

Advantages of Revealing a Criminal History in a Job Interview

Kelly Charlton, Christopher Green, & Shilpa M.P. Regan
University of North Carolina at Pembroke



Abstract

In an effort to study the effect of revealing criminal history in a job interview, participants read about job applicants who disclosed or did not disclose a misdemeanor or felony criminal conviction prior to a background check. Results indicate that only disclosure affected evaluations and hiring assessments.

Introduction

More companies are requiring criminal background checks as part of the hiring process. The Society for Human Resource Management found that 73% of employers indicated that criminal checks were conducted on all applicants and 19% indicated that a check would be ordered for select candidates (<http://www.shrm.org/research/surveyfindings/articles/pages/backgroundcheckcriminalcheck.aspx>). Websites such as EHow recommend that a job applicant should not reveal anything that is not asked for, however if a criminal history will be revealed the candidate should provide an explanation (http://www.ehow.com/how_7530961_disclose-criminal-record-employment-application.html). The presumption made is that an explanation may ameliorate the negative effects that a positive criminal background check sets in motion. Though some studies have examined time to redemption for those with a criminal history (Bushway, Nieuwbeerta, & Blokland, 2011; Blumstein & Nakamura, 2009), the current study seeks to investigate the effect personally revealing information about arrest has on the perceptions of a job applicant.

Method

Participants

Participants were 166 male (73%) and female (27%) undergraduate students ranging in age from 18 to 65 ($M = 19.94$, $SD = 5.60$).

Measures and Procedures

Participants read materials that described a male or a female who was applying for an administrative assistant position.

The materials included:

- A description of the job interview in which a male or female applicant either did or did not reveal a misdemeanor or felony conviction (with an explanation).
- A criminal background check that either did or did not reveal a conviction was provided.

Participants then answered a variety of questions about the applicant that included both overall impressions and hiring decisions.

Results and Discussion

Hiring Decision Questions

For the questions related to the hiring decision we found an overwhelming main effect for whether or not the crime was disclosed. It is quite interesting that the nature of the crime had no effect on any of the evaluations. Participants believed that the disclosing applicant was less likely to commit another crime ($F(1, 157) = 12.96$, $p < .01$), was more likely to be hired ($F(1, 157) = 28.62$, $p < .01$), was more suitable to the job ($F(1, 157) = 6.25$, $p < .05$), was more willing to stay at the job long-term ($F(1, 157) = 4.2$, $p < .05$), can be trusted with important tasks ($F(1, 157) = 9.14$, $p < .01$), and has earned a second chance ($F(1, 157) = 7.03$, $p < .01$).

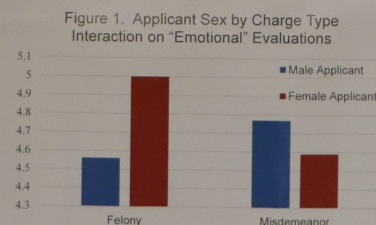
Evaluations

A factor analysis revealed three main factors for the evaluations.

For factor one (including adjectives such as creative, industrious and intelligent) we only found a disclosure effect such that those who disclosed a criminal history were evaluated more positively ($M = 5.19$, $SD = .72$) than those who did not disclose a criminal history ($M = 4.61$, $SD = .87$), $F(1, 158) = 20.58$, $p < .001$.

As shown in Figure 1, there was also an applicant sex by charge type interaction for the third factor (comprised of unemotional and boring), $F(1, 158) = 4.27$, $p < .05$. All other effects for the evaluations were not significant.

Further studies should examine those factors that might make a difference on variables other than disclosure, such as whether or not the confession was about a crime



For Further Information

Please contact:

Kelly Charlton: kelly.charlton@uncp.edu

Shilpa Regan: Shilpa.regan@uncp.edu