**WORKING PAPER NO: 719**

# Consistency and Coherence in Hiring Decisions

**Kanchan Mukherjee**
*Professor of Organizational Behavior & Human Resources Management*
*Indian Institute of Management Bangalore*
*Bannerghatta Road, Bangalore – 560 076*
*kanchan.mukherjee@iimb.ac.in*


**Ashna Sehgal**
*Doctoral Student*
*Organizational Behavior & Human Resources Management*
*XLRI, Jamshedpur*
*Circuit House Area, Jamshedpur 831001*
*ashna.shgl@gmail.com*

# Consistency and Coherence in Hiring Decisions

**Abstract**

This study was undertaken to examine the nature of inconsistencies in the hiring decisions taken by individuals working within a single large company and compare it with those who are not associated with any single firm. The primary focus was to explore a) variations in the weight attributed to different selection criteria, b) variation in the hiring decisions made by the employees, and c) coherence between the weight attributed to different selection criteria and the hiring choice made by each participant. For purpose of the same, the participants were asked to respond to two hypothetical hiring scenarios and attribute differential weights to four selection criteria (Academic Performance, Involvement in extracurricular activities, Functional Expertise, and Likelihood of accepting the job offer). The study was carried out on a sample of 118 MBA graduates studying at a premier business school and a sample of 240 working professionals employed at a large multinational automobile manufacturing firm. The result obtained confirmed the existence of within-organization differences in the weight attributed to different selection criteria and the hiring decisions made by the individuals. No significant difference in the nature of hiring decisions was observed between individuals working for a specific firm and those not associated with any single firm. A lack of congruence was observed between the weight attributed to selection criteria by the decision-makers and the hiring decision made by them. The data was analyzed for exploring differences in hiring decisions of employees differing in terms of the hierarchical level, work division, educational qualification, and age.

**Keywords:** Inter-rater agreement, Intra-rater agreement, selection criteria

## Introduction

Owing to the scarcity and value of a talented workforce, the 'war for talent' has made the selection of the right person for the right job a key differentiator in the market (Keller & Meaney, 2017). Just like other decisions made in an organization, the success of a hiring decision is based on identifying candidates that best match the requirements and 'fits' with the organization. Patty McCord, Former Chief Talent Offer at Netflix, regarded "hiring as constant matchmaking, wherein, great hires are about recognizing great matches" (2018). However, more often than not, this does not happen. There is a large body of literature that has attributed hiring decisions to sources of individual differences such as personal idiosyncrasies and biases (Graves, 1993) rather than a common understanding of organizational requirements and norms.

These idiosyncrasies in hiring practices are often responsible for the lack of agreement and inconsistencies demonstrated by decision-makers in their judgment of the applicant. Such variations in the interviewer judgments and decision process undermine organizational effectiveness and often cause detrimental effects such as a) decreasing employee performance, b) increase the likelihood of legal issues due to discriminatory selection practices, c) decrease in applicant attraction due to poor recruiter behavior (Rynes et al., 1991), and d) decrease in organizational performance (Graves& Karren, 1996). Consistency in the hiring decisions among organizational members is imperative as many organizations view hiring as a way to maintain their culture and hire individuals possessing core values that align with their organizational strategy (Schneider & Bowen, 1993). Thereby, making hiring practices a means to attain a competitive advantage (Schneider & Bowen, 1993). Given the importance of consistent hiring decisions for an organization, previous studies have explored inconsistencies and disagreements among interviewers when rating applicants (Graves & Karren,1992; Cliffordson, 2002; Valenzi & Andrews, 1973) and have provided some guidelines to enhance interviewer agreement (Graves & Karren, 1996). Despite this, consistency and coherence in the hiring decisions taken by the employees working in the same organization continue to be a problem.

By examining the nature of hiring decisions taken by individuals working within the same organization, this study aims to explore a) Interpersonal Consistency, which we define as the inter-rater agreement in the choice of candidate to fill specific positions and whether these choices reflect a pattern of shared thoughts among the decision-makers. b) Intrapersonal Coherence, which we define as the intra-rater agreement in the elaboration of information and using it for making the subsequent hiring decision", more specifically, the coherence in the judgment of relative importance of different selection criteria and the corresponding hiring choice made by each decision-maker.

### Interpersonal Consistency

Hiring is defined as the process of choosing from a group of applicants the individual best suited for a particular position and for the organization (Gusdorf, 2008). This definition emphasizes two major parameters for choosing an applicant 1. ensuring that the applicant's qualifications match the job requirements associated with a particular position, i.e., a person-job fit. 2. ensuring a fit between the applicant and the culture and goal of the organization, i.e.

a person-organization fit. (Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011). The selection research is increasingly giving greater importance to the latter type over the traditional KSAs. This conceptualization of "fit" is believed a) to go beyond the assessment of "general employability" for any organization or b) idiosyncratic reactions of individual evaluators, c) to include a "distinct firm-specific component" to applicant evaluation (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). Additionally, strategic management theorists also continue to encourage recruiters to assess the compatibility of applicants with organizational norms, values, and strategies (Miles & Snow, 1986; Olian & Rynes, 1984).

Since an effective hiring decision is based on choosing the applicant best suited for an organization, it is desirable that employees working for the same organization would hold similar beliefs about the suitability of the applicants and would make similar hiring decisions. Thus, the hiring decision would be 'consistent' across the individuals belonging to the same organization, owing to the common personal attributes shared by the current employees (Schneider, 1987). Prior efforts to examine the nature of selection decisions taken by members of the same organization have provided mixed results. While, the work of Rynes & Gerhart (1990) found evidence for a greater degree of similarity among the assessments of individuals belonging to the same organization than among individual associated with different organizations, Graves & Karren (1993) found significant individual differences in the decision making the process of the individuals associated with a single organization, revealing a lack of an implicit shared understanding of the importance of various selection criteria among the organizational members. Differences in the decision processes of members belonging to the same organization were also reported by works of some of the early researchers (Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield, &Peterson, 1971; Mayfield &Carlson, 1966).

As selection interviews are the most widely utilized and preferred procedure for employee selection (Posthuma et al., 2014) across cultures and geographical boundaries, most of the studies exploring the variations in the hiring decisions have utilized employment interviews. The literature on employment interviews has provided evidence for wide interviewer differences in the selection of applicants. Two major sources of evidence are:

First, evidence for disappointingly low inter-rater reliabilities provided by some early research, wherein, the reliability estimates vary across the studies (Wagner, 1949; Mayfield, 1964; Arvey & Campion, 1982). Broadhurst's study (1974) explored the reliability of interviews in selecting students for clinical psychology courses by having four preliminary selector screen applicant forms and a reference letter of 128 applicants and two pairs of interviewers evaluated 29 applicants. They found that though there was agreement among the preliminary selectors, the intercorrelations among the interviewers were considerably low. Variations in the interviewer's decision-making process were also reported by Graves & Karren (1992) who analyzed how recruiters evaluated applicants for customer service positions. They found that the decisions made by the recruiters were not based on the same factors. Further, even when the recruiters did rely on the same factors, they varied greatly in the importance they attached to each criterion. "The differences observed in the interviewers' approaches to evaluating applicants were striking given that they were from a single organization and evaluated applicants for one position" (Graves & Karren, 1996, p.164). Similarly, Andrews & Valenzi (1973) observed

substantial disagreements among four expert judges in the way they utilized five selection criteria (Typing, Shorthand, Experience, Education, social skills) when faced with the task of rating 243 applicants for a secretarial job. Apart from the differences in the importance attributed to selection criteria, interviewer differences in the relative importance attributed to various personality traits during an employment interview were also observed. These differences exert influence over interviewers' personality judgments and the subsequent hiring decisions (van Dam, 2003). Similarly, when a resume is used for reviewing and making inferences about entry-level applicants' personality traits, they are found to elicit low inter-rater reliability. Cole et al, (2009) estimated interrater reliability by correlating the recruiter's judgments of applicant's resumes for five personality traits and found reliability estimates for recruiter personality inferences were generally low, ranging from .14 to .56. Though some researchers have found evidence for considerably low inter-rater reliability, Cliffordson (2002) reported modest inter-rater reliability (.47) among sixteen interviewers in their judgment of empathy of 123 applicants in real selection interviews, thus reinforcing the faith in interviews as a user-friendly and reliable selection method. Prior studies have also suggested ways of improving inter-rater reliability, such as the use of standardized questions and panel interviews or multiple separate interviews (Conway et al, 1995; Cliffordson, 2002). Job analysis and interviewer training are also believed to be moderately useful (Graves & Karren, 1996; Conway et al, 1995).

Second, interviewer differences in hiring decisions have also been attributed to personal idiosyncrasies and a range of unconscious and uncontrollable biases. Some arise out of an association between the interviewer and the applicant, such as 'similar to me effect, wherein, a mere biographical, attitudinal or personality similarity between the applicant and the interviewer biases the decision in the favor of the applicant (Orpen, 1984; Rand & Wexley 1975). Similarly, the interviewer's personal liking towards an applicant is found to be positively associated with the overall evaluation of the applicant (Keenan, 1977; Graves & Powell, 1988). At the same time, the literature on cognitive biases has provided numerous ways in which individuals unconsciously distort applicant information leading to flawed judgments and biased decisions. Such biases include halo effect (Heneman, Schwab, Huett &Ford, 1975), first impression bias, contrast effects (Arvey & Campion, 1982), confirmatory bias (Harris, 1989), and distributional errors (Pulakos et al, 1996).

Considering the wide variability in how interviewers assess applicants, along with lack of attention given by the organizations in explicitly shaping interviewer's preferences to ensure the suitability of an applicant to the organization, there is a possibility that the hiring decisions made by individuals belonging to a single organization are a reflection of the general or idiosyncratic stereotypes instead of a significant amount of firm-specific components (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990).

Thus, with the objective of exploring the interpersonal consistency in the judgment of different selection criteria and hiring choices among decision-makers, the following hypothesis was developed:

*Hypothesis 1: The inconsistency in the weight attributed to different selection criteria will be relatively less for individuals belonging to the same organization as compared to individuals not associated with any single organization.*

*Hypothesis 2: The inconsistency in the hiring decision taken by individuals belonging to the same organization when faced with the task of filling identical positions will be relatively less than the inconsistencies reported by individuals not associated with any single organization.*

Though it is essential for an organizational member to have a common understanding of the kind of applicant that is desired by the firm and to make a hiring decision reflecting the same, it is equally important for the organizational members to have a good understanding of their own decision processes. A lack of awareness of one's own decision process can cause discrepancies in one's intended and actual hiring decisions and ultimately lead them to make a decision that is inconsistent with firm-specific beliefs. Thus, the next section of the paper is focused on addressing the intra-personal coherence in making a hiring decision.

**Intra-personal Coherence**

Early research examining variations in hiring decisions has provided evidence for decision-makers' lack of awareness and insight into their own decision-making process (Dunn et al, 1995; Moy & Lam, 2004), resulting in a discrepancy in their judgment and choice. Andrews & Valenzi (1993) in their attempt to explore inter-rater differences in information cue utilization for the purpose of rating applicants for secretarial jobs, found that "a key source of inter-rater disagreement was the failure of judges to process cues consistent with their estimate of perceived relative importance" (p. 52). In their study, the researcher made four interviewers working for the same organization rank five information cues (Typing, Shorthand, experience, education, social skills) in the order of their importance for making a hiring decision. They compared the ranks attributed to the five information cues to the hiring decisions made by the interviewers and found large discrepancies between the interviewers' perceived ranking and the pattern of decisions taken by them, thus, indicating interviewers' lack of insight about one's own cue utilization. Graves & Karren (1993) also obtained pronounced differences in the match between interviewer's ranking of the importance of different selection criteria and the actual selection decision. The researchers adopted a policy capturing experimental design to identify selection criteria used by each interviewer in evaluating the applicants for a customer service position. They also asked the participants to rank the importance of five criteria in achieving success in the same role. Though criteria used by some interviewers matched the ranking provided by them, other interviewers utilized criteria that contradicted their own ranking. Moy & Lam (2004) in their efforts to examine the impact of various selection criteria and personality traits in getting hired used self-report rating and conjoint analysis to derive different hiring models, allowing a comparison of decision-makers intended and actual decisions. The result obtained reinforced that decision-makers lack an understanding of their own decision processes. Though the decision-makers showed a preference for open-mindedness and creativity in the self-report rating, the actual decision taken went against their stated preferences. This paradoxical nature of the results was consistent with the findings obtained by Dunn et al (1995), wherein, the attributes that managers thought they will attend to were not necessarily the ones they intended to. Thus, the following hypothesis was developed:

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*Hypothesis 3:  There will be a lack of coherence in the selector's judgment of the importance of selection criteria and the hiring choice made by them*

**Method**

This study was carried on two sets of samples. In the first study, data was collected from MBA graduates studying in a premier business school in India. In the second study, data was collected from working professionals employed in a large multinational automobile manufacturing company having its presence across the globe. The purpose of conducting the study 1 was for it to serve as a benchmark for study 2. Since the business graduates, unlike the professionals, were not induced to any single organization and possessed varied views and preferences regarding the importance of selection criteria and suitability of applicants, we expected greater variance and inconsistency among business graduates as compared to the experienced professionals.

**Participants.**

Study 1:

The participants of the study were 118 business students studying at a premier school in India. The students belonged to the age range of 21-31 years with the average age being 25. The gender distribution of the sample was such that 44.5% of participants were females and 55.5% were males.

Study 2:

The participants of this study were 240 working professionals employed at an Indian multinational car manufacturing firm. Since the working professionals belonged to the same firm and were induced to the same organizational norms and preferences, a greater degree of consistency was expected in their responses. An online questionnaire was sent to over 800 employees. 272 responses were received, out of which 32 were eliminated as they were partially complete. The remaining 240 responses were retained for analysis, wherein, 75 participants were high-level employees comprising of CXOs, department heads, and senior managers and the remaining 165 participants were at a relatively lower level comprising of managers and operational workers. The data was collected across four divisions, i.e. manufacturing, R&D, sales, and support.  The gender distribution of the sample was skewed with 95% of the participants being males. The age of the participants ranged from 25-58 with 39 years being the mean.

**Procedure**

The participants in the study responded to an online questionnaire comprising three main sections. The first section was designed to capture the variation in the weight attributed to different selection criteria, wherein, the participants responded to the item *"How important are each of the criteria (Academic performance, Involvement in extracurricular activities, Functional expertise, and Likelihood of acceptance of the job offer) in extending a job offer to a candidate?"*. They were instructed to distribute a total of 100 points among all the criteria such that, the most important criterion received the highest score, the second most important

criterion received the second-highest score, and so on. The second section comprised of a filler activity, wherein, participants responded to a set of questions unrelated to the objective of the study. The purpose of the filler activity was to avoid the spillover of weight attributed to different selection criteria by the participants, on to the succeeding questions. The third section was designed to capture variation in the actual hiring decisions, wherein, participants were asked to respond to the two hypothetical hiring scenarios created by manipulating the selection criteria.

*Development of the two hypothetical scenarios*

In order to understand the nature of hiring decisions, two hypothetical hiring scenarios were created. One concerning the hiring of a fresh MBA graduate for a general management role and the other concerning the hiring of an experienced manager for heading the Learning and Development division in the company. For each of the hiring scenarios, two appropriate selection criteria were identified, and corresponding candidate profiles were created by manipulating the selection criteria in a way that conveyed superior performance in one criterion at the expense of the other.

With respect to the hiring of fresh MBA graduates, academic performance as reflected by GPA and involvement in extracurricular activities were chosen to serve as selection criteria. This choice was made based on the evidence that GPA and extracurricular are directly linked to the perceived employability of business graduates (Pinto & Ramalheira, 2017), wherein, GPA serves as a proxy to graduate's cognitive ability and quality of future performance (Kuncel, Hezlett, and Ones, 2004) and involvement in extracurricular provides a means to develop relational and social skills (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002) that aid in succeeding in the labor market (Stevenson & Clegg, 2011). Further, involvement in sports, volunteering events, cultural and artistic activities are found to be the most relevant extracurricular activities for students. (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013a, 2013b; Thompson et al., 2013). Thus, based upon the above evidence, the following hypothetical hiring scenario was developed:

*Q1. Imagine that you are the Head – Talent & Acquisition of the company XYZ. You are faced with the task of filling the important position of "Manager" in your department. Being a general management role, the candidate is expected to be good in his/her field and manage a team of four. The team responsible for campus recruitment have short-listed two fresh MBA graduates they believe are fit for the role and have left the final decision to you. Whom would you choose?*

***Candidate A** is graduating from a well- known business school in the country with a 7.2/8 GPA which puts him in the top 5 % in his batch. He is known to be a sincere and dedicated student, who places academics as his top priority. With his focus on academics, he has found little time for extracurricular activities.*

***Candidate B** is graduating from a well-known business school in the country, with a 5.4/8 GPA which places him at about average in the batch. He is the captain of the college's cricket team and an accomplished keyboard player. He spends many hours involved in his extracurricular activates which has affected his academic performance.*

With respect to the hiring of an experienced worker, functional expertise, and the likelihood of accepting the job offer were chosen to serve as the two selection criteria. This choice was made as functional expertise is one of the most desirable and sought-after qualities for an experienced worker. Realizing the high value of skills and talent, organizations are now ready to pay a premium to attract and retain talent. At the same time, the selection of talent is a costly affair, processing applicants who have a low probability of accepting the offer, and joining the company becomes costly and ineffective for the organizations. Thus, based on the dilemma that presents a trade-off between the applicant's expertise and the likelihood of accepting the offer, the following hypothetical hiring scenario was developed:

*Q2. Imagine that you are the CHRO (India) of a Gurgaon based company 'ABC', you are faced with the task of filling an important position, 'Head – Learning & Development'. The team responsible for selections has short-listed two candidates they believe are fit for the role and have left the final decision to you. To whom would you offer the job?*

***Candidate A*** *is reasonably qualified for the job and fulfills most of its requirements. In addition, he is a resident of Gurgaon and finds ABC's location extremely convenient. If the job is offered to him, he will definitely accept the offer.*

***Candidate B*** *is well-qualified and fulfills all its requirements. However, ABC's location is a constraint for him. He is currently residing in Mumbai where his wife works at a local firm. Moving to Gurgaon would require significant adjustment for his family. He is keen on joining ABC but will accept the offer only if his wife is able to find a good job in the Gurgaon.*

The four selection criteria: 1) GPA, 2) Involvement in extra-curricular activities, 3) Functional hiring and 4) Likelihood of accepting the job offer; along with the corresponding hiring, scenarios were used to explore the consistency and coherence in the judgment and decision choices of individuals working in the same organization.

***Analysis and Results***

*Consistency in the perceived importance of different selection criteria*:

In order to test Hypothesis 1 which states that "the inconsistency in the weight attributed to different selection criteria will be relatively less for individuals belonging to the same organization as compared to individuals not associated with any single organization" an F-test was conducted to test whether the variance obtained by the two samples are statistically significant. No statistically significant difference in the variance was observed for most of the selection criteria, except for the weight attributed to likelihood of accepting the offer $(F_{(117,239)} = 1.4, P < 0.05)$, wherein, the MBA graduates varied more than the working professionals.

*Table 1a: Variation in the weight attributed to different selection criteria*

| Selection Criteria | MBA Graduates | | Working Professionals | | T-Test df(117,239) | | F-test df(117,239) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | SD | M | SD | t | p-value | F | P-value |
| Academic Performance | 27.24 | 11.45 | 30.28 | 12.55 | -2.22* | 0.02 | 1.12 | 0.12 |
| Involvement in Extra-curricular Activities | 21 | 8.33 | 15.59 | 8.29 | 5.80* | 0 | 1 | 0.49 |
| Functional Expertise | 35.63 | 13.37 | 40.79 | 13.74 | -3.37* | 0 | 1.06 | 0.36 |
| Likelihood of accepting the offer | 16.11 | 9.37 | 13.32 | 7.92 | 2.93* | 0 | 1.39* | 0.01 |

An objective of the study was also to explore whether the hierarchical level at which the employees are working moderate the amount of consistency among employees. For the purpose of the same, an F- test was computed to test whether the difference in the variance obtained by the low-level and high-level employees was statistically significant. A significant difference in the variance in the weight attributed to "Academic performance" ($F(74,164)=1.72, p<0.05$) and "Extracurricular activities" ($F(74,164=1.72, P<0.05$) was observed, wherein, the low-level employees showed greater variance than the high-level employees.

*Table 1b: Variation in the weight attributed to different selection criteria*

| Selection Criteria | Hierarchical Levels | | | | df(74,164) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High level | | Low level | | T-tests | | F test | |
| | M | SD | M | SD | t | P-value | f | P-value |
| Academic Performance | 28.2 | 10.26 | 31.23 | 13.39 | -1.74 | 0.08 | 1.72* | 0 |
| Extracurricular Activities | 14.66 | 7.18 | 16.01 | 8.74 | -1.17 | 0.02 | 1.49* | 0.02 |
| Functional Expertise | 44.53 | 12.44 | 39.09 | 13.41 | 2.89 | 0 | 1.28 | 0.11 |
| Likelihood of accepting the offer | 12.6 | 8.44 | 13.66 | 7.69 | -0.96 | 0.33 | 1.2 | 0.17 |

*Consistency in the hiring decision:*

The second objective of the study was to explore variation in the hiring decision taken when faced with the task of filling identical positions. When faced with a hiring choice between two

fresh MBA graduates to fill a general management role, most of the working professionals and MBA graduates (67%) chose candidate B (superior ECA), however, a significant proportion (33%) of the working professionals still believed candidate A (superior GPA) would be a better choice (table 6.a). Similarly, when presented with a trade-off between the expertise of the candidate and likelihood of job offer being accepted, about half of the working professional and MBA graduates (43%, 41%) chose the candidate possessing superior expertise, while, the remaining students (57 %, 59%) were inclined towards the certainty of the offer being accepted. Hypothesis 3 states that "The inconsistency in the hiring decision taken by individuals belonging to the same organization when faced with the task of filling identical positions will be relatively less than the inconsistencies reported by individual not associated with any single organization". A Z-test was conducted to test whether there was a statistically significant difference in the consistency in the hiring decisions made by the two samples. The results indicated that there is no significant difference in the consistency reported by the MBA graduates (individuals not associated with any single organization) and Working professionals (Individuals working for a specific firm).

*Table 2.a: Variation in hiring decisions*

|  | MBA Graduates | Working Professionals | Z-Test df(117,239) | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | | | |
| Candidate A (Superior GPA) | 32.2 | 33.3 | -0.2 | 0.83 |
| Candidate B (Superior ECA) | 67.79 | 66.7 | 0.2 | 0.83 |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | | | |
| Candidate A (100% offer acceptance) | 59.3 | 56.6 | 0.48 | 0.62 |
| Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | 40.6 | 43.3 | -0.49 | 0.62 |

A hierarchical level-wise analysis provided further insights into the decision making of the employees, no significant difference was found for the consistency in the hiring taken by high-level and low-level employees. For hiring scenario 1, a majority of both high (59 %) and low-level employees (70 %) gave preference to candidate B (Superior ECA), indicating a preference towards all-round development over academic excellence. However, a significant difference in the decision preferences among the high and low-level employees was observed for hiring scenario 2 ($Z_{(74,164)}$ =-2.389, p= .016), wherein, a majority of high-level employees (54.67%) preferred candidate B (Superior Expertise), while, a majority of low-level employees (61.82%) preferred candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer).

*Table 2.b: Variation in hiring decisions*

| Hypothetical Hiring Scenario | High level | Low-level | Z-test df (74,164) | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | | | |
| Candidate A (Superior GPA) | 41.3 | 29.7 | | |
| Candidate B (Superior ECA) | 58.7 | 70.3 | -1.76 | 0.07 |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | | | |
| Candidate A (100% offer acceptance) | 45.33 | 61.82 | | |
| Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | 54.67 | 38.18 | -1.04 | 0.29 |

*Coherence between selector's judgment of the selection criteria and his/her hiring preference:*

For the purpose of the study, the selector's hiring decisions were coded for coherence/incoherence using the weights given to different selection criteria. As can be seen from table 3, A participant is said to make a coherent decision when the weight assigned to a selection criterion is reflected in his/her decision preference. For instance, when presented with the hiring scenario 1, a participant makes a coherent choice if he gives greater weight to academic performance relative to extracurricular activities and subsequently chooses candidate A (Superior GPA). However, a participant makes an incoherent choice if he chooses candidate B (Superior ECA) even after giving relatively greater weight to academic performance. Similarly, when presented with the hiring scenario 2, a participant makes a coherent choice if he gives greater weight to functional expertise relative to the likelihood of offer acceptance and subsequently chooses candidate B (superior expertise). However, a participant makes an incoherent choice if he chooses candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer) even after giving relatively greater weight to functional expertise.

*Table 3: Criteria for coherence in hiring decisions*

| Weight attributed to selection criteria | Hiring Decision | |
|---|---|---|
| | Candidate A | Candidate B |
| Academic Performance > Extracurricular Activities | *Coherence* | *Incoherence* |
| Academic Performance < Extracurricular Activities | *Incoherence* | *Coherence* |
| Functional Expertise > Likelihood of Offer Acceptance | *Incoherence* | *Coherence* |
| Functional Expertise < Likelihood of Offer Acceptance | *Coherence* | *Incoherence* |

The third hypothesis states that "there will be a lack of coherence in the selector's judgment of the importance of selection criteria and the hiring choice made by them". As can be seen from table 4. an incoherence in the hiring decisions was observed for most working professionals for both, hiring scenarios 1 and 2 (57%). A Z-test was computed to test for a statistical

difference in the incoherence reported by working professionals and MBA graduates. No significant difference in the percentage of incoherent responses was observed between the MBA graduates and working professionals. Thus, for most of the individuals, the hiring choice made by them is exclusive of the importance attributed to the selection criteria.

*Table 4a: Incoherence between selector's judgment of the selection criteria and his/her hiring preference*

| Hypothetical Hiring Criteria | MBA Graduates | Working Professionals | Z Test df(117,239) | P-Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | 52.12% | 57.29% | -0.92 | 0.35 |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | 53.81% | 57.08% | -0.58 | 0.55 |

A hierarchical level-wise analysis (Table 4.b) indicated that the incoherence between the judgment and the choice made by the low-level employees (62%) was greater than those made by the high-level employees (47%) working at the same organization ( $Z(74,164)$ = -2.24, p= 0.0251; $Z(74,164)$ = -2.058, p = .0394).

| Hypothetical Hiring Criteria | Incoherence across hierarchical Level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High level | Low level | Z-test df (74,164) | p-value |
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | 46.67% | 62.12% | -2.24* | 0.02 |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | 47.33% | 61.52% | -2.058* | 0.03 |

**Discussion and Recommendation**

This study provides insights into the nature of hiring decisions taken by individuals aligned with a single organization (Professionals working at a car manufacturing firm) and individuals who are not aligned with a specific organization (MBA graduates). The analysis of the variations in the hiring decisions made by the two samples provide evidence for variation in a) the weight attributed to different selection criteria and b) hiring decisions made by them. The two samples did not significantly differ from each other with respect to the consistency in the hiring decisions made by them as well as the consistency in the weight attributed to most of the selection criteria, the only exception being the 'likelihood of accepting offer', wherein,

MBA graduates varied more than the working professionals. This finding is salient as it suggests that the consistency in the hiring preferences of individuals induced to the same firm-specific norms and preferences do not differ from those who have not been exposed to any firm-specific preferences. The results obtained by both the samples follow a similar pattern, both students and working professionals mildly agree with each other on the importance attributed to functional expertise and observed maximum variance among them for the weight attributed to the likelihood of accepting the offer. Similarly, the student and working professionals show a moderate amount of variation in the hiring decisions taken by them based on the two hypothetical scenarios presented, with slight inclination towards candidate B (superior ECA) and candidate A (100% offer acceptance) for hiring scenario 1 and 2 respectively. Thus, indicating that hiring decisions made by the participants reflected personal idiosyncrasy more than a common understanding of what kind of applicant is desired by the firm.

Prior research suggests that such idiosyncratic nature of employees' hiring decisions can hamper organizational effectiveness by "lowering employee performance, decreasing applicant attraction, increasing the likelihood of expensive legal judgments and eventually, decrease organizational performance" (Graves & Karren, 1996). Given the widespread inconsistencies in hiring decisions and its detrimental impact on organizational effectiveness, it is imperative for organizational members to develop ways to reduce inconsistency and improve reliability among raters. Organizations need to realize that they cannot assume that its members hold a shared view of the selection criteria that need to be used in assessing the suitability of the applicants. An "explicit agreement concerning the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for a position is needed to ensure consistent selection decisions across interviewers" (Graves & Karren, 1996). Thorough job analysis to identify key KSAs required to perform a given role can be helpful in achieving this (Graves & Karren, 1996; Conway et al, 1996). Apart from the traditional KSAs, organizations should identify characteristics that would enable the applicants to function effectively in the organizational environment (Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991). This will help organizations to select employees who would fit well with the organization's culture and strategic goals.

The most widely suggested means for improving the psychometric properties of selection interviews and enhancing inter-rater agreement is the use of a 'structured interview' (Conway et al, 1996; Campion et al. ,1997; Macan, 2009), which involves standardizing the questions that need to be asked and the way the responses need to be evaluated. Campion et al (1997), suggest that the most effective way to standardize the content of the interviews is to base the questions on job analysis, asking the same questions to each candidate and asking better questions (situational questions, past behavior questions, job knowledge questions). Similarly, the evaluation of the interviews can be standardized by using rating scales and training the interviewers (Campion et al,1997). In order to bring about standardization in the hiring process, Graves & Karren (1996) suggest developing an interview guide for assessing the suitability of applicants. Despite the huge body of research providing evidence for superiority and effectiveness of structured interviews, there seems to be a "lay preference for less standardized approaches to selection" (Diab et al, 2009).

Though prior research has suggested standardized ways of conducting interviews, most of these suggestions are centered around ensuring standardization of the information that is gathered. Besides this, standardization of how this information is to be used and elaborated to make a hiring decision is essential to ensure consistency in the decisions made by different individuals. In his study, we ensured standardization of the content and rating scale by presenting the same hypothetical hiring scenario containing applicant profiles to all the participants. Yet we observed differences in the decisions taken by individuals working for the same organization. This indicates that the way the information is utilized to come up to a decision lacks uniformity and is susceptible to personal idiosyncrasies. Prior research recommends educating professionals about the idiosyncratic nature of hiring decisions and the hazardous implications of the same (Graves & Karren,1997). We believe that providing proper training to organizational members to adopt standardized practices to obtain applicant information and developing a uniform way of evaluating the applicant information to come to a decision is imperative for ensuring consistency across the organization. Thus, future research should focus on developing ways to ensure uniformity in how the information is evaluated to ensure consistency in the hiring decisions.

Besides the standardized practices to obtain applicant information and developing a uniform way of evaluating the applicant information, the impact of personal idiosyncrasies on selection decisions can also be reduced by altering the selection process. Organizations can employ multiple interviewers/recruiters to evaluate the applicants (M. Campion et al., 1988; Hakel, 1982), this way multiple judgments can be aggregated to reduce random errors introduced by personal idiosyncrasies (Dipboye, 1992; Hakel, 1982). Multiple interviewer formats such as a panel or separate interviews are known to increase inter-rater reliability (Conway et al, 1996; Cliffordson, 2002).

This study goes beyond highlighting inconsistencies in hiring decisions taken by organizational members to provide insights into the decision-making process undertaken by each member. The results confirm the existence of an individual's lack of awareness and insights into their own decision-making process, thereby, supporting the results obtained by the previous studies (Dunn et al, 1995; Moy & Lam, 2004; Andrews & Valenzi 1973). The hiring decisions made by more than half of the working professionals and MBA graduates were incoherent. Thus, indicating a discrepancy in the importance attached to the selection criteria and hiring choice made.

Till the time there is incoherence in the beliefs and decisions of the organizational members, achieving consistency in the decisions made by them becomes a far-fetched goal. It is immensely important for an organization to take up measures to reduce this discrepancy and encourage individuals to make a more coherent choice. Thus, organizations should ensure its members received appropriate training to develop better insights into their own decision-making processes.

Another objective of the study was also to explore employees' level in the organization as a potential moderator for interpersonal consistency and intrapersonal coherence in the hiring decisions. The results obtained indicated that high level and low-level employees did not significantly differ with respect to the variance in the weight attributed to most of the selection

criteria. The only exception being the academic performance, wherein, the disagreement among low-level employees is significantly more than the high-level employees. Further, high-level and low-level employees did not differ with respect to the consistency in the hiring decisions made by them. However, the hiring preferences of the employees were such that though both high (59%) and low-level employees (70 %) gave preference to candidate B (Superior ECA), indicating a preference towards all-round development over academic excellence, they differed in the candidate they preferred for the 'Head- L&D' role. Most of the high-level employees preferred candidate B (Superior Expertise), while, low-level employees preferred candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer). Thus, indicating high-level employee's preference towards the expertise of the employees over the likelihood of joining.

Further, a level-wise comparison suggested that incoherence in the hiring decisions made by low-level employees was significantly greater than the decisions made by high-level employees. Suggesting that high-level employees are more likely to be coherent in their thoughts and actions and may also possess a greater degree of insights in their own decision process.

The level-wise comparison of the nature of hiring decisions provided interesting insights related to the effectiveness of the high-level and low-level employees in making hiring decisions. Firstly, research on interviewer effectiveness suggests that effective interviewers have better insights about their own decision- making process as compared to ineffective interviewers. Effective interviewers are more likely to exert conscious control over their decisions and thus exhibit a greater degree of consistency between their ranking of the relative importance of selection criteria and the actual hiring decision made (Graves & Karren, 1992). Given the greater degree of coherence exhibited by high-level employees in the present study, it is reasonable to assume that high-level employees are more likely to be effective decision-makers as compared to the low-level employees. Secondly, effective interviewers give greater importance to job-relevant criteria when making a hiring decision as compared to the ineffective interviewers (Graves & Kareen, 1992). This study provided evidence for a difference in preference of high-level and low-level employees in selecting an applicant 'Head-L&D' role, wherein, most of the high-level employees preferred candidate B (Superior Expertise), while, low-level employees preferred candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer). Thus, indicating that high-level managers give greater preference to job-relevant criteria than low-level counterparts, thereby, reinforcing our belief that high-level employees are more likely to be effective decision-makers as compared to the low-level employees. Future research efforts can be directed to test this assumption.

This study also explored differences in inconsistency and incoherence in the hiring decisions of employees differing in terms of the hierarchical level, work division, educational qualification, and age. The results indicate that employees across all the hierarchical levels, work divisions, educational qualifications, and ages report mild agreement on the importance attributed to functional expertise and observed maximum variance for the weight attributed to the likelihood of accepting the offer and involvement in extracurricular activities. They also consider functional expertise and academic performance more important selection criteria as compared to extracurricular activities and the likelihood of accepting the offer. Further, the results also suggested that when faced with the choice of hiring a fresh MBA graduate,

employees across all the hierarchical levels, divisions, educational qualifications, and ages preferred candidate B (superior ECA). When faced the choice of hiring a candidate for 'Head-L&D' role, employees across the divisions and ages preferred candidate A (100% offer acceptance), however, the difference in hiring preference was observed for hierarchical levels and educational qualifications, wherein, high-level employees as well as those who were post-graduate preferred candidate B (Superior Expertise). This finding is salient as it indicates that employees who have attained higher education and are working at higher ranks in the firm give preference to job-relevant criteria such as expertise.

Interestingly, this study demonstrates that though a majority of the employees give greater importance to functional expertise and academic performance, the preferred candidate choice for the majority of the divisions, educational qualifications, hierarchical level age reflects a decision that is incoherent with the judgment of the selection criteria. The analysis of differences in the incoherence in the hiring decisions of employees differing in terms of the hierarchical level, work division, educational qualification, and age indicates that support function reported the maximum level of incoherent responses, while the number of incoherence responses reported by the R&D division was less than all divisions. Similarly, the number of incoherent responses reported by employees in the age range of 39-58 years were less than those reported by their younger counterparts. Overall, this study demonstrates that incoherence is widely prevalent at the organizational, divisional as well as the individual-level. Thus, future research should be directed towards identifying and addressing the causes of such incoherence.

**Conclusion**

Overall, this study provides evidence for a moderate amount of within-organization variations the weight attributed to different selection criteria as well as the hiring decisions made by the organizational members, indicating that hiring decisions made by the participants reflected personal idiosyncrasy more than a common understanding of what kind of applicant is desired by the firm. This study also provided insights into the nature of the decision-making process undertaken by organizational members suggesting that they lack awareness and insights into their own decision-making process. Since an organization's human resource has become the key to achieving a competitive advantage, it essential for organizations to ensure that hiring decisions are aligned well with their strategies and goals. Thus, organizations need to educate their managers on what is desired in the new hires so that there exists explicit agreement about the suitability of the applicants and develop methods to ensure consistency and coherence in the decisions made by them.

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**TABLES**

Variation in the weight attributed to different selection criteria

**Table 1.c**

| Selection Criteria | Hierarchical Levels | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High level (n=75) | | | | Low level (n=165) | | | | |
| | M | SD | Variance | CV | M | SD | Variance | CV | F test |
| Academic Performance | 28.2 | 10.26 | 105.2676 | 0.36 | 31.24 | 13.39 | 179.2921 | 0.43 | 0.587* |
| Extracurricular Activities | 14.66 | 7.18 | 51.5524 | 0.49 | 16.01 | 8.74 | 76.3876 | 0.55 | 0.675 |
| Functional Expertise | 44.53 | 12.44 | 154.7536 | 0.28 | 41.52 | 13.41 | 179.8281 | 0.32 | 0.861 |
| Likelihood of accepting the offer | 12.6 | 8.44 | 71.2336 | 0.67 | 13.66 | 7.69 | 59.1361 | 0.56 | 1.205 |

**Table 1d.**

| Selection Criteria | Divisions | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Manufacturing (n=73) | | | R&D (n=100) | | | Sales (n=47) | | | Support (n=20) | | |
| | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV |
| Academic Performance | 31.69 | 15.04 | 0.474 | 30.1 | 11.5 | 0.38 | 27.9 | 11.35 | 0.405 | 31.5 | 9.74 | 0.309 |
| Involvement in Extracurricular activities | 15.12 | 7.6 | 0.502 | 15 | 8.04 | 0.53 | 17.72 | 8.84 | 0.498 | 15.25 | 10.32 | 0.67 |
| Functional Expertise | 38.69 | 14.71 | 0.382 | 42.65 | 13.3 | 0.311 | 41.48 | 13.63 | 0.32 | 37.5 | 11.29 | 0.301 |
| Likelihood of offer acceptance | 14.47 | 8.69 | 0.6 | 12.25 | 7.225 | 0.58 | 12.8 | 8.331 | 0.65 | 15.75 | 6.74 | 0.428 |

**Table 1e.**

| Selection Criteria | Educational Qualifications | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High School (n=79) | | | Diploma (n=50) | | | Graduate (n=75) | | | Post-Graduate (n=31) | | |
| | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV |
| Academic Performance | 29.55 | 12.83 | 0.43 | 29.5 | 9.85 | 0.33 | 31.13 | 14.2 | 0.456 | 31.096 | 12.15 | 0.39 |
| Involvement in Extracurricular activities | 15.44 | 8.366 | 0.54 | 14 | 7.626 | 0.544 | 15.77 | 9.152 | 0.58 | 17.709 | 7.09 | 0.4 |
| Functional Expertise | 41.518 | 13.4 | 0.322 | 42.4 | 14.68 | 0.346 | 39.86 | 14.093 | 0.353 | 40.162 | 12.8117 | 0.319 |
| Likelihood of offer acceptance | 13.48 | 8.1 | 0.6 | 14.1 | 7.47 | 0.529 | 13.226 | 8.288 | 0.626 | 11.032 | 6.71 | 0.608 |

**Table 1f.**

| | Age | | | | | |
| | 25-38 | | | 39-58 | | |
| Selection Criteria | M | SD | CV | M | SD | CV |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Academic Performance | 30.804 | 14.13 | *0.458* | 29.743 | 10.684 | *0.359* |
| Involvement in Extracurricular activities | 16.11 | 9.75 | *0.605* | 15.042 | 6.415 | *0.426* |
| Functional Expertise | 40.081 | 14.793 | *0.369* | 41.538 | 12.568 | *0.302* |
| Likelihood of offer acceptance | 13 | 7.77 | *0.59* | 13.675 | 8.104 | *0.592* |

Variation in hiring decisions

**Table 2.c**

| Hypothetical Hiring Scenario | High level | Low-level | Z-test | P-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | | | |
| Candidate A (Superior GPA) | *41.3* | *29.7* | | |
| Candidate B (Superior ECA) | *58.7* | *70.3* | -1.767 | 0.0767 |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | | | |
| Candidate A (100% offer acceptance) | *45.33* | *61.82* | | |
| Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | *54.67* | *38.18* | -1.046 | 0.293 |

**Table 2d.**

| | Divisions | | | |
| Hypothetical Hiring Scenario | *Manufacturing* | *R&D* | *Sales* | *Support* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (Superior GPA) | *34.2* | *37* | *25.5* | *30* |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior ECA) | *65.8* | *63* | *74.5* | *70* |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer) | *53.42* | *53* | *61.7* | *75* |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | *47* | *46.58* | *40.43* | *25* |

**Table 2e.**

| Hypothetical Hiring Scenario | High school | Diploma | Graduate | Post-Graduate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (Superior GPA) | *32.9* | *36* | *32* | *32* |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior ECA) | *67.1* | *64* | *68* | *68* |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer) | *56.9* | *60* | *54.67* | *48* |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | *43.04* | *40* | *45.33* | *52* |

**Table 2f.**

| Hypothetical Hiring Scenario | 25-38 years | 39-58 years |
|---|---|---|
| *Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular* | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (Superior GPA) | 31.7 | 35.04 |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior ECA) | 68.29 | 64.95 |
| *Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer* | | |
| Preference for Candidate A (100% acceptance of the offer) | 60.98 | 52.14 |
| Preference for Candidate B (Superior Expertise) | 39.0244 | 47.863 |

Incoherence between selector's judgment of the selection criteria and his/her hiring preference

**Table 4c.**

| | Incoherence across hierarchical Level | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High level | Low level | Z-test | p-value |
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | 46.67% | 62.12% | -2.24* | 0.0251 |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | 47.33% | 61.52% | -2.058* | 0.0394 |

**Table 4d.**

| | Incoherence across divisions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Manufacturing | R&D | Sales | Support |
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | *60.96%* | *55%* | 55.32% | 60% |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | *53.4%* | *53.5%* | *61.7%* | *77.5%* |

**Table 4e**

| | Incoherence across educational qualifications | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | High School | Diploma | Graduate | Post-Graduate |
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | 54.43% | *67%* | 54.67% | 54.84% |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | *58.27%* | *61%* | *55.3%* | *48.39%* |

**Table 4f.**

| | Incoherence across Age | |
|---|---|---|
| | 25-38 | 39-58 |
| Hiring Scenario 1: Academic Performance Vs Extracurricular | *57.32%* | 57.26% |
| Hiring Scenario 2: Functional Expertise Vs Likelihood of accepting the offer | *61 %* | *52.99* |