

A woman's promotion is seen as 'less fair' if a company commits to gender equality

Submitted by: BlueSky Education

Wednesday, 9 October 2024

A woman's promotion is seen as 'less fair' if a company commits to gender equality

People view women's and men's professional success differently when organizations commit to gender equality initiatives, finds new research by WZB Berlin Social Science Center and the University of Cologne.

The study, conducted by ISS researcher Paula Protsch together with Lena Hipp and Kristin Kelley, investigated whether or not corporate values such as equal opportunities or women's advancement, changed how people view women's and men's success.

The results show that when companies value women's advancement or equal opportunities, women's success is less likely to be judged as fair or attributed to intelligence and effort than when companies emphasize performance and uniform assessment standards.

In contrast, people believe intelligence plays a more decisive role in men's promotions and view men's promotions as fairer when organizations value performance principles.

In all organizational types, however, women's promotions are seen as fairer, and their professional success is attributed to a greater or at least equal extent to their intelligence and effort as is the case for men. Presumably, respondents thought that women had to be smarter and harder-working than men to be promoted.

"Our finding is that the public believes that intelligence and effort play less of a role in women's promotions in organizations that commit to women's advancement," says Paula Protsch.

In a survey experience, the participants each read a short description of a recently promoted employee in a large company. The survey randomly varied whether this employee was a man or a woman and whether the company was committed to performance principles, women's advancement, or equal opportunities. The scenarios were identical in all other respects.

The study was published in the Journal Scientific Reports by Nature Portfolio.

/ENDS

For more information, a copy of the report, or to speak with Paula Protsch, contact Katie Hurley from

BlueSky Education on khurley@bluesky-pr.com.