Moderating Effects of Rater Personality on the Relation Between Candidate Self-Monitoring and Selection Interview Ratings

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The present study examined the moderating effect of rater personality – extroversion and sensitivity to others – on the relations between selection interview ratings and measures of candidate self-monitoring (SM) and social anxiety (SA). In a real-life military selection procedure setting in which 445 candidates and 93 raters participated, rater extroversion moderated the relation between candidate SM and selection interview ratings so that this relation was negative for raters low on extroversion and positive for raters high on extroversion. Rater extroversion was also found to moderate the negative relation between candidate SA and selection interview ratings. No support was found for the moderating effect of rater sensitivity to others. An explanation of the moderating effect of rater extroversion based on the assumption that extroversion is negatively related to critical interpersonal sensitivity was suggested.

Impression management has been defined as the attempt of an individual to control and manage the images of the self that she or he communicates to others (Schlenker, 1980). Impression management is also considered to be relevant for such selection processes as job interviews (Fletcher, 1987; Kaemar, Delrey, & Ferris, 1992). Since the theory of self-monitoring (SM) assumes that people differ in the extent to which they observe and control their self-presentation (Snyder, 1974, 1979a), the personality trait of SM would appear to be involved in impression management. In fact, in discussions of the variables that might impact upon selection interview ratings, SM has been singled out as a personality construct of particular importance for the understanding of the dynamics of selection interviews (Dipboye, 1992). However, a review of the literature shows that the relation between candidate SM and selection interview ratings has been the subject of a surprisingly small number of studies (Osborn, Feild, & Veres, 1998). The present study attempted to shed light on the relation between candidate SM and selection ratings by examining the possible moderating effects of rater personality variables on this relation.

Snyder (1979b) attributed the ability to quickly choose appropriate social behavior to persons with high scores on a measure of SM. In contrast to persons high on SM, persons low on SM are more likely to express a more straightforward self-image and to be less concerned with projecting themselves according to situational demand characteristics (Snyder, 1987).

SM was originally conceptualized by Snyder (1974) as consisting of five components: concern with the appropriateness of self-presentation, attention to social comparison information, ability to modify self-presentation, the use of this ability in particular situations, and cross-situational variability. Snyder also developed the 25-item SM Scale to measure these components. However, factor analytic studies have not supported Snyder’s five-component approach (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980). Such studies have uncovered only three factors: acting ability, extroversion, and other-directedness (see Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). In response, Snyder and Gangestad (1986) constructed an 18-item Revised SM Scale that was purported to be more factorially pure.

A review of the literature reveals few studies examining the relation between SM and selection interview ratings.

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Fletcher (1987) predicted that students’ SM would predict ratings in an unstructured interview for admittance to a psychology course. However, the results did not show the predicted positive relation between SM and interview ratings. Osborn et al. (1998) criticized Fletcher’s use of a single interviewer to rate the candidates for the course. In addition, they suggested that “the seriousness with which the students viewed the interview is also open to question” (p. 145). In their study, Osborn et al. utilized a real-life panel interview of police officers applying for promotion and predicted a positive relation between SM and interview ratings. However, as in Fletcher’s study, Osborn et al. found no direct relation between SM and interview scores. More recently, in a controlled simulation of selection interviews, Cook, Vance, and Spector (2000) also failed to find the predicted positive relation between candidate SM and interview performance. They attributed this finding to the limited feedback provided by the simulated interview. According to this explanation, persons high on SM participating in such an interview would not have the clues necessary to modify their self-presentations.

Another possible explanation for the lack of evidence for a positive relation between candidate SM and ratings of candidate appropriateness may be related to the measure of SM used in these studies. Lennox and Wolfe (1984) criticized Snyder’s measure of SM and claimed that the Snyder SM scale measures aspects of social anxiety (SA) in addition to SM. The above-mentioned studies used Snyder’s measure that may not differentiate between SM, which could be expected to have a positive influence on raters and result in higher interview ratings, and SA that could be expected to have a negative effect on raters and result in lower interview ratings. Thus, the two components in Snyder’s measure may cancel each other out, resulting in an apparent lack of relation between SM and interview ratings.

Lennox and Wolfe (1984) constructed a revised measure of SM that focused on measuring a person’s ability to modify his or her self-presentation and a person’s sensitivity to other people’s expressive behavior. In addition, they constructed a measure of SA measuring the level of attention that a person pays to social comparison information and the variability of a person’s behavior across different situations. The purer Lenox and Wolfe measure of SM may be expected to be positively related to selection ratings, whereas the latter measure of SA may be expected to be negatively related to selection ratings. However, recent research by Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell, and Haddleton (1999) in which the Lennox and Wolfe measure of SM was used also did not find significant direct relations between candidate SM and interview ratings. Anderson et al. concluded that interviewers are not markedly influenced by candidate SM.

In all of the abovementioned research, only direct nonmoderated influences of candidate SM on interview ratings were examined. However, candidate SM may not affect all raters in the same way. For example, some raters may be more sensitive to candidate SM and give higher ratings to high self-monitors whereas other raters may be affected to a lesser extent and their ratings may not reflect candidate SM. Although various measures of candidate anxiety have been found to be moderately and negatively related to interview ratings (Cook et al., 2000), for more sensitive raters, SA may be more highly and negatively related to selection ratings, whereas this relation may be attenuated for other raters who are less sensitive to candidate behavior. Thus, the failure to take moderated effects into consideration could result in an apparent lack of relation between such candidate personality variables as SM and SA and selection ratings. In keeping with this argument, Silvester, Anderson-Gough, Anderson, and Mohamed (2002) found that interviewer locus-of-control moderated the effect of candidate attribution style on interview ratings.

The present study set out to examine the possible moderating effect of two personality variables that may be relevant to rater sensitivity. The first is sensitivity to the expressive behavior of others (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Although this measure was developed by Lennox and Wolfe to measure one of the basic components of SM, the measure would seem to be relevant for rater sensitivity in interview situations. Raters who are more sensitive to candidate expressive behavior may be expected to give higher ratings to high SM candidates who manage their own expressive behavior in a manner appropriate to the selection situation than to candidates who are low in SM and do not respond to the demand characteristics of the situation. Raters who are less sensitive to candidate expressive behavior may not perceive such subtle nuances of behavior and thus be unaffected by candidate SM. In a similar fashion, raters who are more sensitive to candidate expressive behavior may be expected to give lower ratings to candidates who are high in SA than will raters who are less sensitive.

Rater extroversion may also moderate the effect of candidate SM and SA on selection ratings. Persons high on extroversion have been found to be better at interpreting facial expressions and body language than persons low on extroversion. Thus, the purported positive relation between candidate SM and selection ratings should be higher for raters who are high on extroversion than for raters who are low on extroversion. In addition, the expected negative relation between candidate SA and selection ratings should be higher for raters who are high on extroversion than for raters who are low on extroversion. On the basis of the above rationale, this study tested the following hypothesis:

Prediction 1: Rater extroversion will moderate the positive relation between candidate SM and selection ratings.
Prediction 2: Rater sensitivity to the expressive behavior of others will moderate the positive relation between candidate SM and selection ratings.

Prediction 3: Rater extroversion will moderate the negative relation between candidate SA and selection ratings.

Prediction 4: Rater sensitivity to the expressive behavior of others will moderate the negative relation between candidate SA and selection ratings.

These predictions were tested in a real-life selection situation.

Method

Research Participants

Candidates. A total of 445 female Israeli high-school seniors who were candidates for the position of combat field instructor, and, therefore, underwent the Israeli Defense Force’s selection process for this position, participated in the research. All research participants had earlier indicated their desire to serve as combat field instructors in the army.

Raters. Ninety-three incumbent combat field instructors, predominantly female, representing the various ground corps (e.g., armory, artillery, infantry) served as raters in the selection procedure.

Candidate Personality Measures

Lennox & Wolfe Revised SM Scale. This measure of SM was developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984). It consists of 13 items such as “I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them”. Lennox and Wolfe reported a Cronbach α reliability coefficient of .75. The reliability in the present study was .82.

Lennox & Wolfe Concern for Appropriateness Scale. This measure of SA, developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984), consists of 20 items such as “I tend to show different sides of myself to different people”. In the present study, a Cronbach reliability coefficient of .83 was uncovered, whereas Lennox and Wolfe found a coefficient of .86. The correlation between these two measures of the candidates’ personality was statistically significant but rather low ($r = .13, p < .01, N = 445$).

For all of the items included on these measures, a seven-point Likert response scale was used, ranging from one (Completely disagree) to seven (Completely agree). Scores on these measures were calculated by dividing the sum of scores on each scale by the number of items for each scale for each research participant resulting in scores ranging from one to seven where a high score indicates a high level of SM or of SA.

Rater Personality Measures

Extroversion. This variable was measured by 23 items from the Eysenck Personality Inventory – Form A (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1968). A sample item is “Do other people generally think of you as being lively?”. Response to each item was agreement (1) or disagreement (0). The scores on this measure range from 0 to 23. Scoring was keyed so that high scores indicated higher extroversion.

Sensitivity to Expressive Behavior of Others (SEBO). This measure, a sub-scale of the Lennox and Wolfe (1984) Revised SM Scale described above, consists of six items such as “I am often able to read people’s true emotions correctly through their eyes”. Lennox and Wolfe reported a Cronbach reliability coefficient of .70 for the SEBO whereas in the present study a coefficient of .77 was found.

Selection Ratings

Selection Interview Rating. Each candidate was rated on a 10-point scale of overall job suitability, ranging from one (Completely unsuitable) to 10 (Completely suitable). The ratings were made independently by each rater participating in the panel interview (see Procedure section). The average inter-rater reliability for this rating was .71 with a standard deviation of .11.

Procedure

All raters participated in a 1-day rater’s training course. During this course, the raters were asked to fill-out the rater personality measures as part of ongoing research. Immediately following the course, the selection process was initiated. Each day, for a total of 6 days, between 70 and 100 candidates arrived at the selection center to participate in the selection procedure for female combat field instructors. After a 1-h orientation session concerning the selection procedure, the various research instruments were administered to the candidates. Then, each candidate participated in a panel interview. Most panels consisted of six raters, each representing a different military corps. However, because of various organizational constraints, some panels were conducted by a smaller number of raters (three to five). In all cases, the interview was led by a senior rater, usually an officer. At the conclusion of the interview, each rater independently assessed the candidate as to her job suitability.

Results

In order to explore the direct relation between candidate SM ($M = 5.02, SD = .67$) and candidate SA ($M = 3.3, SD = .69$) and selection interview ratings, Pearson’s product–moment correlations were calculated between these variables and average panel interview ratings. As found in previous research, the relation between candidate SM and
In-rater Pearson product–moment correlations between the presented in Table 1. These correlations indicate that rater correlation was zero, which could explain why no rater personality measures were first transformed to z-scores and the rater personality measures are also predicted, for raters high on extroversion, the relation between the candidate SM and interview ratings was positive. However, an unpredicted negative relation was uncovered for raters low on extroversion. For these raters, high candidate SM was associated with lower interview ratings. Rater sensitivity to others behavior was not found to moderate the relation between candidate personality measures SM and interview ratings. Thus, Prediction 2 was not supported.

In a similar manner, possible moderating effects of rater personality on the relationship between candidate SA and the selection ratings was also explored. Examination of the within-rater correlations between the measures of candidate SA and interview ratings presented in Table 1 reveals a different distribution than was found for candidate SM. These correlations ranged from strongly negative to weakly positive with a mean correlation close to zero. Accordingly, for some raters, candidate SM was positively related to selection interview ratings, whereas for other raters, candidate SM was negatively related to selection interview ratings. Because of this distribution, the average within-rater correlation was zero, which could explain why no overall direct relation was found between candidate SM and interview ratings.

In the second stage, the correlation between the within-rater correlations and the two rater personality measures – sensitivity and extroversion – were examined. The within-rater correlations were first transformed to z-scores using the formula \((\log e (r+1))/2 – (\log e (1-r))/2\). The Pearson product–moment correlations between the within-rater z-scores and the rater personality measures are also presented in Table 1. These correlations indicate that rater extroversion moderates the relation between candidate SM and interview ratings providing some support for Prediction 1. Specifically, these findings indicate that, as

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<th>Candidate Self-Monitoring</th>
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<td>Candidate Social Anxiety</td>
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| Correlations between rater personality variables and within-rater correlations |
|-------------------------------|-----|------|------|
|                                | Sensitivity | Extroversion |
| Candidate Self-Monitoring      | -.06   | .36*  |
| Candidate Social Anxiety       | -.12   | .36*  |

*p < 0.05.
and for raters high on extroversion the interrater reliability was .69. Therefore, the moderating effect of rater extroversion on the relationship between SM and SA is apparently not based on differences in rater reliability.

Discussion

The present study examined the moderating effect of rater personality on the relation between interview ratings in real-life selection situations and candidate SM and SA. Since persons who self-monitor should be able to manage effectively the impression that they make on raters, a positive relation between SM and selection interview ratings has been predicted. However, past research using both the Snyder and Gangestad (1986) revised scale and the Lennox and Wolfe (1984) scale has not found support for a direct relation between these two variables.

This investigation tested the possibility that rater personality variables may moderate the relation between candidate SM and selection ratings. In keeping with this possibility, when the moderating effects of rater personality were taken into account, a relation between SM and selection ratings emerged. However, the nature of this relation was somewhat surprising. A positive relation between candidate SM and selection ratings was found for raters high on extroversion whereas a negative relation between these two variables was found for raters low on extroversion.

In addition, this investigation explored the relation between candidate SA and interview ratings. Although past research has shown a moderate, but statistically significant, relationship between these variables, the possible moderating effects of rater personality on this relationship were also explored. Here also, rater extroversion was shown to moderate this relation. However, this relation was not in the predicted direction. Although almost all raters were affected negatively by candidate SA, raters high on extroversion were affected to a lesser degree than were raters low on extraversion.

A theoretical explanation that attributes low sensitivity to environmental stimulation to persons high on extroversion may account for the above-described phenomenon. Green (1984) found that persons low on extraversion had higher physiological responses to noise level than did persons high on extraversion. Tellegen (1985) has argued that extroversion may represent individual differences in sensitivity to pleasurable stimuli such that persons high on extroversion are less sensitive to these stimuli than are persons low on extraversion. (For a more detailed discussion of the biobehavioral aspects of extroversion see Watson & Clark, 1997). According to Brebner and Cooper (1985), persons low on extraversion are geared to inspect whereas persons high on extraversion are geared to respond. Thus, raters who are low on extroversion may be more sensitive to interpersonal stimuli in general. When persons low on extraversion serve as raters in a selection situation, this sensitivity may be especially enhanced. These raters may be sensitive to SM and view it as impression management tactics. Their ratings of the candidates’ SM may, subsequently, even have been negatively affected by such a view of SM. Raters who are high on extroversion may lack such interpersonal sensitivity and may even have been favorably impressed by the impression management tactics engendered by SM. The finding that persons high on extraversion are more suggestible than are persons low on extraversion (Moss & McEvely, 1966) supports the above explanation since it implies that such persons may be particularly susceptible to self-management impression management tactics.

The moderating effects of rater extroversion on the relation between candidate SA and interview ratings can be explained in a similar fashion. In the present study, candidate SA was found to be negatively related to selection ratings. However, the moderating effect that was uncovered showed this relation to be higher for persons low on extraversion. In terms of the above-described association between extroversion and interpersonal sensitivity, such an effect might be expected.

One major limitation of the present study concerns the dependency between the raters. Since a panel interview situation was used, a number of raters rated the same candidate. In addition, although as described in the procedure section the interviews were led by a senior rater, a possible two-way influence of rater and rater behavior cannot be completely discounted. Future research should be performed with stricter control over the interview situation.

In general, the present study has shown that selection interview ratings may be influenced by various personality variables – both of the candidate and the rater – and that such relations may be of a more complex nature than the usually expected linear relation. Future research in this area should help to clarify these relations.

References


References


