

Effect of Framing on Applicants' Reactions to Personnel Selection Methods

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This research demonstrates the effect of framing on applicants' reactions to two personnel selection methods: undergraduate grade point average and personnel interview scores. Presenting a selection situation framed positively (to accept applicants) caused applicants to rate both selection methods more favorably relative to presenting them with an identical selection situation framed negatively (to reject the remaining applicants). Framing affected reactions that emphasized distributive justice aspects of the selection situation and procedural justice aspects. The results are consistent with Prospect theory and with Fairness Heuristic theory. The paper offers a theoretical explanation for the effect of framing on applicants' reactions to personnel selection methods, discusses the implications of this effect, and suggests directions for future research.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, the use of various methods for personnel selection has been accompanied by a growing body of research examining applicants' reactions toward these methods (Chan & Schmitt, 2004; Schmitt & Chan, 1999). Recruiting organizations recognize the importance of applicants' reactions to selection methods for reasons such as their ability to attract applicants and validity considerations (Rynes, 1993; Schmitt, Oswald, Kim, Gillespie, & Ramsay, 2004; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, & Stoffey, 1993). Research regarding applicants' reactions to personnel selection methods (also labeled techniques or procedures) examined correlates of applicants' individual differences (Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner, & Bartel, 2007) and compared reactions to different selection methods in an American sample (Smither *et al.*, 1993) or international samples (Anderson & Witvliet, 2008; Marcus, 2003; Moscoso & Salgado, 2004; Phillips & Gully, 2002; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996).

The perceived fairness of personnel selection methods is one aspect of applicants' reactions that has

received much attention in the literature. Empirical evidence suggested that the perceived fairness of selection methods is related to various variables, such as motivational factors (e.g., Arvey, Strickland, Drauden, & Martin, 1990), applicant personality (Bernerth, Field, Giles, & Cole, 2006), and self-serving bias (Chan, Schmitt, Jennings, Clause, & Delbridge, 1998). Several theories have been offered to explain the perceived fairness of selection methods. Among these are two normative justice theories – Distributive Justice theory and Procedural Justice theory, and a third one that is descriptive – Fairness Heuristic theory.

2. Theories of distributive vs procedural justice

A person's perceived fairness of a given event or transaction can be based on either the outcome of the event/transaction or on the process used to arrive at these outcomes. Perceptions of the fairness of outcomes received as a result of a given transaction are referred to as *distributive justice* (Byrne & Cropanzano,