The Relationship Between Honesty-Humility And Social Desirability: High-Stake Versus Low-Stake Situations

Authors: Lena Koepke & Julia Marten
Supervisor: Andrejs Ozolins
Examiner: Mikael Rennemark
Abstract

Faking in applications was found to be an important issue in which social desirability plays a relevant role. The present study brings Social Desirability Responding, Honesty-Humility, and different stakes of situations into relation. Social Desirability Responding, i.e. Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement, operationalized by the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR) and Honesty-Humility (HEXACO-60) are analysed regarding their relationships and differences in and between high-stake, low-stake, and high-stake-low-framed situations. Relationships between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management were significantly positive, while no relationship between Honesty-Humility and Self-Deceptive Enhancement was found. There were also no significant differences in the constructs across situations. It was further investigated whether individuals scoring low in Honesty-Humility show different responding behaviour dependent on situational frames compared to individuals scoring high in Honesty-Humility. No significant differences were found. Results imply that Social Desirable Responding scales do not measure what they intend to, hence further research is needed. The tested high-stake-low-framed situational instruction did not significantly reduce faking. However, exploring the option of framing application situations is recommended for organizations. Further, the problematic nature of measuring Social Desirability Responding is considered.

Key words: Honesty-Humility, HEXACO, Social Desirability, Communion Management, Self-Deceptive Enhancement, High-stake, Low-Stake, Faking, Applications

Introduction

Today, in the area of talent management organizations spend most of their expenses for recruiting. As an example, about $1.200 are spent on employee development, while the costs for recruiting are three times as big with about $3.600 per employee per year. The costs of only one flawed hiring decision is estimated to be as high as 30% of a yearly earning of the hired person (Hacker, 1996). As soon as someone is erroneously recruited, numerous problems may evolve that are hard to resolve. Hiring the best fitting people is one of the most crucial aspects companies face to make business work, stay competitive and succeed in the long run (Deloitte, 2018). Further, not only organizations suffer from bad hiring decisions, but also employees themselves, as significant consequences due to bad Person-Job and Person-Environment Fit can
occur e.g., mismatch of individual skills and job requirements and resulting subjective dissatisfaction (Carless, 2005). In order to prevent these issues, understanding of the mechanisms behind erroneous personnel selection is required. This study aims to shed light on the factors and issues that lead to wrong hiring decisions in order to help organizations optimize their recruiting and talent management processes.

First, and to start from the beginning, what leads to wrong hiring decisions? One main aspect is faking on applications due to situational pressures (Ziegler, MacCann, & Roberts, 2012). Application processes and other assessment situations crucial for career progression are said to represent incentives inviting to deceive. More precisely, personality self-reports evidently activate motivation to fake within the assessment process due to its higher stake (e.g., application process) compared to situations with lower stake (e.g., research situations; Goffin & Christiansen, 2003; Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez & Harms, 2013; Zickar, Gibby, & Robie, 2004). The particular impact and stake of a situation was investigated by Lönnqvist, Paunonen, Tuulio-Henriksson, Lönnqvist & Verkasalo (2007) examining FFM regarding Social Desirability Responding in low-stake and high-stake situations. Significantly different results were yielded due to the stake of the situation. Participants in the high-stake situation deceived their answers stronger than participants in the low-stake situation (Lönnqvist et al., 2007). These results lead to another question.

Why does an application process represent a higher stake compared to other situations? The outcome of an application situation is essential for the person applying. Meaning its outcome is either positive in terms of getting accepted which has beneficial consequences, or is negative in terms of getting rejected which has either none or detrimental consequences for the person applying. To summarize, the outcome of a situation defines whether a situation has a high or a low stake, and appears to be the crux of the matter when it comes to faking on applications (Eid & Zickar, 2007; Zettler, Hilbig, & Heydasch, 2013).

Second, due to the occurrence of deceiving within high-stake situations (e.g. application process), one approach frequently enforced in that context is to test for Social Desirability in responding behaviour in order to detect distorted answers or in other words: faking. Hence, Social Desirability scales are frequently used in order to operationalize faking (Crowne & Marlow, 1960; Edwards, 1957; Goffin & Christiansen, 2003; Griffith, Chmielowski & Yoshita, 2007; McCrae & Costa, 1983; Paulhus, 1984, 1991, 2002; Ziegler et al., 2012). Consulting
Social Desirability scales is one option to separate the wheat from the chaff. However, there are various methodological issues when it comes to valid measurement of Social Desirability. Most prominent criticism refers to Social Desirability scales not measuring a response set or style, but instead measuring personality traits. Further in line with aforementioned criticism and grave if true, it is argued that Social Desirability does not measure negative aspects (faking), but positive aspects instead (socially desirable traits) which would result in different meanings of scores when interpreting them (DeVries, Zettler & Hilbig, 2014; Eid & Zickar, 2007; Goffin & Christiansen, 2003; Ziegler et al., 2012).

Third, studies found that not only the stake of the situation leads to different extents of faking, but that there are variations in the extent of faking across situations depending on other factors, e.g., personality (Griffith, Chmielowski & Yoshita, 2007; Rosse, Stecher, Miller, & Levin, 1998). It is assumed that interindividual differences in personality cause inconsistent deception behaviour across situations due to an interaction effect with Social Desirability Responding (DeVries et al., 2014; Eid & Zickar, 2007; Zettler et al., 2013; Ziegler et al., 2012). By investigating the relationship between Social Desirability Responding and core personality traits, DeVries et al. (2014) declared Honesty-Humility as the strongest predictor of Social Desirability Responding in comparison to other HEXACO personality factors. Thus, an individual's expression of Honesty-Humility, which evolved to be one of six relatively stable personality facets, is expected to explain differences in faking behaviour across situations. The interaction effect of the situation, Honesty-Humility, and Social Desirability Responding further impedes the matter of detecting faking on applications (Moshagen, Hilbig, & Zettler, 2014; Zettler et al., 2013).

Taking all information into account, numerous factors appear to be involved in the problematic nature of faking on applications. On the one hand, there are situational factors exerting influence on the testing outcome, personality traits interacting with aspects of the situation and the construct behind faking, and on the other hand, there are methodological issues regarding the scale measuring faking which complicate or even conceal to detect deceptive behaviour (Goffin & Christianse, 2003; Griffith, Chmielowski & Yoshita, 2007; Ziegler et al., 2012). Leading to the aim of this study, Ziegler at al. (2012) put it that way:

In the worst possible scenario (1) people can fake more desirable test scores, (2) people in fact do fake more desirable test scores, (3) faked scores are inaccurate, (4) faked
scores no longer predict future behavior, (5) faking cannot be detected, and (6) faking cannot be stopped, and finally (7) faking has an impact on the use and interpretation of tests across a diverse array of applications. (p. 1)

Aim of the Study

Based on previous findings, we consider further examination of personality traits, deceptive behaviour and situational factors to be necessary in order to help organizations understand the mechanisms behind faking on applications. More precisely, we address the issues by exploring connections and comparisons between Honesty-Humility and Social Desirability Responding in different situations by experimentally inducing situational frames (low-stake, high-stake, high-stake under a low-stake frame). Methodological issues regarding the Social Desirability scale in terms of measuring response distortion or personality traits are inspected. Further, possible interventions for organizations are explored. The present study partly replicates, partly extends former research of DeVries et al. (2014) and Lönnqvist et al. (2007).

This is here achieved by conducting an online study in which four testing groups filled in surveys on aforementioned dimensions, operationalized by HEXACO-60 and BIDR. Groups differ in terms of hypothetical situational frames which constitute the manipulation of the study. Manipulations are operationalized by written instructions, putting participants in different hypothetical situations. As organizational application processes represent high-stake situations which are assumed to trigger faking, we here introduce a third frame which aims to reduce the pressure of high-stake situations. We refer to this frame as high-stake framed as low-stake situation (high-stake-low-framed). By means of this third frame we investigate a possible intervention for organization that targets at reducing faking on applications. Throughout this paper, we refer to the construct Social Desirability Responding by using the terms faking, deceiving, deceptive behaviour, distorted responding and answering in a social desirable way, while we refer to the construct Honesty-Humility by using the terms answering honest, humble, and truthful. In the following theory section, we present the main constructs of the study in more detail, expound their relationships, and subsequently derive hypotheses of the study before proceeding with the method, analysis, results and discussion parts.
Social Desirability

Social Desirability is defined as the tendency “to distort self-reports in a favourable direction” (McCrae & Costa, 1983, p. 882) and thereby “convey an overly positive - or negative - image of themselves” (DeVries et al., 2014, p. 287). Research using social desirability scales with the aim to reduce response distortion has been disputed for some time now. Still, instruments testing for social desirability are used to validate scales (e.g., Rock, 1981), despite several findings that argue against the actual function as a validation or correction option (McCrae & Costa, 1983). Scholars put forward that statistically adjusting for Social Desirability Responding does not necessarily add value to studies in terms of exposing true scores, but on the contrary might even diminish criterion validity. This led to studies retesting the construct of Social Desirability Responding which resulted in questioning the originally intentioned character of the scale (McCrae & Costa, 1983).

It is now argued that Social Desirability Responding scales are subject to three differentiated interpretations, namely as measuring either a response set, response style, or substantive personality traits (Lönnqvist et al., 2007). A response style is defined as a bias which is systematic and constant over time, whereas a response set is a bias triggered by temporary motives (Paulhus, 2002). The assumption behind Social Desirability Responding as a measurement for personality traits is that some people simply own more desirable characteristics such as being honest and well-adjusted, and are therefore expected to score higher in Social Desirability Responding than others. This contrasts with the original idea of Social Desirability Responding, i.e. individuals faking their self-descriptions in order to appear more likeable (McCrae & Costa, 1983).

Due to the diverse interpretation of the scale, individuals’ scores may have very different meanings. There is no reliable way to verify or translate participants scores of personality self-reports (cf. Li & Bagger, 2006). Additionally to this matter, self-report measures such as Social Desirability Responding are prone to conscious falsification, because the “right” - or socially desirable - answers to questions are fairly obvious which in turn facilitates participants to present themselves in a positive way (Eid & Zickar, 2007). These issues justify the problematic nature of Social Desirability Responding as researchers are unable to differentiate between those who possess desirable traits and those who do not (Lönnqvist, 2007).
As a consequence, Paulhus (1988) developed the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). The BIDR allows for measurement of the distinguishing constructs Self-Deception and Impression Management. Corresponding scales are Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Impression Management. Based on Paulhus’ (2002) revision of the two BIDR factors, we refer to the formerly called Impression Management by using the more current term Communion Management. Communion Management is consistently used throughout this report. This applies for both, resources that already use the term Communion Management and those who refer to Communion Management as Impression Management.

Communion Management is defined as the attempt of individuals trying to influence and control the impressions they have on other individuals and thus, how they are perceived and evaluated by others. The expression of Communion Management itself is composed of the motivation to manage impressions on the one hand, and the ability to do so on the other hand (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Individuals high in Self-Deceptive Enhancement believe that they possess overly positive qualities and hence, are prone to report these accordingly exaggerated (DeVries et al., 2014). While Communion Management is considered to constitute the mainly conscious entity of Social Desirability Responding, Self-Deceptive Enhancement is regarded as the mainly unconscious counterpart within Social Desirability Responding. However, both constructs entail conscious as well as unconscious components (DeVries et al., 2014). When aiming to correct for response distortion it is nonetheless recommended to mainly focus on Communion Management as it is the construct that is more prone for deliberate falsification (DeVries et al., 2014). However, since Self-Deceptive Enhancement evidently appeared to make minor contributions to conscious faking, it is part of the present study for the purpose of completeness and to support previous results.

While examining Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement within the personality space (Aavik & Allik, 2006; Lönnqvist et al., 2007; DeVries et al., 2014), scholars found scientific evidence for the statistical relationship between substantive personality traits and Social Desirability Responding. Self-Deceptive Enhancement is shown to be positively correlated to Emotional Stability ($r = .54$), Conscientiousness ($r = .42$) and Extraversion ($r = .31$); and Communion Management is positively related to Conscientiousness ($r = .42$), Agreeableness ($r = .42$) and Emotional Stability ($r = .35$) (cf. Li & Bagger, 2006). Studies assessing similar content confirm correlations between Social Desirability Responding and the
above stated traits (McCrae & Costa, 1983; Lönnqvist et al., 2007; Ones, Viswesvaran & Reiss, 1996).

However, researchers put forward that almost half of the items within the BIDR substantially concern the construct integrity such as “I never take things that don’t belong to me” which is rarely touched upon by items of the Big Five which have mostly been the centre of investigation. Cunningham et al. (1994) for instance examined the relation of Communion Management and integrity, showing a positive correlation between both constructs. Here, a connection to the construct Honesty-Humility becomes obvious, as attitudes and behaviour concerning integrity are found within the dimension (Honesty-Humility) that is part of the HEXACO model (DeVries et al., 2014). Ultimately, DeVries et al. proved a statistical relationship between Honesty-Humility and Social Desirability Responding in a low-stake situation as mentioned before. This implies that Honesty-Humility is a possible predictor for Social Desirability Responding.

**Honesty-Humility**

The HEXACO model emerged as a modification of the most widely recognized personality model: The Five Factor Model (FFM; aka “the Big Five”; cf. McCrae & Costa, 1989). The FFM enforced itself through various models including one up to seven personality factors (Zettler et al., 2013). However, large lexical studies revealed that personality is most accurately assessed by six instead of five dimensions (Ashton et al., 2004). Even though labels of existing five dimensions were adopted from the FFM within the HEXACO model, some of the constructs behind these dimensions are slightly different in conception (for further reading see Ashton et al., 2004; DeVries et al., 2014). The added sixth factor Honesty-Humility is defined as representing “dishonesty, fraud, greed, and feelings of self-importance on its low pole with sincerity, fairness, greed avoidance, and modesty on its positive pole” (DeVries et al., 2014, p. 288). Within the HEXACO-model, Honesty-Humility is composed of the four sub facets sincerity, fairness, greed-avoidance, and modesty.

Honesty-Humility was found to show positive correlations with constructs like trust ($r = .23$), straightforwardness ($r = .55$), altruism ($r = .32$; Ashton & Lee, 2005), and job performance ($r = .18$; Johnson, Rowatt & Petrini (2011), and negative correlations with counterproductive work behaviour ($r = -.37$; Zettler & Hilbig, 2010), cheating behaviour (Hershfield, Cohen, &
Thompson, 2012; Hilbig & Zettler, 2013; Ashton, Lee & DeVries, 2014) as well as the Dark Triad characteristics narcissism ($r = -.42$), machiavellianism ($r = -.67$), and psychopathy ($r = -.57$; Lee, Ashton, Wiltshire, Bourdage, Visser & Gallucci, 2013). These correlations highlight the social and fair orientation of individuals with high expressions of Honesty-Humility.

Further, as Honesty-Humility was found to be negatively correlated with narcissism ($r = -.38$, $p < .01$; Lee et al., 2013), it was hence found to be positively related to proneness to lying and deceptive behaviour (Jonason, Lyons, Baughman & Vernon, 2014). Thus, the possession of Honesty-Humility, or lack thereof, is hence assumed to indicate the extent of faking scores in high-stake situations (Lee et al., 2013). Narcissism was also shown to positively correlate with self-deceptive behaviour, but not with Communion Management (Paulhus, 1998; Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991).

**General Relationships between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement**

Since Honesty–Humility is defined as “the tendency to be fair and genuine in dealing with others, in the sense of cooperating with others even when one might exploit them without suffering retaliation” (Ashton & Lee, 2007, p. 156), it has been examined in the context of Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement due to similarities in terms of content. DeVries et al. (2014) investigated the BIDR regarding all six dimensions of the HEXACO model. Besides other results, it was shown that Honesty-Humility operates as the strongest predictor of Communion Management ($r = .45$) and to a lesser extent but also significantly predicts Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($r = .34$) under normal research conditions (DeVries et al., 2014), thereby demonstrating the general relationship between Social Desirability Responding and Honesty-Humility. These results are expected to be replicated within this study.

**H1:** Honesty-Humility is positively related to Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in low-stake situations.

As mentioned before, a substantial literature (Lönnqvist et al., 2007; Pauls and Crost, 2004) emphasizes the importance of situational factors as shaping the studies’ results due to subjects being motivated by temporary stimuli. By this, we refer back to situations having a high or a
low stake depending on the outcome of the situation. As soon as the outcome of the situation is of great importance, there is the possibility that answers and behaviour of participants are influenced by that. For instance, Zettler et al. (2013) conducted research on Honesty-Humility regarding situational factors, resulting in findings of an existence of “specific pattern of interaction with situational factors” (p. 286).

DeVries and colleagues (2014) found a relation between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in low-stake situations (cf. see H1), subsequently they formulated a research gap concerning the relationship between Honesty-Humility and Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management in high-stake situations. This research gap is addressed within this research and represented by Hypothesis 2 (H2). Although we assume that scores will generally be slightly higher in the high-stake condition (see H3), we also expect positive relationships between Honesty-Humility and Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management in the high-stake condition. That is, because a balanced lifting of scores caused by high-stake infliction would resemble the relationship of the baseline scores (relationship in low-stake situation, H1).

H2: Honesty-Humility is positively related to Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in high-stake situations.

Differences in Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement dependent on Situational Factors

Lönnqvist et al. (2007) investigated Social Desirability Responding (Communion Management, Self-Deceptive Enhancement) regarding FFM by making use of different situational influences. As part of their research, the authors differentiated between applicant status (high-stake) and employed status (low-stake) of participants in order to examine whether situations that exert more pressure in terms of possible outcomes e.g., being accepted or rejected, lead to higher scores for Social Desirability Responding due to better self-presentation performed by subjects. It was assumed that the applicant condition (high-stake) serves as temporary motivation leading to participants answering in an overly positive way in order to exert influence on the outcome. This aforementioned temporary motivation that lead to answering in a different way can be explained based on interpreting Communion Management as a response set measure which is “sensitive to situational demands for impression management” (Lönnqvist et al., 2007, p. 315).
As theorized, Communion Management yielded significant higher scores for participants with applicant status than for those with employed status. Communion Management scores increased stronger than Self-Deceptive Enhancement as predicted. Lönnqvist et al. (2007) concluded that Communion Management scores are more responsive to situational influences than Self-Deceptive Enhancement. Nevertheless, Self-Deceptive Enhancement scores were as well higher in the high-stake situation than in the low-stake situation.

Due to Honesty-Humility correlating positively with Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management both raise with the increased stake of the situation (Lönnqvist et al., 2007), it can be assumed that Honesty-Humility may also be slightly higher in high-stake situations than in low-stake situations. Even though Honesty-Humility is a personality trait which is stable over time and circumstances (Ashton & Lee, 2008) there is the possibility that scores will be higher in the high-stake situation due to Lönnqvist’s findings (2007), proving that responding to personality trait measurements is influenceable by situational factors. We here extend the aforementioned research setting of testing Social Desirability Responding in high-stake situations by adding the construct Honesty-Humility, as formulated in Hypothesis 3 (H3).

**H3:** Honesty-Humility, Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement are higher in high-stake situations than in low-stake situations.

High-stake situations such as personnel selection scenarios evidently lead to participants scoring higher on Social Desirability Responding and other self-report measures (e.g. FFM; Lönnqvist et al., 2007). These results however differ from assumed truthful answers given under normal conditions such as research conditions (low-stake). Hence, researchers aiming to assess Social Desirability Responding in high-stake situations scrutinized ways to create a setting that reduces the situational pressures of the high-stake situation which knowingly lead to increased Social Desirability Responding. Creating a setting that reduces the pressure of the situation is done in order to receive truthful and unbiased answers even though the testing is done under high-stake influence. We here refer to the so called high-stake-low-framed situational frame which we introduced in the beginning of the report. These frames or settings are of particular interest as, if successful, they may be used in the organizational context within application processes in order to reduce faking on applications.
For instance, Crowne and Marlow (1964) investigated Social Desirability Responding in high-stake situations while framing them as low-stake situations. In one group they let participants believe that answers are considered in hiring and in the other group participants were instructed that scores are only seen by the experimenter and none of the company in order to reduce situational pressure. The latter group scored significantly lower on Social Desirability Responding scales than the former group. Participants who thought answers were crucial for hiring gave overly positive answers in order to reach an overall better test result. Participants who thought answers were only seen by the instructor did not experience the pressure to fake answers as they assumed these were irrelevant for the outcome. This frame however was only tested for research and not for real hiring. In a real situation it would be unethical to instruct participants that their scores would not be seen by the company when in reality they will be seen and taken into account for the hiring decision. However, based on this general idea, we constructed a high-stake low-frame situational frame that can be used in the organizational context. Using this frame, we hypothesized the following:

H4: Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement are lower in high-stake-low-framed situations than in high-stake situations.

Differences in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement dependent on Honesty-Humility between Situations (Interaction effect)

As noted earlier, the stake of the situation may significantly change individuals’ communicated attitudes and shown behaviour in testing situations (Crowne & Marlow, 1964; Lönnqvist et al., 2007; Zettler et al., 2013). So far, we have introduced the general relationship between Social Desirability Responding and Honesty-Humility and how constructs are influenced by situational factors. However, situational factors are not the sole source of changed behaviour or test scores. Faking is rather compiled of the interaction of personality traits and situational components. Authors put forward that an individual’s disposition with respect to Honesty-Humility is shown to drive behaviour depending on the stake of the situation (Zettler et al., 2013).

Examining Honesty-Humility within a public goods game in which participants are instructed to make free choices which have direct consequences for their counterparts, scholars exposed
that individuals low in Honesty-Humility made more selfish choices than individuals high in Honesty-Humility who made equitable decisions (cf. Van Dijk, De Cremer, & Handgraaf, 2004). More interestingly, those individuals low in Honesty-Humility adjusted their overt behaviour depending on the risks and benefits of the situation. As soon as it became more advantageous to make fair choices those low in Honesty-Humility adjusted their behaviour, however those high in Honesty-Humility made fair choices regardless of the benefits or risks of the situation, leading to the conclusion that Honesty-Humility “entails a specific pattern of interaction with situational factors” (Zettler et al., 2013, p. 292). This is in line with interpreting that individuals high in Honesty-Humility own more social desirable traits than individuals low in Honesty-Humility, which is illustrated by the choices they made in the aforementioned game.

The question arose, whether individuals high in Honesty-Humility were even able to distinguish between different stakes of situations or not. Zettler et al. (2013) previously ruled out this question by showing that individuals high in Honesty-Humility were able to differentiate between situations. Due to this interaction effect, individual differences regarding the level of Honesty-Humility are further investigated in this study.

Based on previous findings, individuals low in Honesty-Humility are expected to strategically adjust their behaviour based on the known mechanisms (e.g., punishment, rewarding) of the situation in contrast to individuals high in Honesty-Humility who do not strategically adjust their behaviour depending on situational factors. Derived from that, it can be assumed that those low in Honesty-Humility will adjust their response behaviour regarding Social Desirability Responding depending on the stake of the situation (high-stake, high-stake framed as low, low-stake). Those high in Honesty-Humility are expected to not adjust response behaviour regarding Social Desirability Responding depending on situational pressures (Zettler & Hilbig, 2010). Adjusting response behaviour here refers to distorting answers in a desirable way to fit the outcome e.g., trying to influence personality scores so that these fit the position.

To summarize, we assume that individuals low in Honesty-Humility strategically change their responding in relation to stakes of the situation, while individuals high in Honesty-Humility respond truthful in either case as this reflects the possession of socially desirable traits, and that framing effects should interact with this relation. Further, and in accordance with Crowne and Marlow (1964), we assume that a high-stake-low-framed situation reduces the adaptive nature of those individuals low in Honesty-Humility. From the above, the following hypotheses are derived:
H5: Individuals low in Honesty-Humility score higher in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in high-stake situations than in low-stake situations.

H5a: Individuals low in Honesty-Humility score lower in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in high-stake-low-framed situations than in high-stake situations.

H6: Individuals high in Honesty-Humility score equally high in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in high-stake, high-stake framed as low-stake, and low-stake situations.

**Method**

**Sampling**

The web-based questionnaire enabled us to recruit participants online via the business related social networks Xing and LinkedIn. On these network platforms we advertised the questionnaires using forum posts. Data was gathered over a period of 34 days. 21 outliers were detected using displayed plots for each scale of each group. As including them did not affect the results, they were left in the sample. After imputing means for missing values, we reached a total of 532 participants with complete questionnaires. Age ranged from 14 to 81 in years ($M = 33.9$, $SD = 14.4$). 64.3% of the participants were female. The main sample (94%) was of German nationality, other nationalities specified were Swiss (1.5%), Austrian (2.5%), and others (2.1%). The anticipated minimum sample size was statistically estimated using Cohen’s table (84 persons per group; Cohen, 1992) and is overtopped with 131 to 135 persons per group. Due to the marginal amount of non-German participants, we did not expect effects caused by Austrian, Swiss, or other cultures. The sample can be classified as WEIRD (western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic; Heinrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010) based on nationalities and participant sources we used. We intended to motivate individuals to participate by offering a raffle of four vouchers of an international online shop for various goods. Dropout rates were highest with 19.1% (Group 4; high-stake) and 17.1% (Group 2; low-stake, high-stake) for the groups that were tested under a high-stake frame. Most participants dropped out at the point the situational frame appeared. The group which did not have a situational frame
shown (low-stake) had similarly high dropout rates with 14.6% (Group 1; low-stake). The group which had the low-stake frame put on a high-stake situation showed the lowest dropout rates with 8.4% (Group 3; high-stake-low-framed). The detailed composition of different groupings is described in the following section.

**Design**

The study design consisted of four different groups that were distinguished by their situational conditions, while surveys remained the same throughout all four conditions (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-H</td>
<td>low-stake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CM</td>
<td>low-stake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDE</td>
<td>low-stake</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. n = subsample H-H = Honesty-Humility, CM = Communion Management, SDE = Self-Deceptive Enhancement*

Group 1 (low-stake) functioned as control group in which individuals were advised to answer the whole survey honestly and spontaneously as the data gathered was only used for research purposes. Thereby, a low-stake situational context was given. Group 4 (high-stake) represented the high-stake situational counterpart to Group 1. We activated the high-stake manipulation in Group 4 by providing a text that instructed the participants to imagine they are in an application process for a job position that they very much want to fill in and that the results of the study are crucial for the hiring decision. The instruction was given before the first survey started. Group 2 (low-stake, high-stake) and Group 3 (high-stake-low-framed) had manipulations following the completion of the Honesty-Humility-scale that was assessed under the low-stake condition (research purpose). After completing the Honesty-Humility-scale, Group 2 (low-stake, high-stake) was introduced to the identical high-stake condition as Group 4 to fill in the Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement scales. To create a high-stake situation under a
low-stake frame, Group 3 (high-stake-low-framed) was presented a text that instructed the participants to imagine they are in a job application process for a job position that they really want to fill in, but in this case the results are not crucial for the hiring decision. Instead, results are gathered to obtain a more general picture and impression of them as a candidate. We intentionally chose a different instruction than Crowne and Marlow (1964) as we aimed to test an instruction that is more applicable, especially regarding ethics and honesty towards applicants.

All participants received the same introduction to the study containing a vague description of the study’s purpose, information about the raffle, and the option to contact us if any questions emerged. Further, ethical aspects were addressed by ensuring anonymity, our exclusive use of data for this study, the option to withdraw from the participation, and the option to be fully informed about the study’s content subsequently to completing the questionnaire. 15 filling-items taken from other scales of the HEXACO-60 (Moshagen, Hilbig, & Zettler, 2014) were inserted to distract from the relevant data collection and to prevent participants from suspecting the study’s purpose (Duffy, Smith, Terhanian, & Bremer, 2005). Randomized and balanced allocation of the four different conditions was ensured through settings of the platform used to distribute the questionnaires (Soscisurvey).

**Surveys**

To assess Honesty-Humility, we administered the corresponding scale taken out of the German version (Moshagen et al., 2014) of the HEXACO-60 (short version; Ashton & Lee, 2009). Internal consistency is considered to be good (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .79$) as well as re-test reliability ($r_{tt} = .79$) and convergent validity based on the factor Agreeableness which is part of the FFM (Moshagen et al., 2014). Items are formulated in the form of statements, which are instructed to be answered on a scale from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree” (Ashton & Lee, 2009; for German version see Moshagen, Hilbig, & Zettler, 2014).

The German short version of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Response (BIDR, Musch, Brockhaus, & Bröder, 2002) based on the English version of the BIDR by Paulhus (1988) was used to assess the independent constructs Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management within the conceptualization of Social Desirability Responding. Participants were queried about expressions of Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management with
10 items, respectively. Convergent validity is verified based on other test instruments (e.g., Eifler, 2007). The minor correlation of both scales \( r = .11 \) supports assumptions of discriminant validity and respective independence between Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management. Internal consistency was found to be moderately high in the German version with Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .66 \) and \( .65 \), respectively. For single-case analyses, these figures are insufficient, albeit sufficient for group level analysis. Although dichotomous responding was authorized by Paulhus (1991), the continuous seven-point Likert-scale with answers ranging from 1 = “Not True” to 7 = “Very true” (for German version see Musch et al, 2002) was used due to reasons of validity (for further information see Stoeber, Dette, & Musch, 2002).

**Analysis**

Data was first prepared for analysis, including analysing outliers and dealing with missing data by imputing means. This was most appropriate as only a small amount of values were missing (0.066%). Assumptions (normality, absence of multicollinearity, homogeneity, etc.) were tested for which indicated parametric tests were appropriate. For four out of the present six hypotheses, Honesty-Humility scores were left continuous, while for H5, H5a, and H6 the Honesty-Humility mean variable was categorized into three categories ranging from low in Honesty-Humility (1 - 2.3), medium in Honesty-Humility (2.4 - 3.7), to high in Honesty-Humility (3.8 - 5). To get to these categories we split the cases ranging from low to high in Honesty-Humility by dividing the range between Min = 1 and Max = 5 through three. We used this rather unconventional technique to not only categorize and define “low” in Honesty-Humility based on our dataset but to consider all reachable values. This will be discussed later in this paper.

Anticipated relationships formulated in H1 and H2 were tested using Pearson’s correlation, with Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement as variables. Differences assumed in H3 and H4 were tested for using a MANOVA, using the grouping (1 - 4) as factor and Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement as outcomes. Differences assumed in H5, H5a, and H6 are also tested using a MANOVA but exclusively for cases scoring low and high in Honesty-Humility, respectively, with using grouping/situation as factor (IV) and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement as outcomes ( DVs).
Results

Descriptive Values

Descriptive values of each variable in each group are displayed below (Table 2). Internal reliabilities of the respective scales are acceptable and partly in line with previous research (Communion Management, Self-Deceptive Enhancement; Lönnqvist et al., 2007; Musch et al., 2002), partly slightly lower than previous research (Honesty-Humility; e.g., Ashton et al., 2014). Means range between $M = 3.52$ and $3.57$ (Honesty-Humility) between $M = 3.73$ and $4.00$ (Communion Management), and between $M = 4.38$ and $4.55$ (Self-Deceptive Enhancement).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. H-H: G1</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. H-H: G2</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. H-H: G3</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. H-H: G4</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CM: G1</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CM: G2</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. CM: G3</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-stake, Low-framed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. CM: G4</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. SDE: G1</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-stake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. SDE: G2</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Relationships between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement

We tested H1 and H2 (relationships between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement) using Pearson’s correlations. Each analysis was run with Honesty-Humility and either Self-Deceptive Enhancement or Communion Management. Within Group 1 that was assessed under low-stake situational influence (low-stake), the relationship between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management is significantly positive with $r = .507$ ($p < .001$). Against expectations, there is no significant relationship between Honesty-Humility and Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($r = .039$, $p = .651$). Thus, H1 is partly supported. This as well applies to H2, the relationship between Honesty-Humility and Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in high-stake situations with a correlation of $r = .508$ ($p < .001$) of Honesty-Humility and Communion Management, and again nonsignificant minor correlation of Honesty-Humility and Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($r = .118$, $p = .179$).

Differences in Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement dependent on Situational Factors

It is expected that there are differences between Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement among different situations. Starting with low-stake situations as baseline scores that supposedly map the most honest scores, up to scores assessed under high-stake conditions that are expected to be significantly larger, and with scores assessed under high-stake and low-framed conditions lying in between the two situations. First glances at descriptive values (Table 2) imply that there are differences in Means for Honesty-Humility and Communion Management in favour of the assumptions made in H3 and H4. Self-Deceptive Enhancement rarely shows any mean differences among situations. To test for significance in the differences, we ran a MANOVA with the groupings (stakes of situations) as IV and...
Honesty-Humidity, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement as DVs. Multivariate results of differences between groups are not significant when looking at Pillai’s Trace with $F(9, 1584) = 1.286$ and $\eta^2 = .007$ ($p = .240$). Univariate test results are also nonsignificant for all three DVs Honesty-Humidity ($F(3, 528) = .121$, $\eta^2 = .001$, $p = .948$), Communion Management ($F(3, 528) = 1.906$, $\eta^2 = .011$, $p = .128$), and Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($F(3, 528) = 1.559$, $\eta^2 = .009$, $p = .198$). As these differences are not significant, H3 and H4 cannot be supported.

**Differences in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement dependent on Honesty-Humidity between Situations (Interaction effect)**

To analyse if there are differences in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement between situations depending on scores in Honesty-Humidity, we used the categorized variant of Honesty-Humidity split into “low”, “medium”, and “high” in Honesty-Humidity. In the first step, we computed individual means. Means for Self-Deceptive Enhancement range between 4.29 and 4.98 while means for Communion Management range on a wider scale from $M = 2.03$ to 4.39. At first glance, there are no mean differences for Self-Deceptive Enhancement that exceed $MD = 0.6$. For Communion Management, there are visible tendencies for mean differences in favour of our assumption, i.e., individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humidity do generally also score low on Communion Management but when introduced to a high-stake situation, Communion Management scores are higher (e.g., $M = 2.03$ in low-stake and $M = 2.77$ in high-stake). Mean differences for individuals scoring high in Honesty-Humidity also appear to be in favour of our assumptions, as means hardly deviate from each other with a maximum mean difference of 0.29. For Communion Management, all means of the high-stake-low-framed condition (Group 3; e.g., $M = 2.45$) lie between Group 1 (low-stake; e.g., $M = 2.03$) and Groups 2 and 4 (high-stake; e.g., $M = 2.77$), which corresponds with our assumptions (H5, H5a). Significances of these relationships are subsequently checked.

Secondly, we exclusively included cases scoring “low” in Honesty-Humidity and checked for the impact of the situational stake (low-stake, high-stake, and high-stake-low-framed) on scores in Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement. We did the same for cases exclusively high in Honesty-Humidity. This allowed us to check for significant differences in
Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement (DVs) between groupings (IV) scoring either very low or rather high in Honesty-Humility.

For individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility ($n = 21$) multivariate test results (Pillai’s Trace) are nonsignificant ($F(6, 34) = .682, \eta^2 = .107, p = .665$), i.e. no significant differences occurred between groups, thus no effect of the IV on a linear combination of the DVs. Univariate tests of between-subjects effects based on groups are not significant for Communion Management ($F(3, 17) = .874, \eta^2 = .134, p = .474$) and Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($F(3, 17) = .764, \eta^2 = .119, p = .530$). Therefore, individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility do not significantly differ among situations when it comes to Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement. H5 and H5a cannot be supported.

For individuals scoring “high” in Honesty-Humility ($n = 241$) multivariate test results (Pillai’s Trace) are nonsignificant ($F(6, 474) = 1.163, \eta^2 = .015, p = .325$), i.e. no significant differences between groups. Tests of between-subjects effects based on groups are not significant for Communion Management ($F(3, 237) = 1.006, \eta^2 = .013, p = .391$) and Self-Deceptive Enhancement ($F(3, 237) = 1.362, \eta^2 = .017, p = .255$). Individuals scoring “high” in Honesty-Humility do not significantly differ among situations when it comes to Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement, and thus do not adapt their responding behaviour. H6 is supported.

**Discussion**

**Results**

While some of our hypotheses found significant support through our data, others did not. Still, there are tendencies that should be taken into account in further research. With regard to assumed positive relationships between Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement in both, low-stake (H1) and high-stake situations (H2), we found Honesty-Humility to significantly correlate with Communion Management in both, high-stake and low-stake situations. We ascribe Honesty-Humility the predicting role in this relationship, as Honesty-Humility is a stable personality trait is unlikely to be influenced by a possible unstable construct. However, only a longitudinal study is able to reveal causality. Interestingly, and against previous results (e.g., DeVries et al., 2014), Honesty-Humility did not correlate
with Self-Deceptive Enhancement neither under low-stake (H1) nor under high-stake conditions (H2). These findings advocate the assumption that Self-Deceptive Enhancement is mostly unconscious and not deliberately executed to the extent that Honesty-Humility or Communion Management. Findings may imply that expressed honesty and humility towards others does not say anything about how individuals have self-deceptive tendencies.

In H3 and H4, we assumed that there are significant differences within Honesty-Humility, Self-Deceptive Enhancement, and Communion Management between the three situations low-stake, high-stake, and high-stake-low-framed. Results show that there are no significant differences among situations for all three variables and between situations, i.e. that the stake of the situation does not influence test scores. For Communion Management, very minor tendencies in Mean differences were found that if were bigger, would support our assumptions. There are two possible reasons to explain these findings. First, there are no differences among responding behaviour between situations, i.e. Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement are not sensible towards situational influences, which contradicts former findings (e.g., Lönnqvist et al., 2007). Second, our manipulations operationalized by short texts are not powerful enough to inflict perceptions of being in a high-stake situation and therefore do not influence responding behaviour in the way an actual high-stake situation would do.

Underlying assumptions for H5, H5a, and H6 are that individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility adapt their responding behaviour more strongly in high-stake situations than individuals who score high in Honesty-Humility. Results do not show significant differences in responding behaviour for Communion Management neither for individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility nor for individuals scoring “high” in Honesty-Humility. However, Communion Management means show greater difference tendencies for individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility than for those scoring “high” in Honesty-Humility. These tendencies are in favour of our assumptions and in line with previous research (Zettler et al., 2013), as Communion Management scores are lowest in the low-stake situation and highest in high-stake situations. Despite apparent tendencies, the lack of significance does not allow us to conclude that individuals “low” in Honesty-Humility adapt their responding behaviour more strongly than individuals high in Honesty-Humility. Also in line with assumptions, but only shown as a tendency: Communion Management scores in the high-stake-low-framed situation are higher than low-stake scores but lower than high-stake scores. Still, there are no significant
results. The exploration of a very cautious interpretation of the nonsignificant results, leaves us with the assumption that a high-stake situation put under a low-stake frame comes closer to truthful (low-stake) scores than high-stake situations. Further investigations are necessary to confirm these assumptions. This could be achieved by enhancing the situational influence experimentally and under controlled conditions or in a field study with actual applicants.

In summary, Honesty-Humility is again confirmed to positively correlate with Communion Management, plus, individuals scoring high in Honesty-Humility under low-stake circumstances do not adapt their responding behaviour in high-stake situations. Non-significant tendencies show somewhat higher adjustment behaviour of individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility in high-stake situations. A low-frame imposed on a high-stake situation slightly (n.s.) regulates adjustment behaviour of individuals “low” in Honesty-Humility.

Neither the assumption of situational factors exerting influence on testing outcomes, nor the assumption that personality traits and faking interact based on situational factors can be confirmed based on our results. These aspects were expected to shed light on the mechanisms behind faking on applications. However, results may lack significance due to limitations listed in the next section. We found the methodological issues listed concerning the Social Desirability scale to be at least partly confirmed due to Communion Management measuring rather desirable traits than undesirable traits. Hence, the scale needs to be revised, i.e. scores are to be interpreted in a different way.

**Limitations**

There are a number of limitations that might possibly qualify our conclusions. First, and possibly the pivotal reason for our nonsignificant results are the operationalisations of manipulations we constructed in this study. Participants were instructed to imagine how they would act in a fictitious situation, which can strongly deviate from real behaviour. Studies such as Lönnqvist et al.’s (2007) investigated constructs based on real situational differences (applicants vs. employees) which in turn exerts more influence on the response behaviour of participants. Based on tendencies found in this study we expect that results become more meaningful when tested with stronger manipulations (e.g., real life situations). Also, checking for the activation of the manipulation is something we could have considered when gathering data; e.g., by including a control question that asks to indicate the perceived feeling of being in
a high-stake situation at the end of the questionnaire. Statistically, we expected medium effects and doubled the required sample size to display visible results, as we assumed the situational frames to be powerful enough. A bigger sample would have been able to display anticipated effects. To sum up, hypothetical situational frames are not the ideal choice to investigate Honesty-Humility, Communion Management, and Self-Deceptive Enhancement using situational influences.

Second, dropout is highest in the high-stake situation groups (Group 2 and 4) which indicates that participants were rather unwilling to imagine themselves in a situation that exerts comparatively more pressure and requires one to appear likeable. We derive this conclusion as the instructions in the high-stake-low-framed situation were even longer than the high-stake instruction, and dropout rates in high-stake-low-framed were lowest of all four groups. Hence, we do not assume that dropout rates are based on design features of the study (e.g., long texts). Thus, hypothetical imagination can be interpreted as too exhausting for participants, perhaps even anxiety provoking. Also, the setting is potentially influenced by other factors such as age and current employment status. Younger individuals may have an easier time imagining themselves to be in an application situation as they possibly have experienced it recently, or about to do so in the near future. People not intending to change their job or to apply for a position, may have a harder time to put themselves in a fictitious situation. Again, we come to the conclusion that experimental or field study conditions are more suitable when it comes to including situational frames as an independent variable. Third, as this is an online study the actual implementation period of participants filling in the surveys is not controllable in terms of distraction, concentration, etc. Thus, we were not able to control for confounding variables and check for activation of manipulation. However, the large number of participants is assumed to counterbalance these (Duffy et al., 2005).

Another limitation stems from the study’s sample. We have a rather homogenous sample regarding the criteria abbreviated as WEIRD (Heinrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). As seen in Crowne et al.’s study (1964), large differences in Social Desirability Responding were found between different social classes (prison inmates, prostitutes vs. upper classes). Since our hypotheses required distinct group differences regarding Honesty-Humility scores, our groups are unevenly big. The group with lowest Honesty-Humility scores is comparatively small which might be due to the sample being WEIRD. Hence, the relatively small group of individuals “low” in Honesty-Humility ($n = 21$) reduces the statistical power in two possible ways,
detecting an effect and detecting an unreliable effect. If we had a more heterogeneous sample
and a more powerful group of individuals scoring “low” in Honesty-Humility, relations and
dependencies between Social Desirability Responding and Honesty-Humility could possibly
have turned out to be more striking. The sample is also a crucial factor for generalising the
results. In this case, and due to our WEIRD sample, we assume that the results can be
generalised across German speaking countries regarding the population that fits the description
of our sample, i.e. working middle to upper class. We do not recommend generalising the results
across other countries, as cultural differences may influence effects.

Since this group is rather homogenous, Honesty-Humility scores are mostly distributed in the
upper levels and thus has only few participants scoring relatively low. Consequently, we
considered distributions found in other studies (e.g., Moshagen et al., 2014) to justify our
decision to categorize Honesty-Humility into three categories based on the scores that can be
reached. Usually, when dividing groups based on scores, the sample itself (scores that are
actually reached) serves as reference deciding upon which scores are to be interpreted as “low”
or “high” (mean plus/minus one or one and a half standard deviation). We explicitly decided
against this procedure as we are especially interested in those who score on the lower third of
the Honesty-Humility scale. That is, because those are the individuals that are of biggest interest
to prevent from behaving deceptively in application processes. “Normal” liars (“medium” in
Honesty-Humility) for example, are expected to not cause much harm or tremendous following
consequences when being hired. Even though our subsample (“low” in Honesty-Humility) is
very small and not that powerful, we kept that group as our hypothesis required a sample with
individuals scoring very low in Honesty-Humility. That is, because we assume that if
“extremely” dishonest individuals can be influenced to answer more honestly, e.g., by a low-
frame put upon a high-stake situation, this would at any rate prevent “normal” liars from
answering in a socially desirable way, too.

**Research Desiderata**

By considering several explanations for our results, the manipulations used in this study could
have been to be too weak, also when comparing with similar studies (Crowne & Marlow, 1964;
Lönnqvist et al., 2007). Consequently, for future research it is recommended to replicate this
study with stronger manipulations in terms of real situations, or optionally with participants
actually searching for a job, e.g., in an experiment or field study. Further, and in line with limitations, a more diverse sample may be valuable regarding the relation of Honesty-Humility and Communion Management. In case our results are valid and reliable, Communion Management and Self-Deceptive Enhancement are shown to not be influenceable by stakes of situations. Further, research is needed to investigate the character of the BIDR scales. Our results would then support the assumption that Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Communion Management scales rather measure substantive traits independent of situations instead of response sets or response styles which is in line with one of the three studies by Lönnqvist et al. (2007).

Significantly shown in this study and previous studies, Communion Management as part of Social Desirability Responding does not necessarily measure cheating or faking, but especially for individuals scoring high in Honesty-Humility, Communion Management measures desirable personality traits. Hence, scoring high on Communion Management should not compellingly be interpreted as something negative, but as possible positive personality expression when in line with high Honesty-Humility scores. Due to that, it is strongly recommended to verify and develop the construct and scale of Social Desirability Responding as such. A new form of measuring response behaviour and biases is necessary for a valid measurement of Social Desirability Responding with clear recommendation to discriminate new scales from actual personality factors.

Also striking in our study was the missing relation of Self-Deceptive Enhancement and Honesty-Humility, putting forward that Self-Deceptive Enhancement might indeed measure something else than Social Desirability Responding or, as argued in vast literature, is mainly unconscious and rather not to be influenced by other variables. Either way, the construct Self-Deceptive Enhancement needs further research and testing in terms of validity, content, and meaning.

**Practical Implications**

Based on the tendencies found in our study, and relying on theories and current trends, data gathered within the application process needs to be assessed in a more holistic way, integrating possible biases and dynamics of the situation (Deloitte, 2018). If interviewers fail to attend to and counteract these biases they may fail to make the best hiring choices for their organization.
People Analytics is in need of intelligent tools and concepts to make the talent acquisition process as valuable as possible for the organization and as attractive and comfortable as possible for applicants (Deloitte, 2018).

When considering our nonsignificant results, we can hardly recommend to use a certain frame to reduce social desirable responding. Also, we cannot recommend the BIDR to assess Social Desirability Responding as at least regarding Communion Management there are significant relations to Honesty-Humility which implies the measurement of actually desirable traits. However, exploring the option that our manipulations were solely not strong enough, we would recommend the frame which we used in this study or other modifications of it as we expect practical implications for personnel selection processes in terms of lowering social desirable responding due to reshaping the stake of situation. For companies it should be of higher interest to get to know the personality behind the applicant instead of putting candidates under stress due to particular questions (e.g., stress inducing questions), interview methods, and so forth, which will restrict the diversity of personality shown. Thus, establishing a good atmosphere and relation to candidates is of high relevance. When handing out personality tests in hiring processes, we do not assume that organizations do that using the description of the situation we operationalized in our high-stake frame. Still, if no information about the relevance of the tests is given, applicants may put themselves in the high-stake situation by assuming these tests are crucial for their hiring. For this, a test briefing that resembles our high-stake-low-framed description can take away pressure to appear best possibly good or most socially desirable. We advise organizations to remain cautious and to not deceive applicants by exaggerating irrelevance of these tests, as this must be considered unethical.

Conclusion

As yet, most studies concentrated on the distinct effects of Honesty-Humility, without sufficiently accrediting the influence of the situation. That is certainly interesting, as widely known and accepted assumptions found, for example in trait activation theory, highlight the unique interaction of situation and personality as driving behaviour (Zettler & Hilbig, 2013). Here, and in line with literature, results show tendencies in accordance with the aforementioned; namely situational factors play a role in shaping behaviour based on Honesty-Humility scores. Especially in the work context with regards to personality assessment, the particular impact of the situation needs to be considered when observing and analysing candidates in order to receive
valuable data. It is of tremendous relevance to further investigate the complex interaction effects of situation, personality, and behaviour in order to uncover the various possible manifestations of those. Only then, data can be put in a bigger picture and thus enable to draw more valuable conclusions when assessing applicants and or developing them.

Further, as lying and deceiving will most probably remain a problem in the future, standardized methods and scientific insights are strongly recommended to make use of such as framing an application situation to allow personality to drive behaviour rather than situational stressors. Organizations need tools and ways which provide them with the best possible decision-making basis in order to improve their recruiting and development processes and to reduce costs due to wrong hiring decisions (Zickar, Gibby, & Robie, 2004).

References


