

EMPLOYEE SELECTION METHODS IN ROMANIA: POPULARITY AND APPLICANT REACTIONS

Abstract

This study assessed the prevalence of, and applicants' reactions to 21 different employee selection methods. Past studies on this topic have focused mainly on countries in Western Europe. This research investigated a sample of 142 Romanian respondents using a postal survey. The most popular selection methods used by Romanian organizations were found to be CVs, ability tests and interviews. In contrast, applicants most favor work-samples, followed by ability tests, interviews, CVs and personality tests. Their perception of astrology, graphology, personal contacts and modern selection instruments, was negative. These results are similar to those reported from studies in other countries suggesting that Romanian job candidates do not differ greatly in their reactions to these selection methods from their European counterparts. The study shows that Romanian employers predominantly use selection methods that are perceived positively by candidates.

Keywords: selection methods, Romania, human resources

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METODE DE SELECȚIE A ANGAJAȚILOR ÎN ROMÂNIA: POPULARITATE ȘI REACȚII ALE APLICANȚILOR

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Rezumat

Studiul analizează prevalența și reacțiile aplicanților la 21 de diferite metode de selecție. Studiile anterioare în acest domeniu au fost focusate în principal pe țările din Europa de vest. Cercetarea de față analizează un eșantion format din 142 de respondenți din România folosind chestionare transmise prin poștă. Rezultatele studiului arată că cele mai populare metode de selecție utilizate de organizațiile din România sunt CV-urile, testele de abilitate și interviurile. Pe de altă parte, aplicanții preferă probele de muncă, testele de abilitate, interviurile, CV-urile și testele de personalitate și au o percepție negativă față de utilizarea astrologiei sau grafologie în etapele de selecție. Utilizarea contactelor personale și a metodelor moderne de selecție sunt de asemenea percepute negativ. Rezultatele cercetării sunt similare cu cele raportate în studii aplicate în alte state europene, sugerând faptul că aplicanții români nu diferă foarte mult de omologii lor din vestul Europei în privința preferințelor legate de metodele de selecție. În plus, studiul arată că angajatorii români folosesc cu predominanță metode de selecție percepute în mod pozitiv de către candidați.

Cuvinte cheie: metode de selecție, România, resurse umane.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Past studies on selection methods have been conducted from the perspective of the organization and have focused on method popularity, comparing national and international usage, predictive validity, reliability, and utility. However, there has been an increasing interest in applicants and their reactions to the selection methods used on them (Chambers, 2002) mostly because they are increasingly seen as a significant and powerful 'actors' in the selection process (Nikolau and Judge, 2007). Moreover, nearly all of these studies have looked at Western Europe, and ignored East European practices. This study focuses on Romania and investigates not only the prevalence of selection methods in that country, but also job applicants' reactions to those methods. This is only the second such study to be conducted in this country.

Personnel selection methods have undergone major changes in recent decades because of technological advances and changing opinions about selection criteria. Skills shortages have been growing throughout Europe at all levels in recent years (Holbeche, 2009). Information on these matters is important for local employers and for companies planning to invest in a particular country. According to Eurostat data, at the present time, Romania has a lower unemployment rate (7.3%) than the EU28 average rate (10.8 %), as well as a negative net migration rate (-0.24) among the workforce (CIA World Factbook, 2014). Therefore, employers cannot risk engendering negative reactions among job applicants towards their selection methods as this may reduce the already limited applicant recruitment pools. Employers are encouraged to use selection methods that are both valid and favorably perceived by job applicants. Knowledge of universal and country-specific reactions is therefore particularly useful for international companies that must implement selection systems and manage the reactions of applicants in multiple countries (Ispas et al, 2010).

2. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Popularity of Selection Methods in an International Context

Many studies have investigated the popularity or prevalence of selection methods in different countries. These include both country surveys and meta-analyses based on previously published studies. These show that that CVs, interviews and references are the most popular methods, and are therefore dubbed 'the classic trio' (Levy-Leboyer, 1990) or the 'traditional triad' (Cook, 1991). Nevertheless, the results show that each country has its own particular pattern of preferences for selection methods. The popularity studies in different countries have shown contradictory results for several reasons. First, a

strong correlation has been found between the size of the companies surveyed and the range of methods used. Usually, the selection process in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) only involves simple and cheap methods such as CVs, interviews and references. Unsurprisingly, researchers of these companies have reported lower figures for the usage of the more complex, more time-consuming or more expensive methods. Second, large companies allocate substantial budgets for selection, and hence will more often use expensive assessment centers as well as personality and cognitive testing. In addition, Shackleton and Newell (1991) found that the use of methods within a country has changed over time. Finally, the selection method research data from each country was collected using different research designs and methods, and was based on widely differing samples and response rates (n = number in sample; rr = response rate), making inter-country comparisons difficult or even impossible.

Smith (1991) and Shackleton and Newell (1991; 1994) ($n_1=73$ and $n_2=166$ with $rr_1=61\%$ and $rr_2=22\%$ respectively) observed important differences between European countries in terms of the selection methods used. Assessment centers were frequently only used in the UK, Germany and Netherlands. French and Wallonian companies preferred graphology but, like German companies, they did not use references. However, their samples were rather small compared to the other studies. Smith and Abrahamsen (1992) also investigated the selection methods prevalent in Europe, but their secondary analysis of international data led them to conclude that the pattern of selection was very similar in all countries. Shackleton and Newell (1994) responded by suggesting that these authors had ignored the frequency of method use and had simply observed whether a method was in use or not.

Using a Price Waterhouse Cranfield survey ($n=15,000$, $rr=20\%$), Brewster and Hegewisch (1994), confirmed that there were major differences between countries in terms of selection methods popularity. Their results suggested that graphology was only popular in France, and that psychometric tests were rarely if ever used in Germany. Biodata was widespread in Scandinavian and Iberian countries, but less often used in Anglo-Saxon Europe. In terms of modern selection methods, Straus et al. (2001) or Emmot (2003) found that approximately 30% of all British companies used telephone interviews and webcam-based interviews. By 2010, the usage of these had risen to 50% (CIPD, 2010). About 1% of all companies started to use video CVs.

The past studies therefore suggest that selection patterns differ between countries although application forms/CVs, interviews and references are prevalent worldwide. While psychometric tests were used only in some parts of the UK, work-samples, cognitive and personality tests were popular in almost all of northern Europe. Biodata on the other hand was more often used in southern Europe, some parts of Scandinavia and Flemish Belgium. Assessment centers were widely used only by British (but not

Scottish), Dutch and German firms. Graphology was common only in the French-speaking world. Telephone interviews and videoconferences have become popular in the UK. Based on these studies, this research hypothesized that Romanian companies would opt for the 'the classic trio' of selection methods, and would therefore share the pattern of other European countries.

H1: 'The classic trio' is the most popular selection tool in Romania.

The majority of past studies of selection method popularity have been conducted in the UK. Beside the 'traditional triad', British employers have shown a preference for modern techniques such as assessment centers, personality tests and ability tests. This pattern is very similar to the Dutch one. However, in Scotland, companies tend to prefer unstructured interviews and almost never use assessment centers. French companies have also been regularly researched and all the studies have found that graphology is one of the most popular methods there, surpassing even references. Their pattern of selection method use is similar to that of Belgium and Israel. Germany is the third most researched country and has constantly been compared with the first two. In addition to CVs and interviews, German employers frequently use assessment centers, work-samples and personality testing, while rarely using references or psychometric tests. Except for their preference for unstructured interviews, Italian and Swiss companies have the same German usage profile. Scandinavian and Iberian countries have been found to share a preference for biodata, but only the former group of countries uses work-samples and GMA tests.

In Romania (and elsewhere in Eastern Europe), there is a paucity of existing research into selection methods. This is partly due to the past communist regime making it difficult to conduct, and almost impossible to publish results, in international journals; and partly to employers in post-communist countries being reluctant to reveal their HR practices. Ispas et al.'s (2010) is the only study so far, that has investigated the selection process in Romania. It examined fairness reactions to 10 selection methods based on a sample of 240 Romanian employees.

2.2 International Job Applicants' Reactions to Selection Methods

How have job applicants reacted to the different selection methods used by organizations? Over the last twenty years, studies such as those of Chambers (2002) and others, have addressed this question of what "attitudes, affect, or cognitions an individual might have about the hiring process" (Ryan and Ployhart, 2000: 566). The answer is important for several reasons. First, if selection methods are perceived as unfavorable, applicants may criticize or withdraw from the hiring process and reduce the applicant pool; they may legally challenge the company; or else choose not to re-apply or cease to remain a customer (Hausknecht et al., 2004). As the selection process usually creates the first

encounter between applicants and the employer, reactions may influence not only the applicants' decisions at the time, but also their post-encounter perceptions and attitudes. It has been shown that companies which did not pay attention to applicants' reactions, experienced important negative consequences, including smaller applicant pools and reduced public trust in the organization concerned (Ispas et al., 2010). The existence of social networking sites has increased the impact and speed with which an individual's negative hiring experience can be communicated to others. However, Elkins and Phillips (2000) observed that if a selection decision was in the candidate's favor, then the method was likely to be viewed as fair and favorable. Similarly, if the selection decision went against a candidate, the method was likely to be viewed as unfair and unfavorable.

The most used model for assessing applicants' reactions to selection methods was developed by Steiner and Gilliland (1996). It rated selection methods on the two criteria of process favorability and procedural justice. The former, which is used in the current study, refers to respondents' views concerning the effectiveness of a selection method in identifying qualified people for the job. The latter relates to their perceptions of the fairness of the method itself, and was not studied here. Researchers exploring candidates' reactions to selection methods have used different samples (job applicants in actual selection settings, employees and students) and different research designs (evaluating reactions before and/or after selection). While the majority of these studies were conducted in the USA, applicant reactions research has also been conducted in European countries which provide a comparison for this study.

Anderson, Salgado and Hülshager (2010) analyzed 38 studies published between 1996 and 2010 ($n = 8,974$) that assessed applicant reactions in 17 countries and found great similarities. They reported a three-tier clustering of overall favorability perceptions – most preferred (work-samples, interviews), favorably evaluated (CVs, cognitive tests, references, biodata, personality tests) and least preferred (integrity tests, personal contacts, graphology - except for France). Previously, Hausknecht et al. (2004) analyzed 86 samples ($n = 48,750$) and reported similar results.

There has also been a long debate concerning how modern and traditional selection methods are viewed by candidates. Kroeck and Magnusen (1997) found that traditional face-to-face interviews were preferred over webcam-based interviews. Strauss et al. (2001) ($n = 59$), Ployhart et al. (2002), Chapman et al. (2003), Anderson (2003) and Donaldson (2004) all confirmed this preference. Chan and Schmitt (1997) and Reynolds et al. (2000) observed that candidate reactions to multimedia tests were mostly favorable. Mead (2001) also reported that 80% of all respondents preferred online personality tests. Furthermore, Salgado and Moscoso (2003) found equivalence between written and online

personality tests, with a slight preference for the latter. Since very few studies on this topic have been published between 2004 and 2011, it is possible that these preferences might have changed in the recent years due to advances in technology.

Knowledge of both general trends and country-specific reactions is useful for multinational companies which implement selection systems worldwide. For this reason, a review of international research on this topic is now presented. With regard to France, Steiner and Gilliland (1996) compared the fairness reactions to various selection methods using two student samples from France and the USA. The results showed that interviews, work-samples and CVs were perceived positively in both samples but integrity tests were rated negatively. Graphology was seen more favorably in France, due to its extensive use. For Germany, Marcus (2003) studied the reactions of 213 German students. In line with previous findings, participants rated interviews, work-samples and CVs favorably, and had relatively negative reactions to personal contacts and graphology. In Greece, Nikolaou and Judge (2007) examined applicant reactions using two samples of 158 employees and 181 students ($rr = 41\%$). Interviews, CVs and work-samples were again the most favored selection methods. Personal contacts, integrity tests, and graphology received the lowest ratings. Students demonstrated more positive attitudes towards ability, personality and integrity tests than did employees.

In Iceland, Jónsdóttir and Hafsteinson (2008) used a modified Steiner Gilliland model on 239 Icelandic students. Interviews, work-samples, CVs and references were rated most positively, followed by personality and integrity tests. Least preferred were personal contacts and cognitive ability tests (CATs). The latter represents a notable difference between Iceland and other European countries. In Italy, Bertolino and Steiner (2007) examined the applicant reactions of 137 Italian students. Work-samples were the most favorably rated, followed by CVs, ability tests, interviews and personal references. Biodata and personality tests received slightly negative ratings, and integrity tests, graphology and personal contacts were perceived most negatively. In the Netherlands, Anderson and Witvliet (2008) replicated Steiner and Gilliland's work on 167 students. Results were similar to other countries from Europe and North America showing a preference for interviews, CVs, work-samples and biodata. The least popular methods were graphology, integrity tests, personality tests and references, in ascending order.

In Romania, Ispas et al. (2010) examined the reactions of 240 employees ($rr = 60\%$) finding that they rated work-samples, interviews, ability tests and CVs favorably. In contrast, the use of the technique of graphology, and the practice of selecting candidates on the basis of their ethnic background or through personal contacts, was viewed negatively. Moscoso and Salgado (2004) examined differences in

applicant reactions in Spain (n=125) and Portugal (n=104). Interviews, CVs and work-samples were rated most favorably; and integrity tests and graphology were perceived most negatively in both countries. A few, slight variations in rankings were noticed here, with ability tests and personality tests being rated more positively than elsewhere, but the general pattern remained remarkably similar. In Turkey, Bilgic and Acarlar (2010) used a simplified version of the Steiner and Gilliland model assessing only three selection methods. The 154 Turkish students that they studied ($rr = 84\%$) judged interviews most favorably.

While there are many British studies into selection method popularity, those on applicants' reactions to selection methods are limited. In 2004, Donaldson (n =154; $rr = 37\%$) found significant differences between recruiter and student reactions, with recruiters generally rating all methods positively except for unstructured interviews; and students rating structured interviews and in-tray tests most favorably, and online testing and telephone interviews least favorably. In her second study, Donaldson found negative reactions towards graphology. Patterson et al. (2011) (n = 23,855; $rr = 59\%$) assessed candidate reactions to selection practices in postgraduate medical training and found medical assessment centers to be the most favored method.

Philips and Gully (2002) tested applicants' reactions using two American and Singaporean samples. In both countries, interviews, work-samples and CVs were rated most positively, while personality tests and graphology were rated most negatively. Similar results were obtained by Anderson and Witvliet (2008). All these studies show that applicants' reactions to selection methods are very similar. In every country, participants tended to prefer CVs, interviews and work-samples; and psychometric tests (except for integrity tests) were also perceived favorably. On the other hand, integrity tests, personal contacts and graphology (except for the French sample) were perceived negatively.

In their Romanian study reported earlier, Ispas et al. (2010) focused only on the traditional selection methods proposed by Steiner and Gilliland in 1996. Therefore, there is a gap in the research because their sample did not include job-seekers or students and modern selection methods were not evaluated. Based on all these facts, this study hypothesized that the Romanian respondents would rate selection methods in a similar manner. In addition, it hypothesized that the current sample would prefer modern selection methods over traditional ones.

H2: Respondents rate interviews, CVs and work-sample favorably.

H3: Respondents rate graphology, personal contacts and integrity tests unfavorably.

H4: Respondents tend to favor modern selection methods.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

A total of 292 questionnaires were sent in 2011 to both employees and job-seekers using the databases of a human resource recruitment and selection company. Respondents received the questionnaire either electronically or as a hard copy, along with instructions on how to return them anonymously. No financial compensation was given. A total of 142 replies were received (response rate = 48.6 %).consisting of 64 job-seekers and 78 full-time employees. The majority of the sample was female (63%), and 71% were within the 18 and 26 year age range. Half of the respondents had between 0 and 3 years of professional work experience; 20% had no experience; and 5% had over 10 years of experience. While 53% of all respondents had not applied for more than two jobs in the past two years, 12% had made more than 51 applications. Most answers were gathered from the northern and the western parts of Romania and from Bucharest. In the central and southern areas of the country, the response rate was lower.

3.2 Procedure

This study used a cross-sectional self-reported survey. This type of design primarily describes a phenomenon or documents its characteristics. Because it is cross-sectional, data is collected at one point in time from a sample selected to represent a significant population. The survey was chosen not only to facilitate information gathering and hypothesis testing, but also because most previous studies used this method to produce coefficients and ratings that could be generalized at a country level thereby permitting comparisons. The data collection method used in this survey involved a closed-question, self-administered postal questionnaire. It was judged that the research questions were sufficiently precise and unambiguous that respondents would not require the presence of an interviewer. This decision was also influenced by Steiner and Gilliland's (1996) recommendation that all studies assessing selection method prevalence and process favorability should use closed-question questionnaires in order to facilitate comparisons.

The survey used a modified version of the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) model. The number of selection methods investigated was increased from 10 to 21 (modern techniques, assessment centers, and structured and unstructured interviews were some of the methods added). The questionnaire was translated into Romanian by a native Romanian speaker. The translation was verified by a second independent native Romanian speaker. Based on the recommendations given by Steiner and Gilliland, a description of each selection method was attached to the questionnaire. The first draft of the

questionnaire was piloted on ten respondents. Based on the feedback received, the scoring for the last three questions was changed from a 7-point to a 5-point Likert scale, due to the limitations of the initial one. Respondents suggested that their answers could be more accurate if they had more than three intermediary answers. They explained that they wanted to give a high mark for CVs. However, they did not want to give a 5 – the maximum, but at the same time, they judged 4 to be too low. They requested an additional option between the medium choice–3 and the minimum / maximum choice of one out of 5.

3.3 Measures

The first items of the questionnaire were related to sex, age, employment status, professional experience and the number of jobs the respondent had applied for in the past two years. A question asked participants to indicate whether or not they had experienced different selection methods in the past. Finally, process favorability (i.e. how much they liked the selection method) was assessed by asking participants to rate each selection method in terms of effectiveness and fairness, using a 5-point Likert scale (from 1='strongly disagree' to 5='strongly agree').

3.4 Data Interpretation

The data collected was analyzed using a statistics software program. Based on the results of the statistical frequency distributions, the hypotheses were supported or rejected. In addition, parametric and non-parametric tests were used to present the correlations between variables and mean comparisons. Firstly, the study checked the consistency of each process favorability item, by calculating the Cronbach alpha coefficients. Afterwards, the frequency distributions were used for all the items of the survey in order to find the actual number of observations and the percentage falling within each range. For the scale items, the study used the Friedman test (non-parametric) in order to compare ratings of process favorability across the selection methods used. Furthermore, using the Independent-Samples T-test, the study looked for any correlations between responses and sex or employment status. Finally, in order to identify differences in preferences between employees and job-seekers, the study followed Moscoso and Salgado's (2004) guidelines and used the Cohen d effect-size measure.

4. RESULTS

The results are reported in relation to each of the four hypotheses being tested in turn.

H1: 'The classic trio' is the most popular selection tool in Romania'.

This hypothesis proposed that in Romania, CVs, interviews and references - the so-called 'classic trio' would be the most popular selection tools. Table 2 shows the results and compares them those

reported in the literature review. In contrast to the previous Romanian study, the results show that these three techniques are widely used in Romania and therefore hypothesis H1 was supported (see Annex I). CVs were the most common method (90.8%), followed by ability tests (72.5%), structured and unstructured interviews (69.7% and 67.6% respectively), personality testing (64.1%) and references (62.7%).

The study also examined possible differences in responses between employees and job-seekers. Using on the Pearson's chi-square test, the study found that answers were mostly not related to the employment status. Company employees gave similar answers to job-seekers. The only significant influences were those observed in relation to ability tests, telephone and unstructured interviews and references (more employees were tested with these methods, compared to job-seekers, $p < .05$). Nevertheless, the Phi and Cramer's V tests showed that the effect was only medium ($V < .30$). In addition, there were no correlations with sex, except for numerical testing (56.2% males were tested with this method compared to only 38.2% females) and references (73.6% males vs. 56.2% females).

H2: Respondents rate interviews, CVs and work-sample favorably.

The results of two process favorability questions were averaged together to obtain a single process favorability index. The Cronbach α coefficient for this index, across all participants and all selection methods was .922 suggesting a relatively high internal consistency. However, references ($\alpha = .654$) and especially ability tests ($\alpha = .501$) had lower values than the level accepted by researchers for reliability coefficients (.700). While the former has a marginal internal consistency, the latter might be considered unacceptable by some researchers, due to its poor reliability. After creating the index, the results were transformed from a 5-point Likert to a 7-point Likert scale, based on the method suggested by Dawes (2008). This re-scaling procedure was suggested after piloting the survey but was also necessary in order to compare the current results with those obtained from previous studies which used a 7-point scale. The results are presented in Table 3.

The one-way ANOVA tests showed that ratings differed across the 21 selection methods ($\chi^2 = 134.512$, $df = 20$, $p < .01$). Work-samples, interviews and CVs were found to be the four most favored selection methods (See Annex II). Therefore, hypothesis H2 was supported. However, it should be noted that while structured interviews were among the top four methods used, the unstructured interviews were in the top eight. Comparing job-seekers' preferences for selection methods with those of the employee group, it was found that the former favored the top three ranked methods (CVs, ability tests, structured/unstructured interviews); whereas the latter, favored these same three methods, but in a

slightly different preference order (ability tests CVs, personality tests, structured/unstructured interviews).

H3: Respondents rate graphology, personal contacts and integrity tests negatively.

Although personal contacts and graphology were the most negatively perceived methods, integrity tests were rated somewhat positively (just below psychometric tests and assessment centers). Therefore, hypothesis H3 was rejected. While this was the case for job-seekers, employees favored integrity tests even more than they favored unstructured interviews.

H4: Respondents tend to favor modern selection methods.

Online testing, telephone interviews and webcam-based interviews (defined as modern selection methods) were found to be three of the most unfavored methods. Only graphology, personal contacts and astrology were rated more negatively. This response was similar for both employees and job-seekers. As a result, hypothesis H4 was rejected. Mean comparisons were also carried out (using the Independent-Samples T test) in order to explore possible correlations between process favorability answers and sex or employment status of respondents. For the former, the study found statistically significant results for two of the 21 selection methods, while for the latter there were only three cases. More specifically, females tended to perceive biodata ($F=.440$, $t=2.337$ ($n=111$), $p<.05$) and assessment centers ($F=1.022$, $t=2.759$ ($n=119$), $p<.01$) more positively than males. In the second case, employees tended to perceive unstructured interviews ($F=2.268$, $t=2.273$ ($N=126$), $p<.05$) and ability tests ($F=2.910$, $t=2.11$ ($n=126$), $p<.05$) more positively and biodata ($F=.337$, $t=-2.217$ ($n=111$), $p<.05$) more negatively than job-seekers. To confirm the small differences between employees and job-seekers, the study followed Moscoso and Salgado's (2004) guidelines and investigated the effect sizes of these differences using the Cohen's d effect-size measure. In most cases, the differences were small ($.02<d<.41$) according to Cohen's (1977) rule with biodata ($d=.417$, $r=.204$) and unstructured interviews ($d=.404$, $r=.198$) demonstrating the largest differences between employees and job-seekers. For telephone interviews ($d=.020$, $r=.010$), verbal testing ($d=.011$, $r=.01$) and graphology ($d=.021$, $r=.010$) differences were found to be minimal.

5. DISCUSSION

This paper reports the prevalence of, and the applicant reactions, to job selection methods. The first hypothesis investigated the prevalence of selection methods in Romania. The results showed that 'the classic trio' was the most popular combination, in line with other European countries. The Romanian results, when compared with those of much researched west European countries show similarities and

differences. Compared to France (Shackleton and Newell, 1994), graphology was hardly used; (52.0% vs. 4.2%); assessment centers were half as popular (59% vs. 34%); but references were much more prevalent (39% vs. 63%). When compared to other countries, the Romanian selection practices were closest to the German and Italian models. The only major difference was the Romanian preference for personality tests, which was lower in Germany. It should be noted though that previous international research studies in this field had investigated fewer selection methods (typically only 9-10) and had gathered data from companies rather than from the applicants themselves (employees / job-seekers).

In terms of selection methods prevalence, the results differed from those obtained by Ispas et al (2010) - the other Romanian study. Of all the selection methods analyzed, only graphology and biodata had similar figures. However, for CVs (91% vs. 38%), interviews (69% vs. 39%) and ability tests (73% vs. 27%), there were significant differences between the samples. This can be explained by the fact that Ispas et al (2010) only used blue-collar employees and because the average age of their sample was higher. Nevertheless, when the data was filtered to obtain a similar 26-60 year-old employee sample, the results showed even greater differences (74% for interviews, 97% for CVs and 81% for ability tests). The results show that, compared to employees, the job-seekers were selected more often using modern techniques than traditional ones. In terms of the prevalence of selection methods, the results showed that online testing (37%) and webcam-based interviews (18%) were still not widely used in Romania. Nevertheless, 42% of all job-seekers said that they were evaluated, at least once, through online tests. The results also show that psychometric tests and assessment centers are not common in Romania. However, many of the components of the latter are being widely used (e.g. personality tests, 64%, verbal, numerical and abstract testing, 38-50%).

The next three hypotheses were related to process favorability. In contrast to the prevalence of selection methods, these results showed a significant similarity to the other Romanian study. The only differences were that the participants from the current sample rated biodata more negatively (4.30 vs. 5.23) and graphology more positively (2.63 vs. 1.33). Due to the similarities of the two studies, results for the more commonly used selection methods can be generalized at a country level. Therefore, in terms of process favorability, it can be suggested that Romanians tend to rate work-samples, ability tests, structured interviews, personality tests and references most positively, and personal contacts and graphology most negatively. Nevertheless, for the other 11 selection methods, further research needs to be undertaken in order to identify a trend. The results also showed that all modern selection techniques (telephone interviews, webcam-based interviews and online testing) were perceived rather negatively by respondents. Only personal contacts were favored less. This is surprising given that 71% of all respondents were under 26 years old.

The results of this study of selection methods in Romanian can be compared with those obtained by previous researchers in other countries. Several notable differences emerge. Firstly, Romanians provided significantly higher process favorability ratings for all methods relative to their counterparts in the other countries. Anderson, Salgado and Hülshager (2010) in their meta-analysis of 38 independent samples gathered from 17 countries that assessed applicant reactions found lower overall favorability for all 10 methods. While differences were small with respect to personal contacts, graphology and biodata, the current Romanian sample rated ability, personality and integrity tests much higher. For example, the third hypothesis (H3), that, *Respondents rate graphology, personal contacts and integrity tests negatively* was rejected because integrity tests were rated much more positively in Romania than in any other country (4.77 vs. 3.69). A comparison of these Romanian results with those from other countries, as well as the results concerning the prevalence of methods, suggest that Romanian HR practices are most similar to those of Germany (Marcus, 2003). There were also similarities to the Greek, Portuguese and Dutch samples. The French results however, were very different. In terms of rankings, there were significant differences between Romania and all other countries. The 2010 meta-analysis and the Dutch study had the most similar rankings. The Portuguese rankings of selection method popularity were totally different from the Romanian ones.

6. RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Implications

The current findings have important implications for companies operating in Romania and for those that are planning to invest in the country. First, potential employers should not be concerned that Romanian job candidates will react substantially differently to the most frequently used selection methods than job applicants from other European countries. The results show that applicants' reactions in Romania vary only marginally from the overall favorability pattern. The study also has implications for future research. In order to obtain a favorable reaction from candidates to the selection process, and therefore to the organization itself, employers should select candidates using work-samples, ability tests, interviews and CVs. Additionally, they should avoid using modern techniques (e.g. telephone interviews, webcam-based interviews and online testing), personal contacts and graphology. These conclusions do not represent a problem for Romanian organizations as the findings show that while the favored selection methods are already in widespread use in the country, the unfavored ones are rarely used. The only exception to this generalization concerns the work-samples tests which appear to be under-utilized (46.1%) although they were found to be amongst the most favored of all the 21 analyzed methods. The findings concerning ability, personality and psychometric tests are encouraging because these selection

methods have a high predictive validity. On the other hand, graphology and personal contacts are methods that are rarely used in Romanian organizations; are perceived unfavorably by candidates, and have low validity scores. Future researchers might usefully assess selection methods relevance from an organizational perspective.

6.2 Recommendations

In order to elicit a favorable reaction from applicants to the selection process, and to by extension, to the recruiting company itself, all non-native employers in the country should use those selection methods that Romanian candidates perceive to be fair and useful. As in other European countries, these methods include work-samples, ability tests, interviews and CVs. In addition, these companies should use assessment centers and psychological tests more often because candidates rate these methods positively. On the other hand, French and Flemish companies especially should be careful if they plan to use graphology in Romania, because applicants perceived this method negatively. In addition, all employers should try to avoid personal contacts and delay the introduction of modern techniques in the selection process. These results are very similar to those obtained in the previous Romanian study (Ispas et al., 2010) that assessed applicant reactions to selection methods, and are also comparable to the ones reported by Anderson, Salgado and Hülshager (2010) in their meta-analysis based on studies from 17 countries. Therefore, until a further study suggests otherwise, it can be argued that this is the current trend in Romania. In conclusion, this study carried out in Romania demonstrated that cross-cultural differences related to applicant reactions to selection methods are very small between European countries. It found that Romanian employers use selection methods that are both positively perceived and which are valid.

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ANNEX I

TABLE 1. SELECTION METHODS PREVALENCE IN DIFFERENT EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

	Combined sample	Employees	Job Seekers	RO* 2010	UK 2010	SWISS 2010	IT* 2007	SCOT** 1999	FR** 1994	DE*** 1994
CVs	90.8%	92.3%	89.1%	38.3%		99.6%	61.9%	4.75		
Ability tests	72.5%	83.3%	59.4%	27.1%	39.0%	18.6%	49.6%	1.34	69.9%	
Structured interviews	69.7%	73.1%	65.6%	38.8%*	69.4%	99.4%	69.1%*	3.91	100%*	3.91
Unstructured interviews	67.6%	79.5%	53.1%		41.8%	71.3%				
Personality tests	64.1%	69.2%	57.8%	17.5%	25.6%	32.0%	40.3%	1.19	64.4%	1.30
References	62.7%	74.4%	48.4%	47.5%	71.5%	89.1%	54.7%	4.17	39.0%	4.65
Application forms	60.6%	61.5%	59.4%		59.6%			1.91	98.0%	4.77
Telephone interviews	52.8%	62.8%	40.6%					1.91		
Verbal testing	50.0%	52.6%	46.9%		28.2%					
Work-samples	46.1%	47.4%	44.4%	60.8%	19.3%	23.5%	46.8%	2.62		
Numerical testing	45.1%	51.3%	37.5%		28.2%					
Biodata	40.8%	47.4%	32.8%	46.7%	27.3%	12.7%	40.3%		19.1%	1.07
Psychometric tests	38.7%	37.2%	40.2%						50.0%	1.35
Abstract testing	38.0%	44.9%	29.7%							
Online tests	37.3%	33.3%	42.2%							
Assessment centers	34.0%	39.7%	27.0%		17.3%	26.3%		1.00	59.0%	1.87
Integrity tests	30.3%	34.6%	25.0%	13.3%			16.5%			
Webcam-based Interviews	18.3%	14.1%	23.4%							
Personal contacts	7.3%	9.3%	5.5%	14.6%			46.8%	2.36		
Graphology	4.2%	5.1%	3.1%	4.6%	2.0%	15.8%	5.0%		52.0%	1.06
Astrology	1.4%	1.3%	1.6%							1.00

*The study evaluated fairness reactions and interviews were not differentiated in structured or unstructured;

**Companies used this method at least once;

***Mean scores of usage from 1 (not used) to 5 (always used)

ANNEX II

TABLE 2. MEAN PROCESS FAVORABILITY RATINGS FOR SELECTION METHODS BY COUNTRY

	N	α	Mean	Standard Deviation Combined	Standard Deviation Employees	Standard Deviation Job-Seekers	2010 Meta- analysis***	RO 2010 N=240	TR** 2010 N=154	NED 2008 N=167	IT 2007 N=139	GR 2007 N=339	ES 2004 N=125	PT 2004 N=104	DE 2003 N=213	FR 1996 N=117
Work Samples	128	.722	6.01	1.24	5.89 (1.33)	6.16 (1.13)	5.38 (.55)	6.28 (1.04)		5.10 (1.11)	5.15 (1.29)	4.80 (1.39)	4.93 (1.51)	4.90 (1.44)	5.34 (1.20)	5.26 (1.19)
Ability Tests	126	.501	5.78	1.15	5.98 (1.08)	5.55 (1.20)	4.59 (.36)	5.68 (1.58)		4.15 (1.35)	4.43 (1.43)	4.34 (1.32)	4.15 (1.18)	4.13 (1.59)	4.10 (1.17)	4.21 (1.36)
Structured Interviews	128	.759	5.47	1.38	5.32 (1.42)	5.65 (1.33)	5.22* (.11)	5.75* (1.52)	5.04* (1.34)	5.08* (1.11)	4.33* (1.27)	5.32* (1.20)	4.99* (1.08)	5.35* (1.30)	5.67* (.99)	4.56* (1.19)
CVs	137	.727	5.27	1.47	5.14 (1.54)	5.42 (1.38)	4.97 (.00)	5.60 (1.59)		4.68 (1.05)	4.50 (1.30)	4.73 (1.25)	4.90 (1.18)	5.18 (1.33)	4.85 (1.13)	4.54 (1.19)
Personality Tests	126	.762	5.19	1.34	5.26 (1.34)	5.11 (1.36)	4.08 (.27)	5.27 (1.93)	3.86 (1.37)	4.42 (1.13)	3.77 (1.36)	4.17 (1.37)	4.05 (1.08)	4.13 (1.32)	4.18 (1.09)	3.96 (1.35)
Verbal Testing	121	.791	5.02	1.40	5.04 (1.35)	5.01 (1.47)										
References	131	.654	5.01	1.50	5.04 (1.46)	4.98 (1.55)	4.36 (.20)	5.33 (1.65)		4.34 (1.25)	4.25 (1.23)	3.86 (1.39)	3.54 (1.49)	3.94 (1.49)	4.91 (1.21)	4.12 (1.10)
Unstructured Interviews	126	.756	4.98	1.60	5.29 (1.37)	4.65 (1.77)										
Assessment Centers	119	.707	4.95	1.50	4.89 (1.55)	5.03 (1.47)										
Psychometric Tests	121	.815	4.95	1.48	5.03 (1.41)	4.86 (1.58)										
Numerical Testing	119	.768	4.81	1.32	4.88 (1.26)	4.73 (1.41)										
Integrity Tests	115	.698	4.77	1.46	4.82 (1.40)	4.72 (1.56)	3.69 (.36)	5.11 (2.01)		3.26 (1.43)	3.07 (1.48)	3.52 (1.47)	3.22 (1.36)	3.85 (1.57)	3.64 (1.28)	2.54 (1.24)
Abstract Testing	111	.733	4.34	1.50	4.44 (1.41)	4.21 (1.62)										
Application Forms	127	.702	4.32	1.44	4.28 (1.45)	4.37 (1.44)										
Biodata	111	.780	4.30	1.63	3.99 (1.54)	4.66 (1.67)	4.28 (.28)	5.32 (1.72)		4.24 (1.12)	3.72 (1.35)	4.23 (1.18)	3.90 (1.23)	3.99 (1.29)	3.20 (1.27)	3.91 (1.31)
Webcam-based Interviews	116	.812	3.76	1.44	3.55 (1.35)	4.00 (1.52)										
Telephone Interviews	130	.706	3.41	1.43	3.40 (1.53)	3.43 (1.33)										
Online Testing	117	.767	3.33	1.56	3.23 (1.48)	3.45 (1.65)										
Personal Contacts	25	.852	2.71	1.77	2.85 (1.83)	2.50 (1.76)	2.59 (.25)	3.00 (1.96)		3.04 (1.37)	2.99 (1.82)	3.35 (1.58)	2.22 (1.32)	2.80 (1.84)	2.62 (1.51)	2.92 (1.67)
Graphology	102	.780	2.63	1.38	2.65 (1.34)	2.62 (1.43)	2.33 (.18)	1.33 (.83)		1.95 (1.06)	2.27 (1.39)	2.04 (1.28)	2.09 (1.20)	2.89 (1.75)	1.90 (1.10)	3.23 (1.62)
Astrology	106	.886	1.75	1.20	1.69 (1.13)	1.82 (1.29)										

*interviews were differentiated in structured or unstructured;

**the sample was converted from a 7 point scale;

***meta-analysis into reaction generalization over 17 countries (Anderson, Salgado and Hülsheger, 2010)