Perception of selection interview, selection test and employee performance: An empirical analysis

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Unlike in the past, a critical success factor for organizations in this 21st century in achieving and sustaining a competitive advantage is by combating the challenge of improving quality and service delivery. This study using the ex-post facto design critically analyzed the role of selection interview and selection test on employee’s performance. One hundred and ninety (190) (males = 96 (50.5%); females = 94 (49.5%)) participants whose age ranged between 20 and 55, were involved in this study. Three hypotheses were tested using the t-test and ANOVA, the findings showed that female university employee unlike males favourably perceived the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance $t(188) = 3.86, p<.05$. The result also revealed that university employees who are singles, more than the married, reported more favourable perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance $t(188) = 6.43, p<.05$. It also showed that university employees in the age range of 20-25 years reported the highest mean score on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. Therefore, selection interview and selection test are good predictors of employee performance, if conducted in a standardized form.

Key words: Perception, selection interview, selection test, employee performance.

INTRODUCTION

In the past decades the primary concern of organizations is usually focused on productions and sales. A critical success factor for organizations in this 21st century in achieving and sustaining a competitive advantage is by combating the challenge of improving quality and service delivery (Grant, 1996). This stance can only be actualized through increased employee performance and the key to attaining and sustaining this is selecting and retaining the right people. Finding methods and ways of achieving these objectives becomes crucial for organizations which desire to remain in the market. Hence, selection interview and selection test have been identified as tools that uncover candidates knowledge, skills and abilities alongside the requirements of the job (Alan, 2004).

However, making wrong selection decision may have a far reaching impact on the organizational functioning, including, loss of productivity; cost of hiring; orientation and training in replacing a non-performing employee; cost of profit forgone due to employee performance; cost of severance and subsequent cost of further recruitment and selection (Arthur and Walter, 1995).

These recognized shortcomings about recruitment errors necessitate a turnaround in the process of recruitment into job vacancies in organizations. Change has become euphemeral everywhere – be it economy, politics, business, environment etc. (Chand, 2006). The changing environment of human resource management is marked by characteristics like work diversity, economics and

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technological change, globalization, organizational restructuring, changes in the nature of jobs and work and so on. The logic of employee selection could simply be drawn from the fact that if variability in physical and psychological characteristics were not so prevalent, there would be little need for selection of applicant to fill various jobs (Bernadim, 2003). Without variability among individuals in abilities, aptitudes, interests and personality traits, one would expect all job candidates to perform comparably. Based on this, Boroucki and Burke (1999) expressed that as jobs become more complex, individual differences in output variability also increases. Hence the need to determine based on certain criteria and media, who is best fit to occupy a position among so many applicants.

The role of human resource decisions in creating and sustaining organizational performance and competitive advantage is imperative. Researchers in the field of strategic human resource management (SHRM) have increasingly relied on the resource-based view of the organization to explain the role of human resource practices in organizations performance (Delery and Harold, 1996). However, HR practices can only be a source of sustained competitive advantage when they support resources or competencies that provide value to the organization (Anderson and West, 1998). Emphasis has also been made that the behavior of an employee at work plays an important role in attaining organizational goal and it therefore becomes necessary to understand what predicts employee performance.

Employee performance has been examined as a joint function of employee individual characteristics and the organizational environment characteristics (Schneider, 2001). For employee performance excellence, organizations must search for HRM models that strengthen their bid for competitive advantage such as sound strategy for employee selection (Amy et al., 2005). In a bid to carry out a successful selection exercise, there is need to assess the suitability of candidates by predicting the extent to which they will be able to carry out a role successfully. Nonetheless, to eliminate roadblocks to successful employee performance, Barrick and Mount (1991) asserts that apart from providing adequate resources to get job done right and on time, adequate screening and selection of suitable employee must be given careful attention. This, according to Mullins (2007) is ensuring “quality at source”. Clearly, there should be a fit between the intended strategy of an organization and the characteristics of the people who are expected to implement it – thus hiring the right people is the first phase of any human resource management programme (Armstrong, 1999).

Selection entails much more than choosing the best available person, selecting the appropriate and talents – comes packaged in a person – attempts to “fit” what an applicant can and wants to do with what the organization needs (Fajana, 2006). More than anything else, placement of human resources should be seen as a matching process, and how well an employee is matched to a job affects the amount and performance of that employee in a given task (Kandula, 2004). Research also has shown that whether an employer or human resource professional uses specific knowledge, skills, abilities or other approach, effective selection of employees involves using criteria and predictors of job performance. Hence, the heart of an effective selection system is knowledge of what constitutes appropriate job performance and whether employee characteristics are associated with such performance (Hui and Aichia, 2004).

The concept of selection has been defined from different views by various researchers and this is represented as follows, that selection is the process of hiring; offering jobs to one or more candidates from the applications received through recruitment; managerial decision making process through which suitable persons who are likely to perform on the job are identified and selected from the pool of applicant (Brain and Gerhart, 1998). There are various methods through which employee selection can be carried out, including, but not limited to, selection test and selection interview.

Alan (2004) and Armstrong (2009) consider selection interview and selection test as most suitable tools to predict prospective employee performance. Several justifications have been put up to defend this and they include the fact that selection interview helps to obtain and assess information on the job for which they are being considered in comparison with the predictors made for other candidates. Selection interview to Scott (1995) is a purposeful exchange of ideas, the answering of questions and communication between two or more persons or according to Alan (2004), it is “a conversation with a purpose” not infrequently the purpose is obscure to the point of invisibility, rather, candidates are induced to talk freely with their interviewers about their experience and careers though this conversation has to be planned, directed and controlled to achieve the main essence of interview which is to make an accurate assessment of the candidate’s suitability for a job. The reports of Smith (1991); Eder and Harris (1999) and earlier research findings of Weisner and Cronshaw (1988); Shankar (2004) supported the values of selection interview.

On selection test, The Uniform Selection Guidelines issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission asserts that any employment requirement is a ‘test’ (Campbell et al., 1993). Supporting the validity of selection test, The British Psychological Society advised organizations on essentiality to choose tests that meet the four criteria of sensitivity, standardization, reliability and validity. The history of tests, as cited by Saiyadain (2002), can be traced back to the efforts of Francis Galton who developed a variety of tests of sensory determination to measure person’s intellect as far back
as 1883 (Kandula, 2004). Since then, Saiyadain (2002) noted that there is no looking back; as a result, a large number of general aptitude tests and specific skill tests has been put in place for the purpose of selection.

Selection test is a device that uncovers the information about the candidate which is not known through application blank and interview, in this way selection is an adjunct of a selection method (Mamoria, 1994). Deniz et al. (1993) defined test as a sample of an aspect of an individual’s behavior, performance and attitude. In addition, Schmidt and Hunter (1981) observe that when they are combined with a structured interview, they had the highest predictive value of all the methods of selection tools studied. Several research findings have shown that the basic premise underlying strategic human resource management (SHRM) is that organizations who have greater congruence between their human resource practices and strategies enjoy superior performance through the cumulative efforts of their employees (Dyer, 1984a, 1984b; Fombrun et al., 1984; Jackson and Schuler, 1995; Jackson et al., 1989; Schuler and Jackson, 1987a, 1987b, 1988; Schuler and MacMillian, 1984). The concept of employee performance received increased attention recently as both managers and organizational analyst are finding ways to increase employee retention and performance (Demszet, 1991).

Agreeing to the aforementioned, meta-analytic reviews of validities studies unanimously supported the superiority of interviews (Huffcutt and Arthur, 1994; Hunter and Hunter, 1984; McDaniel et al., 1994; Wiesner and Cronshaw, 1988; Wright et al., 1989; Conway et al., 1995; Marchese and Muchinsky, 1993). This claim is evident in a review of structure in the selection interview focusing on psychometric consequences, and also considers a broader range of structure components (Armstrong, 1999). Therefore, effects of interview structure on reliability, validity and user reactions of the study are 15 components which were further divided into 2 categories: Those that influence the content of the interview or the nature of the information elicited and those that influence the evaluation process or the judgement of the information elicited. The impact of each component in the study is evaluated against the aforementioned criteria. Further, 6 types of reliability were considered: test-retest, reliability, interrater reliability, candidate consistency, interviewer-candidate interaction, internal consistency and interrater agreement.

According to Campion (1988) Campion et al., 1994), Delery et al. (1994), Edwards et al. (1990), Green et al. (1993), Hakel (1971), Latham and Saari (1984) and Latham and Skarlicki (1995), one of the highest level of structure that enhances validity of selection interview is that exact same questions be asked each candidate in the same order and well as using the same paralanguage. Another study which aimed at proofing the validity of selection interview was done by carrying out a comprehensive review and meta analysis by McDaniel et al. (1994). The analyses are based on 245 coefficients derived from 86,311 individuals. Results show that interview validity depends on the content of the interview (situational, job-related or psychological). Further findings reveal that structured interview was found to have higher validity than unstructured interview. Therefore, since selection interviews are pre-employment tests and, as such should be standardized samples of behavior. Standardization implies uniformity of procedure in administration and scores. Using the same procedure may be the most basic way to convert the interview from a ‘conversation into a scientific measurement’ (Michael et al., 1998).

On selection test, Deniz et al. (1993) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis based on 665 validity coefficients across 576,460 data points to investigate whether selection test validities are generalizable and to estimate differences in validity due to potential moderating influences. Results indicates that integrity test validities are substantial for predicting employee performance and counter productive behaviours on the job such as theft, absenteeism etc. Second, the estimated mean operational predictive validity of integrity test for predicting supervisory ratings of employee performance is 0.41. Also results from predictive validity studies conducted on applicants using external criterion measures indicates that integrity tests predict the broad criterion of organizationally disruptive behavior better than they predict employee theft alone. However, despite the influence of moderators, integrity test validities are positive across situations and setting (Robert et al., 2006). Several faults have been identified with the Nigerian university systems, and have also been accused of being the major cause of the poor quality of university graduates that are continually churned out in the outside world. Therefore, this study is necessitated to sample the perception of university employees, who are mostly not taken through the normal employment processes as done in the other institutions.

**METHODOLOGY**

The ex-post facto design was utilized in carrying out this study, using a total of one hundred and ninety participants, academic and non-academic staff of the Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria, in the study. This includes 96 males and 94 females, with a mean age of 26 years (SD = 6.12) and age, ranging from 20 to 60 years. The participants were selected from the four faculties in the university, including Christians, Muslims and others who have other beliefs. The independent variables were selection interview and selection tests while the dependent variable was employee performance.

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. The study was a survey study, which specifically adopted ex-post facto design. A sample population of one hundred and ninety respondents was selected, including both the academic and non academic staff, using both purposive and random sampling methods, respectively. The purposive was used in the selection of the different categories of staff in the institution, academic and non-
academic, while the random was used in each category to select the study participants. Structured questionnaire developed by the researchers and divided into three sections was used to elicit information from the participants. Section A measured demographic characteristics; section B is a 13 item scale designed to measure the participants’ perception of selection test and interview, while section C, a 10 item scale, was designed to measure staff’s perception of the relationship among selection test, selection interview and staff performance. The pilot study carried out was used to standardize the scale, using item analysis. Therefore, section B was reduced to a 10-item scale with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.91 and the least item total correlation of 0.34. Section C was also reduced to 9 items with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 for this study.

RESULTS

In all, 3 hypotheses were tested using t-test for independent measures and One-way ANOVA. The results obtained are presented as follows.

The first hypothesis stated that there would be significant difference between male and female University employees on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. The hypothesis was tested by t-test for independent measures. The result is shown in Table 2.

The result in Table 2 revealed that female university employees showed more favourable perception of the link between selection test, selection interview and employee performance than male University employee t(188) = 3.86, p<0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference between married and single University employee on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. The hypothesis was tested by t-test for independent measures. The result is shown in Table 3.

The result in Table 3 revealed clearly that single University employees reported more favourable perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance than married University employees t(188) = 6.43, p<0.05. Therefore, hypothesis two was supported by the result of the study.

The third hypothesis stated that there would be significant influence of age groups of University employee on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. The hypothesis was tested by one-way ANOVA. The result is shown in Table 4.

The result in Table 4 revealed that age groups of University employees significantly influenced perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. The result (as shown in Table 5) revealed that University employees within the age group 20 to 25 years reported the highest mean score on perception of the link between selection test, selection interview and employee performance. Therefore, hypothesis

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Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>50.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-31</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39-43</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-49</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. A summary table of t-test for independent measures showing the difference between male and female University employees on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>16.72</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>-3.86</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>18.53</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. A summary table of t-test for independent measures showing the difference between single and married University employee on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>19.22</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>16.33</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>6.43</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. A summary table of one-way analysis of variance showing the influence of age-groups of University employee on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Sum of square</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>Mean square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>649.75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>129.95</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>1479.20</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2128.95</td>
<td>189</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.17</td>
<td>&lt;0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of age groups and scores on perception of selection interview, selection test and employee performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-25 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-31 years</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32-37 years</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-43 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44-49 years</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>17.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>14.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


three was supported by the result of the study. Table 5 gives a good descriptive analysis of the mean scores of the age-groups on perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the knowledge of understanding the link among selection interview, selection test and employee performance. Assessing the role of selection interview and selection test as it relates to employee performance offers a unique approach to expanding prior research on related issues.

There were numerous findings from this work. Hypothesis 1 stated that there would be significant difference between male and female university employees on perception of the link among selection interview, selection test and employee performance. Findings indicated that female university employees reported more favourable perception of the link among selection interviews, selection test and employee performance than male university employees. The plausible explanation to this finding is that in a system where gender bias is a strong determining influence in the selection of employees, many females in spite of their qualifications have been denied several opportunities in getting jobs they are qualified for or in placement and promotional exercises to advance their career growth. This result is an indication that if objective criteria (selection test and selection interview) are used in employment processes, more females will be opportuned to be selected for employment than the numbers being employed now, when compared with their male counterparts. This indicated that female university employees have a better understanding that effective selection test and selection interview produced best candidates, who subsequently will perform at considerable level for organizational success and continuity than male university employees.

This supports Hui and Aichia (2004) and Kandula (2004) who opined that employees will perform better on the job if proper matching is done between the employed and the subsequent job placement. Furthermore, this result also revealed the fact that good selection test and selection interviews produced good results which are good for organizational sustainability.

The tested hypothesis 2 revealed that single university employees reported more favourable perception of the link between selection test and selection interview and employee performance than married university employees. Marriage in Africa has always played a very important role in the distribution of roles and responsibilities in the society. It is also assumed that the married are more responsible than the singles; this is because Africans believe that it takes responsibility to live with a spouse and take care of someone else outside you. In view of this, many singles are usually at the receiving end when they have to compete with the married to get a job or to rise in their career path in the organization. However, in the line of this study, the singles perceives that if the criteria for employment and assessment of employees are based on objectivity, the singles sees the use of tests and interviews on the job as major determinant of employee performance rather than the stereotypic assumptions hold by the culture. This has therefore established the on-going fact that a good link exists among selection test, selection interview and employee performance.

The result on hypothesis three revealed that age groups of university employees significantly influenced their perception of the link between selection interview, selection test and employee performance. In explanation, this result brings out the fact that employee performance is a function of many factors and not just one. The use of either the selection test or selection interview alone cannot successfully predict employee performance, rather, the use of both on the employee. The individual academic intelligence is quite different from the work experience that is needed to perform excellently on a job. This claim is supported by Donald and Cummings (1977) who views employee performance primarily as a joint function of the correspondence or degree of agreement between individual abilities and the ability demands of the job. It follows that the ability of these individuals interact with the ability requirements of the job and the individual ability to perform is highest when the ability demands of the job match the abilities of the individual.

Consequently, under-matching, that is, when individuals do not possess adequate capability to perform; obviously results in lower relative ability to perform. Concurring to this result, is the job characteristics model which indicated that job employee performance is related to psychological, behavioural and organizational outcome (Nonaka, 1991; Clark and Fujimoto, 1991; Wheelwright and Clark, 1992).
Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

In conclusion, since there should be a fit between intended strategies of an organization and the characteristics of people who are expected to implement it. Then, great effort should be made to ensure that there is "quality at source". This is the more reason why the Institute of Work Psychology (2001) sees high employee performance as involving three sets of management practices among which is developing strategies designed to attract and keep the right people. This study has established that selection interview and selection test is good predictors of employee performance.

The resulting theory of job characteristics provides a more cogent description that employee performance is not only a function of job characteristics but a joint function of individual characteristics and organizational characteristics. This means that Person-Job fit which is central to high employee performance will be achieved if candidate’s competencies correlate with the job requirements. It follow that an organization human resource can be a threshold and serve as a competitive advantage due to their aggregate efficient and effective input since employee’s are fit into the right job. Closer observation of this study reveals that employees will perform as far as their aggregate efficient and effective input since employee’s are fit into the right job. The personal attributes of gender, age, marital status have been found relevant in influencing perception of the link among selection interview, selection test and employee performance. This research offer solace to managers, practitioners, government and relevant institutions grappling with uncertainties and demands of competitive environment. Corroborating, this opinion is the submission of Grant (1996), that under conditions of intense and dynamic competition; internal capabilities like human resource provide a more stable basis for strategy than market positioning. Since employee performance is proofed to be a joint function of employee characteristics and organizational characteristics, providing health policy policies and programmes that foster variables like motivation, teamwork, communication, training and retraining, participatory-management, leadership, coaching, counseling to mention a few is crucial if high employee performance must be recorded. Also for employee performance excellence, organizations must search for HRM models that strengthen their bid for competitive advantage such as sound strategy for employee selection. In sum, the results suggest that having the right employee on the right job and enforcing sound performance climate are significantly related to employee performance.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Like all studies, this study has limitations. One of the deficiencies is that among all selection tools, selection interview and selection test was only assessed as predictors of employee performance neglecting other predictors. Another potential limitation is associated with the jobholder component in the study; not all job status categories were sampled. Examples are that of the support staff such as house keeper, security, and so on. This study initially was meant to carry out an empirical-comparative analysis of two private universities but due to lack of fund the research was limited to only Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.

REFERENCES


