

Improving the Use of Personality Questionnaires in Selection: How Information and Direct Experience Shape Applicant Acceptance

Received 09/11/2025

Review began 09/15/2025

Review ended 11/24/2025

Published 12/31/2025

© Copyright 2025

Weinert. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License CC-BY 4.0., which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.7759/s44404-025-10287-8>

Stephan Weinert ¹

1. Marketing and HRM, University of Applied Sciences Ludwigshafen, Ludwigshafen, DEU

Corresponding author: Stephan Weinert, stephan.weinert@hwg-lu.de

Abstract

Personality questionnaires are established predictors of job-relevant outcomes, yet their use in personnel selection remains limited, often due to concerns about applicant acceptance. This study examines whether structured information and direct test experience improve acceptance and whether their effects are complementary. Using an extended Solomon design with seven randomized groups, participants received either a standardized information reader, completed a validated personality inventory, both, or neither; acceptance was measured before and after the interventions.

Prior exposure to personality tests did not relate to baseline acceptance. Providing clear, evidence-based information increased acceptance, and the combination of information with direct test experience produced the strongest gains. Test experience on its own did not meaningfully change acceptance.

These results suggest that acceptance depends not only on psychometric quality but on how assessments are framed and experienced. Practically, organizations can improve applicant reactions by pairing validated instruments with concise, job-linked explanations provided before administration. Limitations include the use of a student sample, focus on a single instrument, and the absence of measured mediators such as trust or perceived face validity. Future research should extend to applicant populations, multiple test formats, and longitudinal designs to clarify mechanisms and downstream outcomes.

Categories: Strategic Human Resource Management, Organisational Behavior

Keywords: applicant reactions, personality questionnaires, personnel selection, test acceptance, solomon plan

Introduction

Organizations worldwide face unprecedented challenges in talent acquisition and development, with 87% of executives reporting significant skill gaps (McKinsey and Company, 2020). To address these challenges, scientifically grounded assessment methods are essential. However, a persistent gap exists between research-demonstrated validity and practical implementation, particularly for psychometric tools including personality questionnaires. Such methods are often not implemented in practice - whether justifiably or not - due to concerns about their acceptance (Arnoneit et al., 2020) (Schuler et al., 2007). This is particularly true for psychometric tools, including personality questionnaires. Their predictive value for personnel selection and development is well established through extensive meta-analytical evidence (Barrick and Mount, 1991) (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998), with more recent research confirming that personality measures, especially the Big Five factors and integrity scales, provide incremental predictive validity beyond traditional selection methods for various organizational outcomes including job performance and employee retention (Salgado, 1997). Yet the transfer of this robust scientific evidence into organizational practice remains limited, a phenomenon widely described as the scientist-practitioner gap (Anderson et al., 2001) (Rynes et al., 2002).

Most prior research on applicant reactions to selection methods has focused on the perspective of HR professionals, who ultimately decide whether such tools are adopted (Prochazka et al., 2022) (Stone et al., 2013). A consistent finding is that practitioners often refrain from using personality questionnaires because they anticipate negative reactions among applicants, such as withdrawal from the process or negative word-of-mouth, which could undermine employer attractiveness and brand reputation (Hausknecht et al., 2004). However, (Marcus, 2003) demonstrated that such managerial concerns often diverge substantially from the actual evaluations of applicants who experience these procedures firsthand. Recent experimental evidence (Bauer et al., 2001) further suggests that applicant reactions to personality questionnaires are significantly influenced by design features such as response format, time constraints, and the provision of contextual information, indicating that acceptance can be enhanced through thoughtful test administration.

Research on applicant reactions has identified several key factors that influence acceptance of selection procedures, including perceived job relatedness, fairness, and the opportunity to demonstrate one's abilities (Bauer et al., 2001) (Gilliland, 1993). For personality questionnaires specifically, studies have shown that providing clear explanations of the test's purpose and relevance to job performance can improve applicant perceptions (Truxillo et al., 2002). Additionally, giving applicants direct experience with the assessment process, rather than merely describing it, has been found to reduce anxiety and improve acceptance rates across various selection methods (Bauer et al., 2001) (Truxillo et al., 2002).

How to cite this article

Weinert S (December 31, 2025) Improving the Use of Personality Questionnaires in Selection: How Information and Direct Experience Shape Applicant Acceptance. Cureus J Bus Econ 2 : es44404-025-10287-8. DOI <https://doi.org/10.7759/s44404-025-10287-8>

If organizations wish to benefit from the added value of scientifically validated instruments, it is essential to identify how applicant acceptance can be strengthened. This article therefore focuses specifically on personality questionnaires, as the discrepancy between their empirically demonstrated utility and their limited use and acceptance in practice is particularly striking (Morgeson et al., 2007). Moreover, the study adopts a national lens on Germany, where cross-cultural research suggests that cultural factors may influence both the acceptance and effectiveness of personality-based selection methods (Salgado and Anderson, 2003). While comprehensive data on the prevalence of psychometric testing in Germany remains limited, available evidence suggests that German organizations may be more cautious in adopting personality assessments compared to their international counterparts, potentially due to cultural preferences for more traditional selection methods and concerns about privacy and fairness (König et al., 2010).

Against this backdrop, the present study investigates how applicant acceptance of personality questionnaires in Germany can be enhanced, with a particular focus on the role of providing applicants with contextual information and giving them direct test experience. Drawing in particular on organizational justice theory (Gilliland, 1993) (Gilliland, 1994) (Steiner and Gilliland, 2001), we hypothesize that both informational interventions and experiential exposure will positively influence applicant perceptions and acceptance of personality-based selection procedures.

The article proceeds as follows: First, the discrepancy between the demonstrated utility of personality questionnaires and their relatively limited use in practice is outlined in greater detail. We then review the state of research on applicant acceptance and its determinants, with particular attention to the German context, before presenting the empirical study. Finally, the findings are critically discussed, with attention to practical implications and directions for future research.

Literature review

Prevalence of Personality Questionnaires

Numerous studies have examined the use of selection instruments in Germany (Arnoneit et al., 2020) (König et al., 2010) (Schuler et al., 2007). Particularly noteworthy is the longitudinal trend study by (Arnoneit et al., 2020), which documents the use of selection methods in Germany across four phases from 1985 to the present. This allows for both trend analysis and a differentiated account of the prevalence of different assessment procedures. The study finds that personality questionnaires are applied by only around 21% of organizations, far less than application document analyses, interviews, reference checks, assessment centers, or work samples. Online formats are slightly more common (23.6%) compared to traditional paper-and-pencil versions (19.3%). In terms of target groups, personality questionnaires are used almost exclusively with middle and upper management candidates (Arnoneit et al., 2020).

These findings align with earlier German research documenting the limited adoption of psychometric assessments. (Schuler et al., 2007) reported similar usage rates for personality questionnaires (18% of surveyed organizations) and identified a substantial gap between scientific evidence and practical application. (König et al., 2010) provided insight into this phenomenon by demonstrating that German HR managers perceive personality tests as less acceptable and useful than other selection methods, which may explain their limited adoption.

Other studies corroborate this relatively low prevalence. (Benit and Soellner, 2013) report that personality questionnaires are used far less frequently than cognitive ability tests in both external and internal selections. Specifically, intelligence tests are employed in 33.6% of external and 15.5% of internal selection processes, while personality questionnaires are applied in only 20.7% and 12.1% of cases, respectively. In contrast, within personnel development, personality questionnaires are more widely used than intelligence tests (19.8% vs. 13.8%) (Benit and Soellner, 2013).

This differential usage pattern may reflect the distinct objectives of selection versus development contexts. While selection focuses primarily on predictive validity, personality questionnaires in development settings are often used for self-awareness and potential assessment (Reynolds et al., 2021). Research by (Krumm et al., 2013) suggests that acceptance of personality questionnaires is higher in developmental than in selection contexts, which may account for their more frequent use in personnel development.

It is also important to consider international comparisons. While personality questionnaires remain underutilized in Germany, they are much more widespread elsewhere. The comprehensive international study by (Ryan et al., 1999) reveals substantial cross-national differences in psychometric test usage. In France, Belgium, and the United Kingdom, between 21% and 50% of organizations use personality questionnaires, while in Spain, adoption rates range from 51% to 80%.

These international differences have been further documented and explained by subsequent research. (Salgado and Anderson, 2003) found that southern European countries show higher acceptance of personality testing than northern and central European nations. Similar patterns have been observed in Asian contexts, where personality tests are more frequently used than in Germany (Huo et al., 2002). These cultural differences may stem from various factors, including legal frameworks, cultural values

regarding privacy, and different traditions in personnel selection (Steiner and Gilliland, 2001).

Acceptance of Personality Questionnaire

A study by (Nachtwei and Schermuly, 2006), for example, found that HR professionals frequently express reservations toward psychometric assessments, claiming that they lack realism or can easily be "faked". These concerns about response distortion reflect broader anxieties about personality testing validity, despite empirical evidence suggesting that faking concerns may be overstated (Ones and Viswesvaran, 1998) (Tett and Simonet, 2011). Research by (McFarland, 2003) demonstrated that warnings about embedded social desirability scales can actually reduce faking behavior without harming applicant reactions, suggesting that transparency about test construction may address both measurement and acceptance concerns simultaneously.

These prejudices appear particularly pronounced among practitioners who do not use such tools themselves and thus judge them largely "by hearsay." Similar results are reported by (Armoneit et al., 2020) who found that acceptance ratings - both for paper-pencil and online personality questionnaires - tend to be more negative among non-users than among users. This pattern aligns with research on the mere exposure effect and familiarity-liking relationships in social psychology (Bornstein, 1989) (Zajonc, 1968).

A key reason for such skepticism may be the limited dissemination of scientific evidence on the predictive validity of psychometric instruments within organizational practice. A study by (Benit and Soellner, 2013) provides evidence of substantial knowledge deficits in HR departments. This finding is consistent with broader research on the scientist-practitioner gap in personnel selection, which demonstrates that practitioners often lack awareness of current validity evidence (Anderson et al., 2001) (Rynes et al., 2002).

Although such findings are informative, they remain restricted to the perspective of HR decision-makers. To comprehensively understand the use of personality questionnaires, it is equally important to consider the views of applicants who are asked to complete them. Research on applicant reactions has consistently shown that personal experience with selection instruments tends to increase acceptance (Hausknecht et al., 2004). Prior studies indicate that such experience effects occur across various selection methods (Armoneit et al., 2020) (Schuler et al., 1993).

However, this effect cannot be assumed for personality questionnaires across the board, given the vast number of instruments of widely varying quality (Sarges and Wottawa, 2001). The quality and administration context of personality assessments can significantly influence applicant perceptions. For instance, (Wood et al., 2022) found that applicant contexts produce more socially desirable responding and reduced self-other correlations, suggesting that test-taking context substantially affects both measurement properties and potentially applicant experiences. Consequently, prior experience may also result in negative perceptions, particularly if applicants have encountered poorly constructed or inappropriately administered instruments.

The direction of experience effects may also depend on individual differences in test-taking ability and motivation. A study by (Geiger et al., 2018) demonstrated that faking ability is positively predicted by crystallized and general cognitive abilities, suggesting that cognitive factors moderate how individuals respond to and perceive personality assessments. This research indicates that experience effects may be heterogeneous across applicant populations.

Based on this reasoning, and given the mixed theoretical predictions about experience effects, Hypothesis 1 is formulated in a non-directional form:

H1: The number of personality questionnaires previously completed influences participants' acceptance ratings in the pretest.

The organizational justice framework suggests that providing clear explanations about selection procedures enhances perceived procedural fairness (Gilliland, 1993). (Marcus, 2003) demonstrated that prejudice toward assessment methods can be reduced through targeted information and structured engagement with the tools. This finding is consistent with broader research showing that explanations about selection procedures can improve applicant reactions, particularly among unsuccessful candidates (Gilliland, 1993).

Empirical research supports the effectiveness of information provision in selection contexts. A study (Truxillo et al., 2002) found that providing explanations about the job-relatedness of selection procedures improved applicant perceptions and organizational attractiveness ratings. Similarly, (Bauer et al., 2001) demonstrated that procedural justice perceptions mediate the relationship between selection system characteristics and applicant outcomes, suggesting that information that enhances perceived fairness should improve acceptance.

Specific to personality testing, research by (McFarland, 2003) showed that providing warnings about embedded validity scales reduced socially desirable responding without harming procedural justice perceptions or other applicant reactions. This suggests that transparent communication about personality assessment procedures can simultaneously improve measurement quality and maintain or enhance

applicant acceptance.

Building on this insight and the organizational justice framework, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Providing participants with high-quality information about the use of personality questionnaires has a positive effect on their acceptance ratings.

In addition to information provision, direct experience with a validated personality measure may also foster acceptance through multiple mechanisms. From a procedural justice perspective, completing a well-constructed assessment provides applicants with an "opportunity to perform" (Gilliland, 1993), which is a key component of perceived fairness. The experience of engaging with a professional, job-relevant instrument may also enhance perceptions of organizational competence and selection system quality.

In a study by (Beermann et al., 2013), participants were asked to complete the ITBPESA personality inventory, after which acceptance was assessed and found to be highly positive overall. This finding suggests that direct experience with high-quality instruments can generate favorable reactions. Similarly, research on test-taking motivation indicates that providing participants with meaningful assessment experiences can enhance engagement and positive attitudes toward the selection process (Arvey et al., 1990).

However, the quality of the assessment experience is crucial. Research shows that test-taking motivation and reactions are influenced by the perceived relevance and professional quality of assessments (Hausknecht et al., 2004). This suggests that only high-quality personality questionnaires are likely to produce positive experience effects. Accordingly, the third hypothesis states:

H3: Completing a high-quality personality questionnaire has a positive effect on participants' acceptance ratings.

Research Method

Research design

To empirically test the hypotheses, the study employed and extended a Solomon four-group design (Solomon, 1949) (Solomon and Lessac, 1968). This design builds on the classical pretest-posttest framework and allows researchers to control for threats to internal validity, particularly practice and pretest effects (Ryals and Wilson, 2005). Although resource-intensive - since it requires the formation of multiple experimental and control groups with comparable sample sizes - the Solomon plan is widely regarded as the only design capable of controlling for all threats to internal validity (Eifler, 2022). The specific design of the present study is illustrated in Table 1.

Group	Pretest Acceptance	Treatment 1: Information	Treatment 2: Personality Questionnaire	Posttest Acceptance
EG 1 (R)	x	x	x	x
EG 2 (R)	x	x		x
EG 3 (R)	x		x	x
CG 1 (R)		x	x	x
CG 2 (R)		x		x
CG 3 (R)			x	x
CG 4 (R)	x			x

TABLE 1: Research design based on an extended Solomon plan

Source: Author's own illustration.

CG = Control Group; EG = Experimental Group; R = Randomized assignment

The design required seven randomized groups. Experimental groups EG 1-3 followed the classical pretest-treatment-posttest sequence, while control groups CG 1-3 served as corresponding one-shot posttest controls. An additional control group (CG 4) completed only pre- and posttest measures without receiving any treatment.

This structure enables several analytical comparisons: (a) treatment effects can be assessed within each group by comparing pre- and posttest scores; (b) differences between experimental and control groups can be tested for statistical significance; and (c) the inclusion of CG 4 provides an additional reliability check, ensuring that time-related influences (e.g., maturation or external events) did not affect outcomes

if pre- and posttest results remain stable.

Measures and treatments

Acceptance was measured with the *Akzept!-P Questionnaire for Personality Measures* (Kersting, 2025). The core item asked participants to provide an overall rating of personality questionnaires as tools in personnel selection and development on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = very good, 6 = very poor) (see Appendices).

To test Hypothesis 2, participants received a standardized reader containing four articles on personality questionnaires (Treatment 1). Two articles were drawn from peer-reviewed journals and two from practitioner outlets, ensuring both scientific rigor and accessibility to non-experts. This ensured that participants were exposed to balanced information regarding the benefits and limitations of personality questionnaires.

To test Hypothesis 3, participants completed the paper-pencil version of the *Bochum Inventory of Personality* (Hossiep and Paschen, 2019) (Treatment 2), a validated personality inventory frequently used in occupational contexts in Germany.

Sample

The study sample comprised 334 undergraduate students enrolled in a business administration program at a German university. Although based on a student sample, this population is considered suitable given that university graduates frequently encounter psychometric selection tools in organizational recruitment processes.

Participants were randomly assigned in approximately equal numbers to the seven groups (see Table 2). The mean age was 22.54 years (SD = 1.23).

Group	Female	Male	Total
EG 1	26	23	49
EG 2	24	24	48
EG 3	26	25	51
CG 1	25	22	47
CG 2	24	25	49
CG 3	26	24	50
CG 4	23	17	40
Total	174	160	334

TABLE 2: Distribution of participants across experimental and control groups

Source: Author’s own illustration.

CG = Control Group; EG = Experimental Group

Power analysis using G*Power 3.1.9.7 indicated that 280 participants would provide 80% power to detect medium effect sizes ($f = .25$) at $\alpha = .05$ for the planned ANOVA analyses. The final sample of 334 exceeded this requirement, providing 85% power for the main analyses.

Pilot study and data collection

Before fieldwork, the modified acceptance questionnaire was reviewed by two professors of personnel psychology and piloted with 20 business students to ensure clarity. No changes were required.

During the main study, participants were informed that the investigation concerned perceptions of personnel selection methods and that participation was voluntary. They were assured there were no “right” or “wrong” answers, and demographic data (age, gender) were collected. For EG 1-3, the pretest was followed by the assigned treatments and the posttest questionnaire. CG 1-3 completed the treatments followed by the posttest only, while CG 4 responded to the questionnaire at both measurement points without treatment.

To avoid duplicate participation, data were collected in different courses, and students were explicitly instructed not to participate if they had already taken part. Random assignment was used to allocate students to groups, ensuring that individual differences were distributed randomly rather than

systematically (Bühner and Ziegler, 2017).

Results And Discussion

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Pretest acceptance ranged from 2.1 to 6.8 (M = 4.2, SD = 1.3), indicating moderate baseline acceptance with substantial variability. Assumption tests supported acceptable normality (Shapiro-Wilk, all ps > .05) and homogeneity of variance (Levene’s test, p = .42). A baseline equivalence check showed no significant group differences in pretest acceptance, F(3, 184) = 1.57, p > .05, η² = .025.

Hypothesis 1 (Prior Experience)

With regard to H1, we tested whether the number of previously completed personality questionnaires correlated with pretest acceptance. Associations were negligible (Spearman’s ρ = .002, p > .05, n = 188; Kendall’s τ-b = .001, p > .05, n = 188), indicating virtually no relationship.

Within- and Between-Group Tests (Hypotheses 2 and 3)

Descriptive pre-post means appear in Table 3. The largest improvement occurred when participants received both information and the opportunity to complete a questionnaire (EG 1; ΔM = 0.65). A smaller but positive change emerged for information only (EG 2; ΔM = 0.28). No meaningful change was observed for test experience alone (EG 3; ΔM = -0.05) or for the untreated control (CG 4; ΔM = 0.13). Paired-sample tests confirmed these patterns: EG 1, t(48) = 4.72, p < .05; EG 2, t(47) = 3.27, p < .05; EG 3, t(50) = 0.62, p > .05; CG 4, t(39) = 1.71, p > .05. A one-way ANOVA on posttest acceptance (directional) indicated significant between-group differences, F(6, 327) = 2.43, p < .05, η² = .043. Bonferroni-adjusted comparisons (Table 4) showed that EG 1 exceeded EG 2 and EG 3, whereas EG 2 and EG 3 did not differ significantly.

Group	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	ΔM
EG 1	3.43 (1.19)	2.78 (1.12)	0.65
EG 2	3.65 (1.05)	3.38 (1.10)	0.28
EG 3	3.45 (1.17)	3.39 (1.10)	-0.05
CG 4	3.15 (0.74)	3.03 (0.66)	0.13

TABLE 3: Acceptance of personality questionnaires (pretest and posttest)

Two-tailed tests at α = .05.

Source: Author’s own illustration.

CG = Control Group; EG = Experimental Group

(I) Group	(J) Group	Mean Diff. (I–J)	SE	Sig.	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
EG 1	EG 2	–0.60	0.21	.037	–1.23	–0.03
EG 1	EG 3	–0.62	0.21	.026	–1.24	–0.00
EG 1	CG 1	–0.12	0.21	.499	–0.75	0.51
EG 1	CG 2	–0.41	0.21	.229	–1.03	0.22
EG 1	CG 3	–0.41	0.21	.232	–1.03	0.22
EG 1	CG 4	–0.25	0.22	.461	–0.91	0.41
EG 2	EG 3	–0.02	0.21	.500	–0.61	0.64

TABLE 4: Post-hoc comparisons at posttest (Bonferroni-adjusted)

One-tailed tests at $\alpha = .05$ for omnibus ANOVA; Bonferroni-adjusted pairwise comparisons reported.

CG = Control Group; CI = Confidence Interval; EG = Experimental Group; SE = Standard Error

Factorial (ANCOVA) Tests

Controlling for pretest scores, a 2×2 analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with Information (present vs. absent) and Experience (present vs. absent) as factors on reverse-coded posttest acceptance showed a significant main effect of Information, no significant main effect of Experience, and a significant Information $\times$ Experience interaction. Details appear in Table 5.

Effect	F	df	p	η^2	d	95% CI (d)
Information	23.70	1, 329	< .001	.067	0.45	[0.22, 0.68]
Experience	1.20	1, 329	.38	.003	0.12	[-0.15, 0.39]
Information $\times$ Experience	8.40	1, 329	.004	.025	0.62	[0.35, 0.89]

TABLE 5: ANCOVA results for information and experience (posttest acceptance, pretest as covariate)

Posttest acceptance was reverse-coded so that higher values reflect greater acceptance.

ANCOVA = Analysis of Covariance; CI = Confidence Interval

Discussion

Theoretical Contributions

The present findings refine prevailing accounts of applicant reactions to personality assessment by specifying when and why acceptance improves. First, prior test exposure did not predict baseline acceptance (H1). The near-zero correlations suggest that mere familiarity with personality questionnaires is not, in itself, a reliable antecedent of favorable attitudes. One plausible explanation is that heterogeneous prior encounters, ranging from transparently implemented, validated tools to poorly communicated or lower-quality instruments, offset each other at the aggregate level. This aligns with work showing that applicant reactions are context-sensitive rather than fixed by exposure alone (Hausknecht et al., 2004) (Marcus, 2003).

Second, structured information increased acceptance (H2). Both the within-group gains and the ANCOVA main effect of information converge on the idea that explanation, job-relatedness cues, and transparency shape applicant reactions. This is consistent with organizational justice perspectives, according to which clear procedures and rationales enhance perceived procedural fairness and face validity (Gilliland, 1993), and with research demonstrating that selection-information interventions improve perceptions and reduce anxiety (Truxillo et al., 2002). Meta-analytic evidence likewise indicates that communication and design features can generalize their effects across settings (Anderson et al., 2010) (Hausknecht et al., 2004).

Third, direct test experience alone did not improve acceptance, but it did when paired with information (H3). The significant Information $\times$ Experience interaction indicates complementarity rather than

additivity: experience appears to translate into favorable judgments only when participants understand what the instrument measures and why it is used. Without that frame, even a psychometrically sound tool can remain a “black box” to candidates (Ajunwa, 2020), limiting trust and perceived relevance. When explanation precedes participation, however, the test encounter can confirm expectations (“opportunity to perform”), consolidate fairness perceptions, and yield acceptance gains beyond information alone - helping reconcile mixed evidence regarding the impact of experience per se (Marcus, 2003). This pattern also dovetails with broader debates about the role of personality assessment in selection: robust communication about purpose and validity fosters more favorable reactions to scientifically grounded measures (Morgeson et al., 2007).

Taken together, the results shift emphasis from instrument quality alone to the communication-experience nexus through which instrument properties are interpreted. Models of applicant reactions should therefore treat information provision and direct experience as interacting processes: information shapes the cognitive and fairness frame (Gilliland, 1993) (Ryan and Ployhart, 2000), and experience supplies diagnostic evidence that confirms or disconfirms that frame (Truxillo et al., 2002). In addition, the null association for prior exposure reinforces the need to distinguish quality and framing of past experiences from exposure counts - an issue relevant to understanding the observed gap between scientific recommendations and organizational practice (Anderson et al., 2001) (Benit and Soellner, 2013).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the use of a student sample limits generalizability. Students may lack the stakes and contextual experience of real applicants, which may attenuate effects of information and experience (Hausknecht et al., 2004) (Marcus, 2003). Although students are a common population in applicant reaction studies, future research should replicate these results with field samples, actual applicants, or high-stakes simulations.

Second, the study focused on a single personality instrument. Given the diversity in questionnaire quality and format (Sarges and Wottawa, 2001), the findings most likely not extend to all tests. Prior research shows that acceptance varies across test types (Furnham, 2018), underscoring the need for replications with multiple validated instruments.

Third, potential mediators such as trust, perceived face validity, or understanding were not measured. Including these variables would clarify the mechanisms through which information and test experience influence acceptance (van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Moreover, the cross-sectional design precludes conclusions about how acceptance evolves over time; longitudinal designs could capture temporal dynamics and behavioral consequences such as organizational attraction.

Finally, although the Solomon design provides strong internal validity, threats such as maturation, pretest sensitization, or group contamination cannot be entirely ruled out (Cook and Campbell, 1979). However, additional controls - such as comparisons with untreated control group - reduce these concerns.

Practical implications

Organizations seeking to deploy personality questionnaires should not rely on instrument validity or participation alone. Instead, they should (a) provide concise, evidence-based, job-linked explanations before administration and (b) use professionally implemented, validated measures so that the lived experience coheres with the communicated rationale (Ones et al., 2007). This sequencing leverages the information main effect and the Information × Experience synergy observed here, and it is compatible with field evidence on applicant perceptions and fairness communication (Lievens et al., 2003) (Truxillo et al., 2002).

In sum, acceptance of personality questionnaires is best understood as a joint function of what is measured (validated content), how it is explained (transparent, job-relevant information), and how it is experienced (procedurally fair administration). Situating personality assessment within this integrative frame helps specify the conditions under which such tools are likely to be viewed favorably in selection contexts and may contribute to narrowing the scientist-practitioner gap in test use (Armonait et al., 2020) (Benit and Soellner, 2013) (Schuler et al., 2007).

Conclusions

This study clarifies when and why personality questionnaires are accepted in selection contexts. Information provision reliably increased acceptance, while experience alone did not; critically, experience did raise acceptance when embedded within prior explanation. These patterns indicate that applicant reactions are shaped by a communication-experience nexus: transparent, job-linked rationale sets expectations, and a high-quality testing encounter then confirms them. For practice, the implications are that organizations seeking to deploy personality questionnaires should (1) provide brief, evidence-based explanations that make purpose and job relatedness explicit and (2) administer professionally developed, validated measures so that the lived experience matches the communicated rationale. Sequencing matters: explanation first, experience second. This low-cost adjustment can yield measurable gains in acceptance without altering test content.

At the same time, the conclusions should be interpreted cautiously. Results are based on a student sample,

one personality instrument, and did not include mediators such as trust or perceived face validity. Future work should extend to actual applicants and high-stakes settings, compare multiple instruments and formats (including modern forced-choice measures), and model mediating mechanisms and longitudinal outcomes (e.g., organizational attraction, offer acceptance). Such studies would help generalize the present findings and specify the pathways through which communication and experience co-produce acceptance.

Appendices

No.	Question/Statement	Response Format
1	Gender	☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Diverse
2	Age	_____ years
3	Study program/field of study	_____
4	How many personality tests have you completed so far? (Please enter "0" if you have never completed such a questionnaire.)	_____
5	How strong is your interest in personality tests in the context of personnel selection?	6-point scale: ranging from very low, ..., very high
6	In my opinion, the results of personality tests can be consciously manipulated by the person completing them.	6-point scale: ranging from does not apply at all, ..., fully applies
7	In my opinion, the results of personality tests are so vague that they could apply to almost anyone.	6-point scale: ranging from does not apply at all, ..., fully applies
8	In my opinion, the results of personality tests have little predictive value for the later professional performance of the tested person.	6-point scale: ranging from does not apply at all, ..., fully applies
9	In my opinion, personality tests are problematic in terms of content, as they measure aspects that are none of strangers' business.	6-point scale: ranging from does not apply at all, ..., fully applies
10	In my opinion, the effort required to complete personality tests is higher than the benefit that can be derived from the results.	6-point scale: ranging from does not apply at all, ..., fully applies
11	Overall, I consider it useful to use personality tests in the context of personnel selection.	6-point scale: ranging from not useful at all, ..., fully useful

TABLE 6: Questionnaire on the acceptance of personality tests

Translated from German.

Additional Information

Author Contributions

All authors have reviewed the final version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

Concept and design: Stephan Weinert

Acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data: Stephan Weinert

Drafting of the manuscript: Stephan Weinert

Critical review of the manuscript for important intellectual content: Stephan Weinert

Supervision: Stephan Weinert

Disclosures

Human subjects: Consent was obtained or waived by all participants in this study. **Animal subjects:** All authors have confirmed that this study did not involve animal subjects or tissue. **Conflicts of interest:** In compliance with the ICMJE uniform disclosure form, all authors declare the following: **Payment/services info:** All authors have declared that no financial support was received from any organization for the submitted work. **Financial relationships:** All authors have declared that they have no financial relationships at present or within the previous three years with any organizations that might have an interest in the submitted work. **Other relationships:** All authors have declared that there are no other

relationships or activities that could appear to have influenced the submitted work.

Acknowledgements

Data are available on reasonable request. The data are stored as de-identified participant data which are available on request to stephan.weinert@hwg-lu.de.

References

1. Ajunwa I: The “black box” at work. *Big Data & Society*. 2020, 7:1-6. [10.1177/2053951720938093](https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720938093)
2. Anderson N, Herriot P, Hodgkinson G: The practitioner-researcher divide in Industrial, Work and Organizational (IWO) psychology: Where are we now, and where do we go from here?. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*. 2001, 74:391-411. [10.1348/096317901167451](https://doi.org/10.1348/096317901167451)
3. Anderson N, Salgado JF, Hülsheger UR: Applicant Reactions in Selection: Comprehensive meta-analysis into reaction generalization versus situational specificity. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2010, 18:291-304. [10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00512.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00512.x)
4. Armoneit C, Schuler H, Hell B: Nutzung, Validität, Praktikabilität und Akzeptanz psychologischer Personalauswahlverfahren in Deutschland 1985, 1993, 2007, 2020 [Use, validity, practicality and acceptance of psychological personnel selection procedures in Germany 1985, 1993, 2007, 2020]. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie A&O*. 2020, 64:67-82. [10.1026/0932-4089/a000311](https://doi.org/10.1026/0932-4089/a000311)
5. Arvey RD, Strickland W, Drauden G, Martin C: Motivational components of test taking. *Personnel Psychology*. 1990, 43:695-716. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.1990.tb00679.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1990.tb00679.x)
6. Barrick MR, Mount MK: The big five personality dimensions and job performance: a meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*. 1991, 44:1-26. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.1991.tb00688.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1991.tb00688.x)
7. Bauer TN, Truxillo DM, Sanchez RJ, Cragg JM, Ferrara P, Campion MA: Applicant reactions to selection: development of the selection procedural justice scale (SPJS). *Personnel Psychology*. 2001, 54:387-419. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2001.tb00097.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2001.tb00097.x)
8. Beermann D, Kersting M, Stegt S, Zimmerhofer A: Vorurteile und Urteile zur Akzeptanz von Persönlichkeitsfragebogen [Prejudices and judgments regarding the acceptance of personality questionnaires]. *PERSONALquarterly*. 2013, 65:41-45.
9. Benit N, Soellner R: Scientist-practitioner gap in Deutschland: Eine empirische Studie am Beispiel psychologischer Testverfahren. *Zeitschrift für Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie A&O*. 2013, 57:145-153. [10.1026/0932-4089/a000111](https://doi.org/10.1026/0932-4089/a000111)
10. Bornstein RF: Exposure and affect: Overview and meta-analysis of research, 1968-1987. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1989, 106:265-289. [10.1037/0033-2909.106.2.265](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.2.265)
11. Bühner M, Ziegler M: Statistik für Psychologen und Sozialwissenschaftler: Grundlagen und Umsetzung mit SPSS und R [Statistics for psychologists and social scientists Fundamentals and implementation with SPSS and R]. Pearson Deutschland GmbH, Germany; 2017.
12. Cook TD, Campbell DT: Quasi-Experimentation: Design and Analysis Issues for Field Settings. Houghton Mifflin, Boston; 1979.
13. Eifler S, Leitgöb H: Experiment. *Handbuch Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung*. Bauer N, Blasius J (ed): Springer VS, Wiesbaden; 2022. 225-241. [10.1007/978-3-658-37985-8_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-37985-8_13)
14. Furnham A: The great divide: Academic versus practitioner criteria for psychometric test choice. *Journal of Personality Assessment*. 2018, 100:498-506. [10.1080/00223891.2018.1488134](https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2018.1488134)
15. Geiger M, Olderbak S, Sauter R, Wilhelm O: The “g” in faking: Doublethink the validity of personality self-report measures for applicant selection. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2018, 9:2153. [10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02153](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02153)
16. Gilliland SW: The perceived fairness of selection systems: An organizational justice perspective. *Academy of Management Review*. 1993, 18:694-734. [10.2307/258595](https://doi.org/10.2307/258595)
17. Hausknecht JP, Day DV, Thomas SC: Applicant reactions to selection procedures: An updated model and meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*. 2004, 57:639-683. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2004.00003.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2004.00003.x)
18. Hossiep R, Paschen M: Bochumer Inventar zur berufsbezogenen Persönlichkeitsbeschreibung [Bochum Inventory of Personality]. Hogrefe, Göttingen; 2019.
19. Huo YP, Huang HJ, Napier NK: Divergence or convergence: a cross-national comparison of personnel selection practices. *Human Resource Management*. 2002, 41:31-44. [10.1002/hrm.10018](https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.10018)
20. Kersting M: AKZEPT! Fragebogen zur Messung der Akzeptanz diagnostischer Verfahren [Akzept!-Questionnaire for measuring the acceptance of diagnostic procedures]. 2025, Accessed: August 12, 2025: <https://kersting-internet.de/testentwicklungen/akzept-fragebogen/>.
21. König CJ, Klehe U-C, Berchtold M, Kleinmann M: Reasons for being selective when choosing personnel selection procedures. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2010, 18:17-27. [10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00485.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00485.x)
22. Reynolds CR, Altmann RA, Allen DN: Assessment of personality. *Mastering Modern Psychological Testing*. Springer, Cham; 2021. 383-426. [10.1007/978-3-030-59455-8_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59455-8_10)
23. Ryals LJ, Wilson H: Experimental methods in market research: From information to insight. *International Journal of Market Research*. 2005, 47:345-364. [10.1177/147078530504700402](https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530504700402)
24. Krumm S, Grube A, Hertel G: The Munster work value measure. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*. 2013, 28:532-560. [10.1108/jmp-07-2011-0023](https://doi.org/10.1108/jmp-07-2011-0023)
25. Lievens F, Corte W, Brysbe K: Applicant perceptions of selection procedures: The role of selection information, belief in tests, and comparative anxiety. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2003, 11:67-77. [10.1111/1468-2389.00227](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2389.00227)
26. Marcus B: Attitudes towards personnel selection methods: A partial replication and extension in a German sample. *Applied Psychology*. 2003, 52:515-532. [10.1111/1464-0597.00149](https://doi.org/10.1111/1464-0597.00149)
27. McFarland LA: Warning against faking on a personality test: Effects on applicant reactions and personality test scores. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2003, 11:265-276. [10.1111/j.0965-075x.2003.00250.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0965-075x.2003.00250.x)
28. McKinsey and Company. (2020). <https://www.mckinsey.com/-/media/McKinsey/Business%20Functions/Organization/Our%20Insights/Beyond%20hiring%20How%20to%20win%20the%20war%20for%20talent%20.pdf>
29. Morgeson FP, Campion MA, Dipboye RL, Hollenbeck JR, Murphy K, Schmitt N: Reconsidering the use of personality tests in personnel selection contexts. *Personnel Psychology*. 2007, 60:683-729. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00089.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00089.x)
30. Nachtwij J, Schermuly C: Acht Mythen über Eignungstests [Eight Myths about Aptitude Tests]. Harvard

- Business manager. 2006, 1-6.
31. Ones DS, Dilchert S, Viswesvaran C, Judge TA: In support of personality assessment in organizational settings. *Personnel Psychology*. 2007, 60:995-1027. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00099.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00099.x)
 32. Ones DS, Viswesvaran C: The effects of social desirability and faking on personality and integrity assessment for personnel selection. *Human Performance*. 1998, 11:245-269. [10.1080/08959285.1998.9668033](https://doi.org/10.1080/08959285.1998.9668033)
 33. Ryan AM, McFarland L, Shl HB: An international look at selection practices: Nation and culture as explanations for variability in practice. *Personnel Psychology*. 1999, 52:359-392. [10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00165.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1999.tb00165.x)
 34. Prochazka J, Novacek J, Vaculik M: The evaluation of personnel selection methods by HR practitioners: The effect of reference and its interaction with information about validity. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*. 2022, 34:3233-3251. [10.1080/09585192.2022.2117563](https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2117563)
 35. Gilliland SW: Effects of procedural and distributive justice on reactions to a selection system. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1994, 79:691-701. [10.1037/0021-9010.79.5.691](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.5.691)
 36. Ryan AM, Ployhart RE: Applicants' perceptions of selection procedures and decisions: A critical review and agenda for the future. *Journal of Management*. 2000, 26:565-606. [10.1177/014920630002600308](https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630002600308)
 37. Rynes SL, Colbert AE, Brown KG: HR professionals' beliefs about effective human resource practices: correspondence between research and practice. *Human Resource Management*. 2002, 41:149-174. [10.1002/hrm.10029](https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.10029)
 38. Salgado J: The five factor model of personality and job performance in the European Community. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 1997, 82:30-43. [10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.30](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.82.1.30)
 39. Salgado J, Anderson N: Validity generalization of GMA tests across countries in the European Community. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*. 2003, 12:1-17. [10.1080/13594320244000292](https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320244000292)
 40. Sarges W, Wottawa H: Handbuch wirtschaftspsychologischer Testverfahren [Organizational Psychology Instruments]. Werner S (ed): Pabst, Lengerich; 2001.
 41. Schmidt FL, Hunter JE: The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1998, 124:262-274. [10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.262](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.262)
 42. Schuler H, Frier D, Kauffmann M: Personalauswahl im europäischen Vergleich [Comparing Personnel Selection Across Europe]. Hogrefe, Göttingen; 1993.
 43. Schuler H, Hell B, Trapmann S, Schaar H, Boramir I: Die Nutzung psychologischer Verfahren der externen Personalauswahl in deutschen Unternehmen [The Use of Psychological Assessment Methods in External Personnel Selection in German Companies]. *Zeitschrift für Personalpsychologie*. 2007, 6:60-70. [10.1026/1617-6391.6.2.60](https://doi.org/10.1026/1617-6391.6.2.60)
 44. Solomon RL: An extension of control group design. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1949, 46:137-150. [10.1037/h0062958](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0062958)
 45. Solomon RL, Lessac MS: A control group design for experimental studies of developmental processes. *Psychological Bulletin*. 1968, 70:145-150. [10.1037/h0026147](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0026147)
 46. Steiner DD, Gilliland SW: Procedural justice in personnel selection: International and cross-cultural perspectives. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2001, 9:124-137. [10.1111/1468-2389.00169](https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2389.00169)
 47. Stone DL, Lukaszewski KM, Stone-Romero EF, Johnson TL: Factors affecting the effectiveness and acceptance of electronic selection systems. *Human Resource Management Review*. 2013, 23:50-70. [10.1016/j.hrmr.2012.06.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2012.06.006)
 48. Tett RP, Simonet DV: Faking in personality assessment: A "multisaturation" perspective on faking as performance. *Human Performance*. 2011, 24:302-321. [10.1080/08959285.2011.597472](https://doi.org/10.1080/08959285.2011.597472)
 49. Truxillo DM, Bauer TN, Campion MA, Paronto ME: Selection fairness information and applicant reactions: A longitudinal field study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 2002, 87:1020-1031. [10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1020](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1020)
 50. van Iddekinge CH, Lievens F, Sackett PR: Personnel selection: A review of ways to maximize validity, diversity, and the applicant experience. *Personnel Psychology*. 2023, 76:651-686. [10.1111/peps.12578](https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12578)
 51. Wood JK, Anglim J, Horwood S: Effect of job applicant faking and cognitive ability on self-other agreement and criterion validity of personality assessments. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. 2022, 30:378-391. [10.1111/ijsa.12382](https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12382)
 52. Zajonc RB: Attitudinal effects of mere exposure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1968, 9:1-27. [10.1037/h0025848](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0025848)