasons behind these results, the ways in which individuals are accumulating and utilising their looks need to be considered. In their research, Sarpila, Koivula, Kukkonen, Åberg and Pajunen (2020) explained how double standards influence in utilisation and accumulation of aesthetic capital. Furthermore, Kukkonen, Åberg, Sarpila and Pajunen's (2018) research also covered the double standards in terms of the utilisation of aesthetic capital but additionally investigated specifically who endorses these double standards. Thus, I will be comparing and contrasting these two similar studies in terms of double standards in utilising attractiveness in various contexts. Firstly, what needs to be considered when analysing these two studies is that both studies used the same survey data which also makes both research results resonate well with each other. The survey data was nationally representative and collected in Finland in 2016. The survey's purpose in general was to

collect data on the meanings and aspects of physical appearance. Survey data controlled for age, education, partner status and personal income which are proven to be associated with physical appearance according to existing literature. (Sarpila et al. 2020; Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

The norms regarding accumulation and utilisation of aesthetic capital were operationalised into attitudinal questions in the survey. Four questions about the (dis)approval of accumulation of aesthetic capital between men and women concerned grooming tendencies, sports practices, using plastic surgery and wanting to hide physical signs of ageing. Another four questions were about the (dis)approval of utilisation of aesthetic capital between men and women concerning getting a job, getting a higher salary, getting friends and getting a spouse. Since both studies focused on the differences between men and women in terms of societal norms, half of the respondents answered questions only concerning women and the other half men to avoid social desirability bias and thus revealing the possible double standards realistically. (Sarpila et al. 2020; Kukkonen et al. 2018.) Furthermore, Kukkonen, Åberg, Sarpila and Pajunen (2018) added respondent's self-perceived attractiveness as an independent variable. Respondent was asked to consider their appearance as a whole, including body shape and size, facial features as well as their style of dressing and grooming. This addition brings out different combinations between respondent gender and self-perceived level of attractiveness and target gender. (Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

As Sarpila, Koivula, Kukkonen, Åberg and Pajunen's (2020) results showed, the existence of double standards seem to be context-dependent which means that the ways of accumulation and utilisation of aesthetic capital are perceived differently depending on the gendered and context-dependent norms. Accordingly, the results also showed that double standards connected to accumulation of aesthetic capital implied more approval of women, whereas double standards connected to utilisation implied less approval of women. In terms of men, however, there are stricter norms for accumulating their aesthetic capital but less disapproved of exploiting it. Thus, double standards appear paradoxical in terms of gender and their normative logic in accumulation and utilisation of capital. Even if this paradox is not as detrimental for men as it is for women, men do have lesser freedom to enhance their appearance compared to women. Meaning that men face stricter societal-level norms in accumulation and basically need to "settle" to the aesthetic capital they were born with. (Sarpila et al. 2020.)

On the whole, utilisation of physical appearance in the private sphere is societally more acceptable than in working life context. Moreover, the utilisation of one's aesthetic capital in economic exchange was generally found to be the most unacceptable. (Sarpila et al. 2020; Kukkonen et al. 2018.) Nevertheless, according to Sarpila, Koivula, Kukkonen, Åberg and Pajunen's (2020) research, women seem more likely to be disapproved of in all spheres of life. The direction of double standards appears to be the same in private sphere as it is in working life sphere. The study showed that in working life contexts, women face stricter norms in utilisation of physical appearance for instance in recruitment situations and in salary negotiations. In their survey, almost every third respondent (31 %) reported their disapproval of a woman trying to utilise her looks in order to get her salary increased. However, even for men this type of behaviour was highly unacceptable but there is still a clear five percentage point difference of definite disapproval between men and women. (Sarpila et al. 2020.) This effect is also clearly reflecting on my literature review results since it has been evident that generally women suffer from beauty penalty the most.

Based on Kukkonen, Åberg, Sarpila and Pajunen's (2018) research it is also clear that double standards do exist and that they most certainly are gendered differences in norms concerning the attitudes towards exploitation of aesthetic capital. Much like in previous study of Sarpila, Koivula, Kukkonen, Åberg and Pajunen's (2020), they found that women are more disapproved of exploiting aesthetic capital than men and the direction of the double standards is the same in all dimensions of life. However, the most fascinating finding from this study is that women who do not perceive themselves as attractive are the ones who actually endorse double standards against other women. All in all, consequently they found out that the probability of women to more readily disapprove of women who utilise their appearance compared to disapproval of men doing the same was statistically significant in all dimensions of life. (Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

More specifically, the dimensions of life investigated in the study refer to making friends or finding a partner as well as getting a job and getting more salary. Moreover, the job-related situations were the most disapproved areas of exploiting appearance. Explicitly, for women to use their appearance to get ahead in work life context was most disapproved by other women. The probability of women to disapprove of other women to utilise their looks in finding a job was over 50 % which is 10 % higher than women

disapproving of men doing the same. Furthermore, for a woman to use their appearance in getting higher salary, the probability of disapproval by women was even higher (60 %) which is also 11 % higher probability than women disapproving of men doing the same. According to this study, however, men do not disapprove of women utilising their aesthetic capital any more than men disapprove of other men doing the same. Thus, in terms of genders, men's normative judgements seem to be similar to all. (Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

What is more, Kukkonen, Åberg, Sarpila and Pajunen (2018) added self-perceived attractiveness alongside with gender in their research to see the differences in norms while controlling for age, education, income and partner status. After adding self-perceived attractiveness, the results revealed some interesting findings. It turns out that the ones who stand in somewhat vulnerable position in terms of appearance are the ones who embrace these double standards. Meaning that those who do not perceive themselves as attractive are more likely to disapprove of aesthetic capital. Fundamentally, in terms of attractiveness, women who feel that they are in disadvantaged position are more likely to endorse double standards. (Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

Discrimination against attractive women and the possible explanations regarding women disapproving of other women exploiting their looks is also further investigated in Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) study. What they found out from their field experiment is that attractive and plain-looking candidates are not treated equally, especially women. To recap, Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) sent out CVs in pairs to advertised job openings and in every pair, there was one CV with a picture of either an attractive female or male or a plain-looking female or male, whereas the second CV was almost identical but without a picture. The goal of this study was to find out what is the effect of a picture on a CV. Firstly, they found out that in the hiring process the interaction between candidate's looks and required job experience is highly significant. Moreover, between two identical resumes, the one without a picture is nearly six percentage points more likely to receive a callback from a job that does not require previous experience than the one that does require experience. The jobs that require previous experience are more competitive which means that beauty can serve as a tiebreaker when it comes down to employers making a decision between similarly qualified candidates. This would mean

that observed female beauty penalty will decrease, and male beauty premium will amplify. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Secondly, the difference between genders in the effects of beauty differs significantly. Main finding from the field experiment is that attractive men enjoy the highest beauty premium in employer callbacks and attractive women receive the lowest callback rate. When it comes to men, this can be demonstrated by comparing the callbacks between plain-looking men and attractive men. For an equal chance at a callback plain-looking male needs to send over twice as many CVs as an attractive male (9.2 % vs. 19.7 % response rate). Surprisingly, however, no-picture males (13.7 % response rate) are preferred more than plain-looking men. In total of ten occupations included in this field experiment, in seven of them plain-looking males are penalised, and attractive males are rewarded relative to no-picture males. It is evident that based on this study plain-looking men including picture in their CVs are worse off. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Interestingly, for attractive women, however, including a picture in CV can be the most detrimental. Women not having a picture to their CVs elicit the most callbacks (16.6 %) compared to plain-looking women (13.6 %) and attractive women (12.8 %). The women who did not have a picture embedded into the CVs cumulated the highest response rate in six of the ten occupations. On the other hand, even including customer service jobs, attractive women received the lowest callback rate in five of these six occupations. The response rates for jobs dealing with the public and office jobs do not differ significantly from one another so in other words their randomised experiment rules out the possibility for job selection affecting beauty penalty for women. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

In order to tackle the reasons behind employers responding to beauty differently in terms of gender and especially observed beauty penalty for women, Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) conducted a telephone survey of randomly chosen subset of firms included in their experiment. A total of 208 firms, including 97 companies and 111 employment agencies completed the survey. What they found out is that companies and employment agencies differ significantly in ways of responding to beauty. To sum up, companies treat all same-sex beauty categories equally, except the fact that attractive women are penalised. Whereas employment agencies strongly prioritise attractive male candidates and favour no-picture women and discriminate against attractive women and plain-looking women. Nevertheless, discrimination against attractive women is

mitigated and no different from that against plain-looking women when employment agencies do the hiring. Considering from the company hiring perspective the ones who would have to work in the same workplace as the hired candidate do not want attractive females around. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

According to Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) jealousy and envy are one of the proposed reasons behind penalisation of attractive women in working life, and moreover in the hiring context in this particular case. After considering that all resources mentioned in the CVs of their research design were either identical or not mentioned, all is left is the differences in physical appearances. Up to 93 % of the respondents were women which makes the jealousy and envy explanations seem to be fitting well here. Envy could be experienced among females in both companies as well as in employment agencies towards young, attractive female candidates. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.) Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) findings show that women who did not have picture embedded in CV are preferred to attractive women for 55 % of the callbacks when companies did the hiring themselves. For attractive women the callback rate is only 17 % which makes the contrast clear. Thus, Ruffle and Shtudiner (2015) suggest that women in charge of hiring at the companies may feel jealousy and be envious of prospective attractive female employees who would compete with them for attention of male coworkers.

Since employment agencies do the hiring off-site jealousy cannot explain discrimination against attractive women the same way as it could in company hires. However, in this situation envy can be experienced when a person desires to have or possess something, in this case attractiveness, that the other one already possesses. Regardless, compared to companies, employment agencies only weakly penalise attractive women with respect to no-picture women. When the women that are entrusted with hiring will not work with the candidates they hire, envy alone remains. On the contrary, the same trigger that arouses female jealousy in candidate CV pictures is absent for male jealousy. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

For all that, essentially double standards and discrimination against attractive women have both been found to be embraced by other women in studies mentioned above. More specifically, based on the studies covered here it seems that the discrimination and double standards against attractive women are endorsed by women who do not consider themselves attractive, and thus feel jealous or envious of the beauty the other women

possess. Another example of other women, especially senior women, imposing double standards on other women in working life sphere is the so-called 'queen bee syndrome'. The concept refers to older women who have integrated into the organisational culture by embodying the masculine requirements and thus, stereotype and restrict other women of climbing their career ladder and fulfilling their aspirations. (i.e. Kukkonen et al. 2018.) All in all, it has been stated in numerous psychology studies that women are more susceptible to jealousy than men (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015).

Another proposed reasoning for discrimination against attractive women is based on the 'dumb-blonde' stereotype that is commonly known especially in the Western culture. 'Dumb-blonde' -hypothesis in the context of for example hiring would mean reluctance to call attractive women for an interview because of the attached assumption of especially blonde attractive women relying more on their looks in the expense of their intelligence and thus making them seem dumb (i.e. Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.). On the whole, Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) results from the follow-up survey and additional analysis suggest that female jealousy and envy are part of the explanation for penalisation of attractive women, but this is not the case for either the dumb-blonde hypothesis, job selection or only the choice for attaching a photo to CV. However, they note that it is possible that other explanations exist parallel and on their own as well. One example of other explanation reasoning penalising attractive women could be rooted in negative traits such as snobbishness, vanity, lack of sympathy and egoism that are stereotypically associated with attractive women. This prejudice towards attractive women can be detrimental in corporate world where group tasks, mentoring and collaboration are seen vital. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Meanwhile, Heilman's 'lack of fit' theory (1983) can provide another perspective on explaining the penalisation of attractive women in labour market. This perspective covers more on specifically how attractiveness and gender of a job applicant may interact to affect the perceptions of the applicant's agency and their suitability for jobs that are considered as "male-typed". Moreover, to their knowledge, Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery Walker (2016) conducted the first research to test a process model of 'lack of fit' theory to explain the 'beauty is beastly' effect. First of all, their results confirm that 'beauty is beastly' effect is only seen for the male-typed jobs and not at all for female-typed jobs. The results indeed found significant relationships between gender of the applicant and suitability for male-typed jobs, attractiveness of the applicant and

suitability for male-typed jobs as well as perceived agency and suitability for male-typed jobs. Thus, accordingly their analysis discovered that attractive women are seen as less agentic while on the contrary, attractive men are seen as more agentic. Conveniently, regardless of men's attractiveness levels, men were seen as more suitable than women for a male-typed job while unattractive women were seen much more suitable than attractive women. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.)

According to the 'lack of fit' theory, the reasoning for the differences in perceived agency and suitability of the genders for male-typed jobs lays in masculinity and femininity (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). Attractiveness has been shown to emphasise the use of gender-related personality stereotypes (i.e. Heilman & Saruwatari 1979). As can be recalled from theory, the perceived 'lack of fit' occurs because women's attractiveness (and femininity that comes with it) re-enforces the gender-related personality stereotypes that women are less suitable because they were seen as lacking the agentic characteristics associated with male-typed jobs (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). The findings from Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery-Walker's (2016) research lined up accordingly with the aforementioned theory lines since they also found a decline in the perception of agency for attractive women and a rise in the perceptions of agency for attractive men. In this research, Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery-Walker (2016) used two male-typed jobs that differed in their hierarchical positions, and found out that the higher hierarchical position, the higher the job importance for attractiveness. IT manager was chosen as the low-level position where attractiveness is seen as less important whereas the senior vice president was chosen as the high-level position and where attractiveness is seen as more important (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016).

In addition to finding evidence on 'beauty is beastly' effect for women, their results also discovered evidence to support 'what is beautiful is good' -paradigm for both genders (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). However, men enjoyed the most out of the beauty premium while mostly women experienced beauty penalty. More specifically, 'beauty is beastly' effect is present for the male-typed jobs in which attractiveness is not important for success, according to Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery-Walker (2016). In a nutshell, this means that for male-typed job with low importance of attractiveness, being attractive is beneficial for male applicants but detrimental for female applicants. On the other hand, when it comes to the evidence

found to support ‘what is beautiful is good’ -paradigm, male-typed jobs for which attractiveness is seen as important, attractiveness was beneficial for both male and female applicants. Yet, it seems that being attractive is always beneficial for male applicants regardless of the relevance of attractiveness to the job. In conclusion, for any kind of male-typed job attractiveness always pays off for men but for women that only happens when attractiveness is seen important to the job. (Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016.) Therefore, Paustian-Underdahl and Slattery-Walker’s (2016) study shows that attractiveness could be harmful for women applying for lower-level male-typed corporate jobs such as entry or managerial levels of IT for example. However, this is not the case in higher-level positions in which attractiveness may be seen as important (Paustian & Slattery Walker 2016). For women, this could presumably explain parts of the obstacles women face when trying to climb the career ladder. Based on these findings it is evident that the obstacles exist already at entry level jobs for women.

4.2.3 Intersection of beauty: gendered and racialised essence of beauty in working life

Similarly to gendered effects of attractiveness, different ethnoracial categories receive diverse forms of treatment in labour market when it comes to perceptions and prejudice rooted in physical markers of race. While keeping the gendered effects in mind, next is to take racial matters into consideration and create more intersectional approach. This is crucial in order to understand how physical appearance works in the labour market. In order to explain the reasons more thoroughly is to start by stating that the standardised view of beauty in our society has been predominantly Eurocentric. This means that ethno-racial minorities are significantly more likely to be perceived physically unattractive from the point of view of members of dominant ethnoracial categories who are also more likely to be gatekeepers in the labour market. Moreover, ethno-racial minorities with darker features and skin tones are less likely to have the facial features, hair types, or skin tones that match Eurocentric beauty ideals. For instance, Afrocentric features are widely perceived as aesthetically inferior to Eurocentric physical traits because of dissimilar hair types and texture, dark skin tone and more masculine facial features to name a few. (i.e. Monk et al. 2021.) As a result, this creates various intersectional consequences of socially perceived attractiveness especially within the

working life context. Racialised and gendered socially perceived attractiveness result in complicated patterns of inequality. (Monk et al. 2021.)

Firstly, it is important to remember a gender gap in wages that influences in experienced inequality in labour market among women. In the United States' setting, for example, women are estimated to earn 69 cents for every dollar earned by men (Monk et al. 2021, 219). Concepts of double and triple jeopardy are good examples of the complex patterns of inequality that attractiveness renders in labour market. Precisely, the combination of both race and beauty may put Black men in *double jeopardy* on the labour market, whereas the combination of race, beauty and gender may put Black women in *triple jeopardy*. Moreover, other ethno-racial minorities, such as Latinx, who have darker skin tones and other physical features that do not collide with the predominant beauty standards also face penalties on the labour market. However, as stated before, Black men and women face the harshest penalties in working life based off of their perceived physical attractiveness. (i.e. Monk et al. 2021.)

Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) aimed to find out the ways in which perceived beauty is unequally distributed along ethno-racial and gender lines within the United States. One of the main findings of their study is that the intersection of the gender inequality between men and women as well as the ethno-racial inequality between Blacks and Whites result in wage disparities. As mentioned in previous chapter, Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) used Add Health longitudinal data of working, Black, White or Hispanic individuals to analyse the intersectional consequences of attractiveness in the labour market. In this data, Asians, Native Americans, American Indians and other individuals were excluded from this analysis because of their small sample sizes. The data was collected through home interviews, and moreover, it is worthy to note that the vast majority of interviewers were White (70 %), and female. Thus, meaning that the demographic characteristics of the interviewers are actually reflecting the typical gatekeepers in the labour market in real life, which is helpful in the aim of the study. (Monk et al. 2024.)

Based on Monk, Esposito and Lee's (2021) findings, it is evident that there is a positive association among earnings and attractiveness regardless of race and gender. Hence, individuals with higher levels of socially perceived attractiveness seem to have higher annual income compared to their peers. Moreover, regardless of race, ethnicity or

gender, there seems to be a consensus across interviewers on ratings of perceived attractiveness within Add Health data. However, there are substantial ethno-racial differences of perceived attractiveness between races among women. White and Hispanic women received higher scores on average than Black women on perceived attractiveness. On the other hand, among men across all races had similar average perceived attractiveness scores. Firstly, keeping the wage gap in mind, it is important to note that since there are already fundamental ethno-racial differences in socially perceived attractiveness among women, there are also intersectional differences in earnings. For example, according to the national income patterns in the United States, Black women have the lowest levels of earnings, while White males have the highest (Monk et al. 2021, 213). Personal earnings in Add Health data corresponds the same patterns. Thus, in addition to the wage gap between genders, there is also the so-called 'race gap' in earnings between races. According to Monk, Esposito and Lee's (2021) results, Black-White race gap is 87 cents which more specifically means that Black respondents are estimated to earn 87 cents for every dollar earned by White respondents. Not leaving out the Hispanics, according to the results, the earnings are comparative to Whites which is somewhat higher than the national estimates. The reason for this could be perhaps explained by existing skin tone stratification (colourism) in the United States since over 80 % of the Hispanic respondents were described having light skin tones. (Monk et al. 2021.)

These penalties for lacking perceived attractiveness can be easily demonstrated by comparing the predicted earnings to the most beneficiary category which in this case is attractive White males. First of all, a White male is estimated to earn 88 cents to every dollar White male with very high levels of attractiveness is estimated to earn, according to Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021). In the same manner, the ratio for estimated earnings for White females who are lacking perceived attractiveness earn 83 cents. Consequently, Hispanic males at the bottom of the socially perceived attractiveness are predicted to earn 78 cents, and moreover, Hispanic females are predicted to earn 80 cents to every dollar earned by very attractive White male. Black males at the bottom 5 per cent of the lowest levels of perceived attractiveness are estimated to earn only 61 cents and Black females 63 cents to every dollar earned by White males who possess highest levels of attractiveness. (Monk et al. 2021, 220). Thus, the steepest penalties for lacking perceived attractiveness are observed amongst Black men and women. (Monk et al. 2021.)

However, the most interesting finding is that even though Black women have the strongest penalties in perceived attractiveness and earnings, they also have the greatest returns. The returns to attractiveness are so considerable among Black women that the earnings of Black women with the highest levels of perceived attractiveness seem to meet or even cross-over those of White women with similar levels of attractiveness. Correspondingly, the returns to attractiveness are quite significant among Black men, however, not enough to overlap with White men. Finally, these findings suggest that the opportunities and rewards that labour market can offer in this sense are most likely offered according to the ways in which colourism operates, hence meaning to the lightest and most attractive Blacks. Thus, still prevailing and maintaining the ethno-racial differences and Eurocentric hegemony of beauty standards in labour market. Nevertheless, even with compelling evidence gathered from data, direct causal relationship cannot be claimed for certainty. (Monk et al. 2021.) However, to cite Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021, 221): “—lookism reveals itself to be similar to colourism, a phenomenon with which it is intimately linked”.

4.3 New possible explanations for beauty effects in the labour market

In this chapter, perceived beauty and their effects in different cultures will be further analysed and how they might converge with the labour market outcomes. According to my knowledge, previous research has not yet studied the perceived beauty differences between continents, regions, countries, and their cultures and their overlapping influences in the labour market. The cultural differences could possibly explain the existing discrepancies in literature and results concerning beauty premium. However, amongst researchers there is a consensus of the way in which Eurocentric hegemony of beauty standards are prevailing in most of the world and therefore having dark-skin and dark features can thus conversely “work against you”. This chapter will investigate even further into these dimensions and compare and contrast the possible roles of ethnicity, gender, age, education and religion between different cultural realms and add them into the existing findings.

4.3.1 Could cultural differences explain diverse outcomes of beauty premium?

To recap, existing literature has already provided three competing explanations to untangle the effect of attractiveness on earnings. The first explanation is based on individual differences, the second on discrimination and the third on the other hand on occupational self-selection (see pages 40–44). The main focus on this last chapter, however, is to offer a new and alternative explanation to the effect of attractiveness on earnings, that being the ‘cultural differences’ explanation. This explanation pursues to explain different beauty effects in the labour market and the reasons behind discrepancies in existing literature from point of view of different cultures. Thus, it considers the region or country in question and its cultural realm in which the research has been conducted. From this point of view, I will dive deeper into the various cultures and how they might affect discrepancies in existing literature about beauty premium.

For this reason, perhaps the answer for the uncertainty in literature could be in cultural differences. The cultural differences -explanation takes into consideration different cultural views of genders, age, ethnicities, values, religions, beauty ideals among other culturally specific historical factors from different time periods that can be researched and categorised to understand the effects more thoroughly. The aim would be to find out

what types of beauty standards and other observed factors are valued or despised within that specific cultural realm and why. For instance, what valued physical traits are expected from the ideal candidate by the person responsible of the hiring process? What are the internalised regional beauty standards that make up the differences between individuals in the working life and why? How much is Western hegemony seen in beauty standards and how much does it affect the outcomes in labour market? In specific countries, which demographic groups (i.e. considering gender, ethnicity and race) are in privileged position or in inferior position compared to others and why? These questions are just examples of what would be important to consider in both existing results and in future research from cultural differences point of view.

As aforementioned, one needs to acknowledge and compare the influence of the country and its cultural environment as well as the time period the study was conducted in. Additionally, it is important to consider how attractiveness was measured and ultimately what factors were included in the analysis. Overall, four continents were included in this whole literature analysis. Unfortunately, any related research was not found within the continent of Africa nor there were any related South American studies found either. This means that the intersectional dimension of beauty ideals and their effect on earnings in the continent of Africa and South America remains to be unanswered here. Hence, the focus is centred mainly on countries within Asia (China and Israel), Europe (Czech Republic, Germany and Finland), United States of America, Australia and one study review that covers all aforementioned continents in its literature review. However, because of globalisation, all countries constitute of individuals from different ethnicities so intersectional approach can be integrated to the analysis. Each country has their own shared history, region, customs, beliefs, values, languages and religions which influence in the world views of each population.

Moreover, in broader definition of the cultural borders, there exists a concept of the 'Western World' which includes Western European countries, North and South America, Australia and New Zealand (World Population Review 2021). The Western World is based on European values and any country whose cultures are strongly influenced by these values are included or whose population contains a large proportion of people descended from European colonists, such as Australia, New Zealand and North and South America. Thus, the modern definition of the 'Western World' is used

to describe the cultural identities rather than geographical location of the countries in question. (World Population Review 2021.)

The broadly used term of the ‘Western culture’ refers to the somewhat shared social norms, traditions, religious beliefs, political systems and technologies. However, obviously not all countries belong to the Western World. Furthermore, the division of other regions overlap with each other in three ways. The three overlapping regions are firstly, Africa which encompasses the entire continent of Africa, secondly, the Eastern World which comprises all of Asia and the Middle East and thirdly, the Arab World which consists of the Middle East and North Africa. (World Population Review 2021.) Hence, in the upcoming research examples which will be analysed in more cultural context, the Chinese study (Deng et al. 2019) will be considered under the Eastern World, the Israeli study (Ruffle and Shtudiner 2015) would belong under the Eastern World and the Arab World, and the Czech study (Anýžová & Matějů 2018) under the Western World. Additionally, the American study (Monk et al. 2021) will belong under the perspectives of the Western World. Even though, Israel is located in West Asia and technically belongs to Eastern World, it also represents Arab World and the Middle East in its own specific cultural environment because of their shared language, religions and history.

4.3.2 The Western World vs. non-Western world – cultural influence in judgements of beauty

There are found to be three common components of facial attractiveness that all countries and cultures share. These components are symmetry, averageness and sexual dimorphism (see p. 9). Moreover, what is perceived as youthful and healthy is additionally considered more beautiful. The ideology behind these common components is originally rooted in and explained through evolutionary beauty. (i.e. Spyropoulou et al. 2020; Rhodes 2006; Little et al. 2011.) In fact, one study investigated the differences and similarities in beauty ideals between cultures by looking at models in cosmetic advertisements. Their research found common characteristics amongst models in cosmetic advertisements in different parts of the world that were symmetry, high cheek bones, small noses, thin jaws, lush hair, clean and smooth skin and white toothed smile. (Spyropoulou et al. 2020.)

Nonetheless, even if abundant evidence exists in the literature about the general cross-cultural agreement on facial attractiveness, variations also exist as a result of cultural influences. Individual perceptions of beauty reflect the cultural influences and ethnic perceptions of aesthetics. Hence, greater agreement on facial attractiveness is noted within cultures than between them. (Spyropoulou et al. 2020; Broer, Juran, Liu, Weichman, Tanna, Walker, Ng & Persing 2014.) Facial features such as harmony, balance and proportion define their attractive dimensions and are not inevitably applicable on a cross-cultural basis. All in all, beauty is found to be influenced by an individual's geographic, demographic and ethnic background and characteristics. Moreover, the face is a notable contributor to an individual's personality. In particular, what captures the attention and influences the perception of the observer are the most central features of the face such as the lips, nose and chin. (Broer et al. 2014.)

One way to investigate beauty ideals of cultures is by looking into their aesthetic practices such as cosmetic advertisements or even preferred plastic surgery practices in certain countries and their regions. The media, cosmetic advertisements, plastic surgery and aesthetic treatments across countries reflect current beauty ideals and help to compare the cultural differences between them. For example, the ways in which media portray beauty standards all around the world is how beauty is perceived in that cultural context. Moreover, these beauty standards seen in media are also used as a foundation for aesthetic evaluations in plastic surgery. In other words, this means that cosmetic advertisements and plastic surgery practices can be used as a "mirror" of cultural perceptions of beauty. (Chen et al. 2020; Broer et al. 2014.) When the facial characteristic differences of the models in the cosmetic advertisements have been assessed as indicators of beauty in each country the models are featured in, certain ideals are seen as prevalent in certain regions. However, it should be noted that since most of cosmetic advertising is for women and majority of the plastic surgery customers are women (see Sarpila et al. 2020), it also means that the beauty ideals mentioned here are also for women. This is beneficial for the purpose of this particular literature review, since majority of the existing research have found women to have the most diverse outcomes based on their perceived beauty. This means in both beneficial and detrimental ways depending on context and perhaps also culture.

In addition to the common facial features such as symmetry, different regions have their own preferred facial characteristics for perceived beauty. In Asia, or more specifically

East Asia, pale white skin, small face and mouth, large eyes and pointy chin are preferred. Moreover, women who look youthful, cute and innocent and embody all aforementioned facial characteristics, are considered attractive in China, Japan, Thailand and Korea. (Spyropoulou et al. 2020; Chen et al. 2020.) The term “Kawaii” originated in Japan but is used in all of East Asia is to describe something cute and nearly child- or baby-like. Thus, explaining why large eyes are preferred; they signify youth and innocence. It is believed that the reason behind the interest towards “kawaii” might be human nature of nurturance. Additionally, it makes a person seem more attentive, it reflects calmness, has a healing effect on others and more than anything it attracts attention. Therefore, explaining also why a correlation between beauty and success is emphasised amongst East Asians. (Chen et al. 2020.)

Within Chinese cultural realm, factors such as city-type and university-type are vital to take into account in order to get realistic and wholesome picture of the effects in the labour markets. This is necessary because in China the universities are stratified into groups according to their reputation and quality and graduating from high-quality university usually signals higher ability and all in all better human capital. Beauty premia tend to be more pronounced in big cities with higher populations of women and in research roles that are predominantly male-oriented. (Deng et al. 2019.) Other studies have not controlled for example city, company, vacancy and individual factors. In the Chinese study of Deng, Li and Zhou (2019) these factors are included so that they could identify the causal effect of looks.

After controlling for all the factors that could interfere with making a causal effect and see if pure facial feature taste-based appearance discrimination exists, they found out that attractive individuals are 5.6 percentage points more likely to be called for an interview (Deng et al. 2019). Since their research was conducted in China, it falls under the same beforementioned beauty ideals of East Asia. When it comes to women specifically, this could suggest that women who are considered attractive in China, embodying youthful, cute, innocent, ‘kawaii’ look, are also associated with many positive effects and personality traits as mentioned are also the ones who are more likely to be called for an interview. However, even if appearance discrimination exists regardless of gender, women with higher educational credentials are more likely to encounter appearance discrimination compared to men who can actually ease appearance discrimination by attaining better education in China (Deng et al. 2019).

This makes sense considering China's high respect for certain universities based on their reputation, however, the question remains why attaining higher education from respected university does not ease appearance discrimination for women as well. The reasons behind biased appearance discrimination based on education should be further studied.

Meanwhile, in Middle Eastern countries there are three predominant features for attractive face that are firstly, striking eyes, secondly, full lips and thirdly, defined full cheeks. Similarly to Asian beauty ideology, having light skin and pointy chin are preferred. Having light skin as well as straight narrow nose and full lips are also considered as the Western beauty standard. Additionally, having an oval or round face, large almond-shaped eyes, intense arched eyebrows, small straight nose and well-defined jawline are commonly considered beautiful in Middle Eastern cultures. However, there are differences also within Middle East region and even within its countries because of the wide range of ethnic and racial diversity. (Spyropoulou et al. 2020; Kashmar, Alsufyani, Ghalamkarpour, Chalouhi, Alomer, Ghannam, El Minawi, Saedi, Hunter, Alkobaisi, Rafla, Zari, Elsayed, Hamdan, Santagelo, Khater & Rogers 2019.)

Some beauty ideals have received strong influence from the Western cultures partly because of colonialism. For example, eurocentrism has heavily influenced in Central and South Asia's ideal standard of beauty that for instance comprises a preference light-coloured eyes and light skin. However, Eastern Asian countries such as China, Japan and Korea have never been colonised by the West and have for a long time purposely isolated themselves from foreign influence. Nevertheless, East Asian beauty standards could have had little to some influence from Western beauty ideals and eurocentrism, partly due to the strong global impact of American culture. (Chen et al. 2020.) Similarly to East Asia, in Middle Eastern countries' contemporary beauty icons look more traditionally Middle Eastern. The Egyptian queen Nefertiti is an example of historically influential beauty icon in the Middle East (Kashmar et al. 2019). Nevertheless, even if Middle Eastern countries have plenty of beauty trends and icons of their own, European beauty standards still have a strong impact to Middle Eastern perceptions of beauty (Chen et al. 2020; Kashmar et al. 2019).

As stated, cultural influence from Europe, history in colonialism, political power, religions and other common beliefs all contribute to how beauty is perceived in each region and within each country. Thus, it also contributes to the consequences of perceived beauty in all areas of life. In the Middle East, the French and the British held the most political power and cultural influence. When it comes to ethnicity of the Middle East, Arabs make up the majority of the population, thus meaning that Islam is the most prevalent religion. Christianity with heavy influence from Judaism is the second most prevalent religion in the region. The descendance of the people in Middle East can be European or African and other ethnicities. All aforementioned being considered, this means that facial features and skin color vary in a wide range throughout the Middle East. (Chen et al. 2020.)

Regardless, the preference for a lighter skin colour is strong in each ethnic group (Kashmar et al. 2019). This is due to 'the divinity of whiteness' within Middle East region, which refers to historically idealised hierarchy of white skin. This ideology still runs strong in the region since not many believe in equal treatment. Consequently, rooted in this ideology, the darker your skin is the worse you are treated in society. For example, Arabs in the Middle East consider having a white skin to be a blessing and implying higher status compared to those with darker skin. Therefore, also individuals from the Northern Hemisphere are most likely to get treated better in the labour market. For example, they can secure a job, receive different kinds of benefits or determine their salary more easily than others in the society. (Chen et al. 2020.) This should be noted when analysing research about appearance and labour market outcomes in the Mid-East.

Consequently, considering the Middle Eastern cultural perspective, in Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) study when judges were asked to rate the ethnicity alongside with attractiveness and intelligence, the researchers eliminated the pictures whose ethnicity were strongly identified as either Ashkenazi Jews or Sephardic Jews. Inclusion of ethnicity rating and elimination of the ones who are identified as either Sephardic Jews or Ashkenazi Jews is necessary because of the discrimination against Sephardic Jews, meaning Jews of North African and Middle Eastern origin. Because of the prevailing colourism, pure effects of attractiveness in the labour market could be revealed in their experiment only after eliminating the ethnicity biases. Therefore, simply leaving gender and the level of attractiveness in the ID photo to determine the effects which did reveal discrimination against attractive women. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Interestingly, Ruffle and Shtudiner's (2015) study was to their knowledge the first one to demonstrate negative returns for attractive females in an actual labour market, also known as the beauty penalty. Beauty discrimination exists already at the earliest stage of applying for a job vacancy since any woman sending a CV without a picture to a job opening that does not in fact require one, has a greater chance of receiving an interview than an attractive woman who included a picture. Actually, attractive women receive the lowest number of callbacks, even including customer service vacancies. In this context, beauty penalty refers to being less likely to receive a call for an interview and the results suggest that there is 41 % penalty for attractive women including a picture in Israel. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.)

Discrimination against attractive women in Israel could be possibly rooted in the ways attractive women or women in general are perceived and discriminated against in Middle Eastern countries. Already starting from birth, girls and women are treated differently compared to their male counterparts in this region (Unicef 2024). According to Unicef (2024), across the Middle East and North African region (MENA) female youth are more than twice as likely to be not in education and employment than male youth. For instance, access to the labour market for girls and young women across the MENA region is limited because of their age and gender norms (Unicef 2024). This evidently has its influence on how women are perceived in the labour market and could possibly be one of the reasons behind the Israeli study's results. Gender inequality and women's rights obviously vary across countries within Middle East according to cultural, political and religious environments in each individual country. However, it does reflect the overall situation in Middle East concerning women's lack of inclusion in various dimensions of life, such as the labour market. One could assume that the utilisation of erotic capital is highly disapproved based on women's position in society and religious environment of the country or overall region. Future research should focus on the reasons behind greater penalisation of attractive women in Israel or in the Middle East region in general.

When it comes to colourism, even with the extensive amount of ethnic diversity across the Middle Eastern region, people of darker skin colour are still seen as inferior to people with whiter skin colour (Chen et al. 2020; Kashmar et al. 2019). In similar manner, in the United States colourism is also strongly persisting to this day and operating the same way within the labour market (i.e. Monk et al. 2021). Across the

region, there persist a deep-rooted racial prejudice and hatred towards people of colour even if United States is a nation composed of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Cultural attitudes and values are all interconnected and deeply rooted in historical contexts, including for example religious beliefs, political power, colonialism and so much more that continue shaping issues like colourism, gender inequality, and appearance discrimination till to this day.

This being said, it is no surprise that the results from the American study from Monk, Esposito and Lee (2021) found socially perceived attractiveness being unevenly distributed across race and gender. Accordingly, the consequences of socially perceived attractiveness were also intersectional. Meaning that the highest average levels of earnings belong to White males and the lowest average levels of earnings on the other hand belong to Black women. Equally, as Black women receive the steepest penalties, they also gain the greatest rewards for perceived attractiveness in the United States. However, these rewards usually tend to go to the lightest and most attractive Black women according to the way colourism operates. (Monk et al. 2021.) Based on the existing literature, it is evident that the predominant Western beauty standards, gender biases and the structural racism in social and political systems within the society sums up the reasons behind the appearance discrimination of people of colour, especially women of colour in both United States and Israel. The aforementioned results from Israel and United States do in fact reflect the context of history that is based on Eurocentric values, political systems and religion which are still influencing predominantly to opportunities in as crucial dimensions as working life.

In the same manner, the majority of studies that reported the existence of beauty penalties for attractive women were conducted in the United States, according to Kukkonen, Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg's (2024) global literature review. Contrary to the United States, up to six (6) European studies reported attractiveness to be more beneficial for women, while only three (3) studies found attractiveness to be more beneficial for men (Kukkonen et al. 2024). This paradoxical difference between the two Western regions can be explained by further investigating their cultural, political and historical contexts on a deeper level as previous examples have shown. More specifically, when investigating the continent of Europe, and for instance, Czech Republic, prime-aged women are found to be the ones enjoying the highest beauty premium. The premium is so substantial that even if Czech women earn approximately

20 % less than men, women of above-average attractiveness and competence have the same income as men of above-average attractiveness and competence (Anýžová & Matějů 2018, 11).

Furthermore, there have been profound changes in the last 30–40 years, to the least in the Western world, and the importance of physical attractiveness and erotic capital has been increasing, especially for women (Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Borland & Leigh 2014). Interestingly, however, women are more penalised and disapproved of utilising their attractiveness, but still erotic capital has been increasing especially for women. Future research should look into the implications of this paradox between the association of the importance of attractiveness and female beauty penalty. However, since erotic capital has been increasing overall amongst women for the past decades it goes accordingly that Czechia women receive monetary benefits from their good looks. Therefore, one explanation could be that in Czech Republic, beautiful women are appreciated more than disapproved in working life. If further researched, could this also possibly reflect broader consequences of perceived attractiveness of women in Europe since several other European studies have seen similar results as seen from Pajunen, Sarpila and Åberg's (2024) global literature review results. Perhaps erotic capital and beauty in general have more monetary value in Europe for women compared to other continents. However, more research is needed to make any type of assumptions.

One could argue, however, if the 'halo effect' is more strongly rooted in the ways in which beauty of women is perceived in European countries. Consequently, the 'halo effect' could make it easier for women to achieve higher salary by the means of their attractiveness in Europe. Overall, higher salary might be relatively easier for women to achieve within Europe compared to other continents since Europe is in the lead for having closed 75 % of its regional gender gap in 2024, according to World Economic Forum. Northern America ranks second with gender parity score of 74.8 %. Moreover, Eastern Asia ranks fourth with an overall gender parity of 69.2 % in regional gender gap rankings. Lastly but not surprisingly, among all regions Middle East and North Africa ranks last with a gender equality score of 61.7 %. A full 100 % score would mean that the region had reached perfect equality between genders. Also, what needs to be kept in mind is that all regions have differentiating scores between countries and the regional gap score is the average score of the region. (Kali Pal, Piaget, Zahidi, & Baller 2024.)

Therefore, when investigating specific countries, their own up to date country-specific gender equality scores should be checked for full disclosure.

For instance, as Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) results suggest that between genders, the earnings gap in Czech Republic would only be possible to close for women with above-average attractiveness. Since the importance of physical attractiveness and erotic capital has been increasing during the past decades especially for women, I wonder if Czech Republic is either a forerunner of a trend or exception in its findings. In the future, will other European countries move into this direction as well since importance of erotic capital has been rising? What about other countries outside of Europe? Consequently, if so, would only woman with above-attractiveness be the ones that are able to close the gender pay gap? In essence, in the future, will the disapproval regarding utilisation and accumulation of aesthetic capital between genders stay the same or does it change its course?

Finally, gender gap contributes to explaining the relationship between perceived beauty and women's role in the labour market as well as the overall consequences of beauty in working life. On the whole, however, a lot of work is still needed in society to achieve gender and ethnoracial equality and to eliminate appearance-based discrimination in the labour market. All in all, this chapter explains why colourism is found to be so intimately linked with lookism in every culture and why they should not be separated especially when talking about perceived attractiveness in the labour market.

5 CONCLUSION

This literature review examines what outcomes does physical attractiveness create in labour market scene. I explored how socially perceived attractiveness can influence for example through wage distribution, hiring process, job accessibility, earnings, pre-interview stage, job suitability, household income, economic returns and earnings in both beneficial and detrimental ways. First of all, the findings from my literature review make it clear that the roles physical attractiveness play in the labour market are context- and gender-dependent. Secondly, existing power relations and complex patterns of inequality between ethno-racial categories also play a substantial role in determining attractiveness-related outcomes in working life. Moreover, in this literature review, I analysed the broad existence of beauty premium and beauty penalty in the labour market.

Firstly, I investigated the overall evidence for the existence of beauty premium that was found in majority of the studies (8 studies) used in my literature review. Then, comparing the overall evidence on beauty penalty that was found in half of the studies (6 studies). Based on the findings from this literature review, it is evident that even within studies that find evidence for beauty premium there is a discussion over whether other characteristics such as personality, social background, educational attainment, contribute to increasing the beauty premia. Consequently, there seems to be roughly an equal number of studies finding effects of beauty which do not disappear even after controlling for these other characteristics that could possibly influence labour market outcomes (pure beauty premium) as well as support for beauty premium which becomes either smaller or even disappears when controlling for these individual characteristics (indirect beauty premium).

What is more, I focused on finding out how and to what extend gendered double standards and social stratification are produced and maintained within the labour market when it comes to physical attractiveness. From the results, what was important to notice was the fact that some studies in this literature review found both support for beauty penalty and beauty premium which confirmed the contextual and gendered differences in beauty effects in the labour market. More specifically this means that ‘beauty is beastly’ -effect can be witnessed one-sidedly affecting one gender while the other remains unaffected depending on context. This type of “heterogeneous” beauty penalty

was found from most of the studies in this literature review that also found support for beauty premium. (i.e. Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Ruffle and Shtudiner 2015; Doorley & Sierminska 2015). The results from this literature review comprise that men are mostly rewarded, and women are both rewarded and penalised socioeconomically for being attractive. Thus, it is evident that beauty penalty is divided between genders. Women face beauty penalty far more often than men. From eleven (11) studies used in this literature review, up to five (5) studies has found beauty penalty for women and only one (1) study has clearly detected greater beauty penalty for men, excluding one intersectional study that found beauty penalty for both Black men and women. On the other hand, higher beauty premium for men was found in five (5) studies when higher beauty premium for women was evidently found in only two (2) studies. Therefore, based on the findings, it is clear that beauty premium is found the most among men and beauty penalty the most among women.

Attractiveness has its effects in all educational levels, and it seems that education is an important accelerating factor in beauty premium (see Deng et al. 2019; Doorley & Sierminska 2015). However, at least one study found that there can also be detrimental gendered effects of educational attainment for attractive women. In fact, their research claimed that women with better education would actually be more likely to encounter appearance discrimination (Deng et al. 2019). In order to confirm the generalised validity of this finding, further research is needed from other countries.

All in all, for women the outcomes of attractiveness seem to be context-dependent. Similarly, double standards appear paradoxical in terms of gender and their normative logic in accumulation and utilisation of capital. Moreover, the results revealed that attractive women are subject to more detrimental double standards than men. Meaning that in accumulation of their aesthetic capital, men face stricter societal-level norms but in utilisation of aesthetic capital, women in working life context face stricter norms, for instance in recruitment situations and in salary negotiations. Additionally, the perceived 'lack of fit' by employers provided another perspective on explaining why women are perceived as "worse fit" and get penalised for their beauty in male-typed jobs. (Sarpila et al. 2020; Kukkonen et al. 2018.)

The results suggest that the disapproval of utilisation of one's looks, double standards, gendered within-category rivalry, jealousy and envy from other women, 'lack of fit' as

well as negative traits (i.e. vanity, snobbishness) stereotypically associated with attractive women can easily lead to discrimination against attractive women in the labour market. Additionally, it seems that penalisation of attractive women can be possibly traced back to unequal treatment between genders. Women may be treated differently in the labour market due to patriarchal societal values and attitudes that have historically not favoured them. Thus, gender inequality and social stratification always play an important role even when it comes to topic such as physical attractiveness in the labour market.

Similarly to gendered effects of attractiveness, different ethnoracial categories have varying treatment in labour market when it comes to social perceptions and prejudice rooted in physical markers of race. Moreover, beholding power relations and complex patterns of inequality can also affect negatively to beauty premium (Kukkonen et al. 2024; Monk et al. 2021; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016). The power relations in our society displayed in research can be skewed in terms of social class, gender, age and race. More specifically, these power relations include the dominant views of beauty which are found to be racialised in our society. Socially perceived attractiveness combines other status characteristics such as race and gender and they also modify the effects of perceived beauty. Racialised and gendered socially perceived attractiveness result in complicated patterns of inequality. Thus, the consequences of socially perceived physical attractiveness in labour markets are found to be intersectional. (Monk et al. 2021.)

These power relations can surface when investigating for example dominant norms of beauty which are mostly Eurocentric and therefore, discriminate against ethnoracial minorities for not reaching these prevailing ideals of beauty. Ethno-racial minorities with darker features and skin tones may receive penalties because they are less likely to have the facial features, hair types, or skin tones that match Eurocentric beauty ideals. Therefore, the steepest penalties for lacking perceived attractiveness are observed amongst Black men and women. More specifically, based on the results, beauty premium and penalties were found the strongest amongst African-American men and women. This can be explained by the fact that ethno-racial minorities are significantly more likely to be perceived unattractive from the point of view of members of dominant ethnoracial categories who are also more likely to be the gatekeepers in the labour market. (Monk et al. 2021.)

Black men and women face the harshest penalties in working life based off of their perceived physical attractiveness. Precisely, the combination of both race and beauty may put black men in double jeopardy on the labour market, whereas the combination of race, beauty and gender may put black women in triple jeopardy. Thus, in addition to the wage gap between genders, there is also the so-called 'race gap' in earnings between races. It is evident that at the intersection of race and gender result in significant wage disparities. (Monk et al. 2021.) In conclusion, since the most significant ethno-racial biases on earnings are between Blacks and Whites, one could suggest based on these intersectional results that the greatest polarisation of physical attractiveness and earnings is between White men and Black women. Therefore, socially perceived attractiveness can have substantially differentiating outcomes regarding the dominant norms of society or overall consequences of social class, race, and gender that should not be overlooked.

First, when analysing the three possible explanations that illustrate the effect of physical attractiveness on earnings, the discrimination explanation resulted in being the main explanation in majority of the studies covered here (see Hamermesh 2011; Anýžová & Matějů 2018; Paustian-Underdahl & Slattery Walker 2016; Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015). However, some studies found individual characteristics playing a substantial role in determining or increasing beauty premium. Therefore, both discrimination and individual characteristics play a significant role in determining the effects of beauty in labour markets. Additionally, what needs to be noted is that unequal outcomes related to attractiveness (beauty premium) and contextual power relations could perhaps have the same influence in labour market as do individual characteristics (Kukkonen et al. 2024).

As these cumulative findings have clearly showed, gender and race are not seen as socially or politically neutral characteristics and are to affect the perceptions of attractiveness in society. Since we have established the overall labour market consequences that race and gender can produce in general, next would be to understand the discrepancies in literature results. For this reason, perhaps including cultural differences into the equation could help to explain even further the varying effects of beauty in labour market. Both discrimination and individual characteristic differences can be rooted in cultural differences and cultural influence. Therefore, understanding the cultural environment could explain the diverse effects of beauty on earnings or socioeconomic outcomes, in different countries or regions.

Cultural differences could possibly serve as an alternative explanation that exists to explain beauty effects in the labour market. The cultural differences could possibly explain the existing discrepancies in literature and results concerning beauty premium. According to my knowledge, previous research has not yet studied the socially perceived beauty differences between continents, regions, countries, and their cultures and what are their overlapping influences in the labour market. This explanation pursues to explain beauty premium from point of view of different cultures and offers a new and alternative explanation to the effect of attractiveness on earnings. The cultural differences -explanation includes different cultural views of genders, age, ethnicities, values, religions and beauty ideals among other culturally specific historical factors in different time periods that can be researched and categorised to understand the effects more thoroughly.

Even though plenty of evidence exists in the literature about the general cross-cultural agreement on facial attractiveness, variations also exist as a result of cultural influences. Individual perceptions of beauty reflect the cultural influences and ethnic perceptions of aesthetics. Hence, greater agreement on facial attractiveness is noted within cultures than between them. The media, cosmetician advertisements, plastic surgery and aesthetic treatments across countries reflect current beauty ideals and help to compare the cultural differences between them. (Chen et al. 2020; Broer et al. 2014.) However, it should be noted that since most of cosmetic advertising is for women and most of the plastic surgery customers are women it also means that the beauty ideals mentioned here are also for women. This is beneficial for the purpose of this literature review, since most of the research have found women to be the ones rewarded and penalised the most based on their perceived beauty.

Therefore, for the purpose of finding out the possible cultural influence in existing results regarding physical appearance in the labour market, I started analysing the main results, culture-specific beauty standards and perceived beauty effects. For example, in East Asia, pale white skin, small face and mouth, large eyes and pointy chin are preferred. Moreover, women who look youthful, cute and innocent and embody all aforementioned facial characteristics, are considered attractive in China, Japan, Thailand and Korea. Person who embodies this look seems more attentive, reflects calmness, has a healing effect on others and more than anything it attracts attention. (Chen et al. 2020.) In China, attractive individuals are 5.6 percentage points more likely

to be called for an interview (Deng et al. 2019). When it comes to women specifically, this could suggest that women who are considered attractive in China, embodying youthful, cute, innocent, 'kawaii' look, are also associated with many positive effects and personality traits as mentioned are also the ones who are more likely to be called for an interview and are perhaps also more likely to be treated with kindness.

Beauty discrimination of women exists already at the earliest stage of applying for a job vacancy in Israel. Actually, attractive women receive the lowest number of callbacks, even including customer service vacancies. (Ruffle & Shtudiner 2015.) Discrimination against attractive women in Israel could be possibly rooted in the ways attractive women or women in general are perceived and discriminated against in Middle Eastern countries. Already starting from birth, girls and women are treated differently compared to their male counterparts in this region (Unicef 2024). This evidently has its influence on how women are perceived in the labour market and could possibly be one of the reasons behind the Israeli study's results. Gender inequality and women's rights obviously vary across countries within Middle East according to cultural, political and religious environments in each individual country. However, it does reflect the overall situation in Middle East concerning women's lack of inclusion in various dimensions of life, such as the labour market. Additionally, one could assume that the utilisation of aesthetic capital is strongly disapproved based on women's position in society and religious environment of the country or region. However, to confirm this, further research on the topic is needed.

In European context, it seems that for example Czechia women receive monetary benefits from their good looks. Obviously, what also needs to be considered is that there are cultural differences between countries within the same region. For instance, already within the continent of Europe there are Baltic, Slavic, Nordic, and Balkan cultures to name a few that are based on for example shared values of specific regions but also within countries as well. However, Anýžová and Matějů's (2018) results suggest that between genders, the earnings gap in Czech Republic would only be possible to close for women with above-average attractiveness. Overall, higher salary might be relatively easier for women to achieve within Europe compared to other continents since Europe is in the lead for having closed 75 % of its regional gender gap in 2024, according to World Economic Forum (Kali Pal et al. 2024). Nevertheless, lower gender pay gap in certain countries does not necessarily reflect the gender equality of the country

(European Commission 2022). As a whole, gender gap and race gap contribute to explaining the relationship between perceived beauty and women's role in the labour market as well as the overall consequences of beauty in working life.

When it comes to skin tone stratification, in the Middle Eastern region, people of colour are still seen as inferior to people with whiter skin colour (Chen et al. 2020; Kashmar et al. 2019). In similar manner, in the United States colourism is also strongly persisting to this day and operating in corresponding way within the labour market (i.e. Monk et al. 2021). Across the region, there persist a deep-rooted racial prejudice and hatred towards people of colour even if United States is a nation composed of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, socially perceived attractiveness is found to be unevenly distributed across race and gender. In the United States, the highest average levels of earnings belong to White males and the lowest average levels of earnings on the other hand belong to Black women. Equally, as Black women receive the steepest penalties, they also gain the greatest rewards for perceived attractiveness in the United States. However, these rewards usually tend to go to the lightest and most attractive Black women according to the way colourism operates. (Monk et al. 2021.) The results from Israel and United States do in fact reflect the context of history that is influenced by Eurocentric values, political systems and religion which are still affecting to opportunities in as crucial dimensions as working life. The influence from White Western beauty standards, gender biases and the structural racism in social and political systems within the society sums up some of the main reasons behind the appearance discrimination of people of colour.

Furthermore, cultural attitudes and beauty ideals should be taken into consideration already when organising the research and its methods. Methods covered here have varied from rating attractiveness via face-to-face interviews to rating it through CV facial picture. In each country, varying cultural attitudes, values and preferred features and physical traits are in the minds of the recruiter whether they are conscious of it or not. Hence, cultural realms should be considered in each study already at the starting point since they might have impact into the results more than expected. Additionally, this leaves us with a question whether rating attractiveness through pictures or face-to-face interviews will give the most valid answer to the beauty effects in labour markets. Perhaps, each method serves different purposes in different hiring processes. Rating attractiveness through pictures could be used to examine call back rates, and face-to-

face interaction is used to examine the hiring decision after the interview. Although, both research methods will be needed to find out the whole role of attractiveness and other factors, such as personality traits when it comes to getting the job. Which candidates are getting call backs to the interview, and which will be selected after the interview and, ultimately, if there is a difference between the salaries of workers and their attractiveness levels. Hence, including cultural differences and combining all dimensions of working life sphere in longitudinal study would reveal the in-depth influence of beauty.

In conclusion, in this paper I conclude after taking everything into consideration that cultural influences and cultural differences in perception of physical attractiveness in the labour market could be a viable explanation of what causes the discrepancies in existing global results. Therefore, this would mean that the results are more profoundly based on how beauty is perceived, evaluated and valued between different demographic groups within the countries studied. This means that physical attractiveness is perceived differently for example across genders and ethnoracial groups within the country. In practice for instance, results in most countries seem to show a prevalent pattern from either having a higher beauty premium for women or to women facing beauty penalty. Future research should examine if other prevalent patterns exist and why.

For instance, it would be interesting to see which countries showcase male beauty penalty and if so, what would be the cultural implications. Since as mentioned for female beauty penalty the cultural implications could be based on the unequal, patriarchal, political, social, religious reasoning that is expected of and imposed on women. Additionally, it would be interesting to find out from future research if and where the hegemony of beauty is reversed. Are Eurocentric beauty standards going to continue on influencing as strongly in the future or is the trend going to change into for example valuing Afrocentric beauty for a change? Or if the beauty standards are becoming even more culturally specific? Future research on these matters needs to be conducted to be able to have an in-depth understanding of similarities and differences between countries within and across regions.

However, as in every research, this literature review is also subject to limitations, firstly the time frame is limited to the last ten years. Secondly, the data availability or moreover the scope of the research materials were limited in quantity. Thirdly, the lack

of African and South American studies on beauty premium does not give us the full in-depth view globally on this matter. Additionally, this paper does not have the capacity to investigate country-specific cultures throughout, but hopefully future research will. Lastly, while correlations can be identified, establishing causal relationships still remain more complex to confirm. Nevertheless, this paper contributes to the field by giving an alternative approach to explain discrepancies and giving a jump start to investigate the effects of beauty in labour market across different cultural regions. This study additionally pinpoints the importance of understanding of the complexity of intersectional consequences of lookism and colourism through Eurocentric lens of the world.

By understanding how lookism and colourism are linked in impacting appearance-biases and employment outcomes across cultures, further actions can be taken. Especially, when it comes to implementing culturally specific political measures to mitigate discrimination and practices that support labour market equality for all races, ethnicities and genders. Based on existing literature results, it has been clearly established that physical attractiveness in itself is more than anything gendered and racist concept that needs continuous exploration in order to understand the complexities it creates in all areas of life. Cultural attitudes and values are all interconnected and deeply rooted in historical contexts, including for example religious beliefs, political power, colonialism and so much more that continue shaping issues like colourism, gender inequality, and appearance discrimination till to this day. By grasping all areas of attractiveness biases, hiring discrimination, and all in all labour market inequality, it will help us to better acknowledge appearance related inequality across the globe. However, further exploration is needed to explore the extent to which attractiveness impacts job prospects, and how it varies across cultural contexts.

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