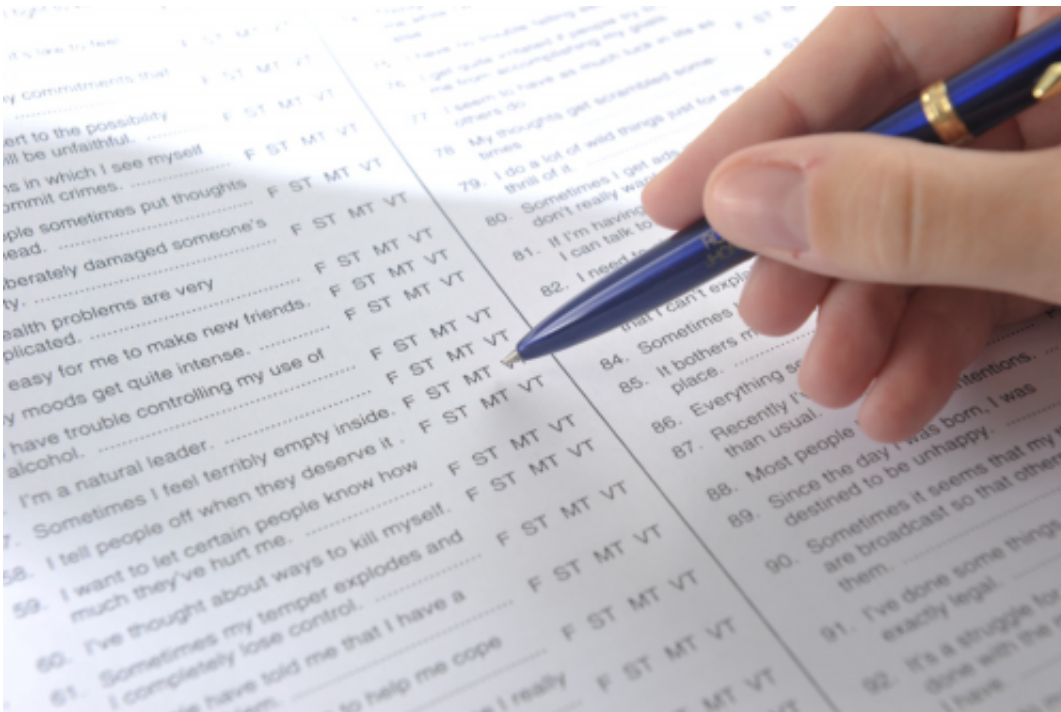


Study shows calm candidates perform better on tests used to screen job applicants

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Applying for a job can be stressful at the best of times and even more so in today's very competitive job market. For some it is especially daunting when standardized tests--a proven tool in the selection process--are required. A new study published in the Journal of Applied Psychology shows that candidates' reactions impact their performance on the test and on the job, but don't change the ability of the tests to reliably predict job performance. Credit: Ken Jones. University of Toronto Scarborough

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in today's very competitive job market. For some it is especially daunting when standardized tests—a proven tool in the selection process—are required. A new study published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* shows that candidates' reactions impact their performance on the test and on the job, but don't change the ability of the tests to reliably predict job performance.

Julie McCarthy, an associate professor in the Department of Management at the University of Toronto Scarborough who is cross appointed to the Rotman School of Management, says tests remain reliable predictors of job [performance](#) regardless of how [candidates](#) respond to this step in the selection process. How candidates react does, however, impact how well they can perform on these tests. "Candidates who experience high levels of anxiety for instance, will have low [test](#) performance while those who are motivated by tests will perform better, both on the test and on the job."

Prof. McCarthy points out that it is these types of behavioural responses that can also positively or negatively affect [job performance](#). Reactions considered situational, such as general skepticism about the tests themselves or about the fairness of using these tools, are also linked to test performance but are not directly linked to performance on the job.

Prof. McCarthy partnered with Chad Van Iddekinge from Florida State University, Filip Lievens from Ghent University, Mei-Chuan Kung from Select International in Pittsburgh, Evan Sinar from Development Dimensions International in Bridgeville Pennsylvania, and Michael Champion from Purdue University, to examine data from studies on three continents, looking at the extent to which reactions relate to [test performance](#) and to the outcome organizations care about most: performance on the job.

"The findings are an important consideration both for organizations and

for applicants," says Prof. McCarthy. "There is clearly value in training programs to help applicants minimize test anxiety and stay motivated."

For organizations, the findings provide additional support for the ability of standardized tests to reliably predict job performance. So while the tests themselves can be a useful tool, the testing process is also important since candidates develop an impression about the organization's culture and values. Candidates' reactions can influence their views and determine how they speak about their experience and about the organization.

Provided by University of Toronto

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