

Interactive Effects of Job Advertisement Wording, Applicants' Gender and Work Experience on Perceived Candidate Suitability in an Experimental Vignette Study

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CONTEXT AND AIMS

- The banking industry, including **financial advisory**, is a male-dominated field
 - What barriers are there in the recruitment process?
- Wording of the job advertisement may lead to more/less gender-biased hiring evaluations and decisions – agentic (male-connotated) vs communal (female-connotated) phrasing (Pietraszkiewicz et al., 2019)
 - **Agentic** phrasing: e.g., decisive, ambitious, expert, goal-oriented...
 - **Communal** phrasing: e.g., caring, compassionate, generous, sharing...
- Most research has focused on leadership positions & the applicants' perspective → research exploring gender-biased selection for leadership roles found a smaller effect of job advertisement wording on recruiters' evaluations when prior work experience clearly indicates high competence (e.g., Bosak & Sczesny, 2011)
- **Research Question:** How do job advertisement wording, applicant gender and relevance of work experience impact perceived competence and suitability for selection (“hireability”) for an entry-level (graduate) role from the recruiting party's perspective?

METHODS - DESIGN

- Experimental vignette study
- Sample mostly consisting of university students – asked to imagine themselves in the role of the recruiter
- Between-subject factor: Randomly assigned to view a job advertisement with more agentic or communal wording, but otherwise equivalent content
- Within-subject variables: 9 different candidate profiles
 - 3 levels for gender: Female / Male / Non-Binary
 - 3 levels for work experience: 1 prior internship with descending levels of relevance to the position
- Response variables: 7-pt Likert-type scales for perceived competence & hireability

METHODS - MATERIALS

Candidate 1 [Numbered 1 to 9]

Gender: [Female / Male / Non-binary]

Age: 21-25

Education:

2019 - 2023: Bachelor's Degree in Finance & Accounting, University of Glasgow

Work Experience:

[Level 1: High job relevance]

06/2022 - 08/2022: Financial advisory intern

- Processing client onboardings
- Preparing documentations of client meetings
- Providing general administrative support

[Level 2: Medium job relevance]

06/2022 - 08/2022: Office administration intern

- Providing administrative support
- Processing invoices
- Monitoring team budgets

[Level 3: Limited job relevance]

06/2022 - 08/2022: Hospitality management intern

- Promoting a positive environment for guests
- Answering phone calls, taking messages
- Processing bookings

Template for Candidate Profiles

Agentic Advertisement

Junior Financial Advisor at CLS Banking Group

CLS Banking Group is a global banking corporation with over 100 years of experience in private banking, wealth and investment management. With its talented and accomplished people and its aspiration to deliver the very best for its clients at all times, CLS Banking Group prides itself on its reputation as an ambitious and dependable firm. Become an expert in financial advisory and benefit from an independent and goal-oriented culture.

Your responsibilities:

- The Junior Financial Advisor will focus on providing day-to-day support to a team of financial advisors in our Private Banking unit and their portfolio of clients.
- The ideal candidate will be able to work independently and persevere when faced with challenges. They will take responsibility in client acquisition and retention in order to win business, as well as preparing credit and Know Your Client reviews and daily transaction reports.

Your qualifications and competences:

- This entry-level position is designed for students currently pursuing a relevant University degree and graduating in summer 2023.
- CLS Banking Group is looking for a reliable, proactive and adaptable individual who succeeds in competitive environments. We welcome candidates who are highly motivated and driven to achieve objectives for our clients and the firm.

CLS Banking Group is committed to promoting equal employment opportunities and to attracting and selecting the best applicants for all positions regardless of their membership of any particular group.

RESULTS

- Robust linear mixed-effects model for each of the two response variables (random effect for subject ID)
- Significant predictors for perceived candidate suitability:
 - All work experience levels (more relevant work experience → higher ratings)
 - Positive interactions between communal advertisement and lowest-relevance work experience
 - High perceived fit between communal traits/behaviours and tasks of a hospitality management intern?
 - More benevolent ratings when job advertisement uses more communal language?
 - *Just for competence, not hireability*: Negative interaction between male candidate gender and medium-relevance work experience
 - Tentative explanation: Predominantly female sample → In-group gender bias when work experience does not clearly signal high competence?
- Interestingly, no main effects of candidate gender or job advertisement condition

CONCLUSIONS

- Work experience had by far the biggest impact on candidate ratings
- No gender bias detected in the study (apart from the negative interaction between male candidate gender & medium-relevance work experience for competence)
- So, may gender effects therefore be less prevalent for entry-level roles from the recruiters' perspective?
 - In order to increase ecological validity, future research should consider social desirability bias, differences between sample and genuine recruiters, using real-life job advertisements, and more diverse candidate profiles in terms of work experience and demographics.

REFERENCES

- Bosak, J., & Sczesny, S. (2011). Gender Bias in Leader Selection? Evidence from a Hiring Simulation Study. *Sex Roles*, 65(3–4), 234–242. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0012-7>
- Pietraszkiewicz, A., Formanowicz, M., Gustafsson Sendén, M., Boyd, R. L., Sikström, S., & Sczesny, S. (2019). The big two dictionaries: Capturing agency and communion in natural language. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(5), 871–887. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2561>