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Perception on Female Candidates for Managerial Positions – How Does the Experience of the Recruiter Influences Perception?

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1. Introduction

Managers may frequently trust their ability to “read people” (Myers, 2002) and base the selection on a “overall” judgement of the employee, rather than on evidence based on facts, tools and techniques of employee selection. Therefore, sometimes choice, which candidate gets hired and which not, is intuitive, irrational and not based on the actual facts.

In such situation, candidates are evaluated not only basing on their skills, knowledge and experience, but as well on intuition which is influenced by perception, prejudice and stereotypes. This maintains the error in the prediction of employee performance high. Additionally, creating place for discrimination and poorer evaluation of the candidate, while recruiter may not even be aware of it (Evans, 2008). In everyday life, also in the recruitment, gender is one of the major categorization – which cannot be omitted or escaped (Eagly and Carli, 2006). Additionally, stereotypes and prejudices are still existent in society, also with regard to perception of female manager. Therefore, in satiation when recruiter is basing an opinion on “gut feeling”, stereotypes and prejudice of women candidate (especially for management position) may bias recruiters opinion and evaluation. Moreover, more experienced and senior recruiters, tend to fall for the “gut feeling” choice, more often than those unexperienced, resulting.

2. Recruitment – theoretical background

Human decision making is far from the rationality, which is assumed in scientific management, but rather people’s decision are governed by two modes of cognition – system 2 and system 1 – cold and hot – rational and irrational – conscious and unconscious – and both are always present in the decision making (Evans, 2008). But intuition itself may be considered as automatic – emotionally driven judgments may arise through non-conscious associations (Dane and Pratt, 2007). Large portion of human decisions and problem solving is determined by the automatic information processing system (system 1). Which is effortless, rapid and unconscious. Apart from the decision making, it manages our tendencies, preferences and attitudes. The second system enables individuals to learn information deliberately, develop ideas and analyze. In case of intuition, it is based on the system 1 information processing – but not all nonconscious operations are competent of intuition itself (Dane and Pratt, 2007).

Research suggest, that intuitive judgments are inferior to rational models, but still may be helpful as a support to decision making techniques and tools. Intuition is created through habits and capacity for rapid responses through recognition,

but the capability to use intuition is created over several years practice, reflection and feedback (according to Simon's axiom 10 years and more).

In case of management, intuition is used when there is a large time pressure, high uncertainty or complexity of the problem, all of those factors foster the "gut feeling" decision as a substitute to the rational one. Under such conditions, experiences managers are using the "hot" cognition in the selection (Conway et al., 1995).

In this regard, development of the decision aids (paper-pencil tests, structured interviews) has been a great achievement in industrial and organizational (IO) psychology as it substantially decreases the error in the selection process (Highhouse, 2008). On the other side, great failure of the IO is the inability to convince managers to use them. Despite of the documented proves that paper-pencil tests outperform unstructured interviews, there still a belief that that choosing the "right" candidate is most effective when based on experience and intuition, not the available tools and tests (Highhouse, 2008). While research prove that experience does not improve predictions made by recruiters in terms of choosing the best employee, as interview-based judgments (highly subjective) never account for more than 10% of the variance in job performance (Conway et al., 1995).

3. Perception of women on leadership positions

As, during recruitment, large portion of the decision making is based on the attitude and categorization, the way women and men are perceived within the organizations, become crucial indicators, who gets hired. Research from 2016 prove that, when women applying for a management job, is in the minority in the candidate's pool, there is 0% chance that she will be the one winning the job, despite the skills, knowledge and experience (Kasperkievic, 2016).

Women's discrimination in the managerial positions goes beyond barriers to enter higher positions. Generally, women are perceived as worse leaders, due to long standing domination of this position by men, which have defined the styles to which people have been used to, therefore traits which are associated with the good leader are typically masculine (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This belief foster the situation in which men exercise more leadership (Eagly and Carli, 2001), as being leader by default. "Think manager – think male" is still existing belief and may foster "bias against women in managerial selection, placement, promotion and training decisions" (Schein, 2007).

Additionally, what creates even more negative perception on the female leader is the lack of fit. "People have similar beliefs about leaders and men, but

dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women” (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

As women are traditionally seen as caring, people oriented, warm and nice, while leaders have to be assertive, tough, result oriented, confident, this creates a situation where those two characteristics combined together create a mismatch. Typical leader should impose masculine traits, while women feminine and this creates a not coherent picture of the person, as a result a negative performance expectations is created which leads to biased evaluation of the performance and the negative attitude towards a person (Heilman and Eagly, 2008).

There are double standards for female and male leadership among the society, which are visible through prejudices, assumptions and differences in evaluation. The consequence of the biases against women, is that people diminish work of the female managers (Heilman, 2007), and in situation when value of work is impossible to be denied, people attribute success to the external factors rather than women’s abilities, and if even that is not possible, female manager is disliked, rejected and seen as a negative (Heilman, 2007).

The acceptance of the behavior is also different for female and male managers, the assertiveness dilemma is an example of such situation. If a female leader acts in a “too assertive way” it is seen negatively and associated with aggression, on the other hand if women is “too collaborative”, it is seen as not being adequate for the leadership position, as not being “tough enough”. Again this situation creates not coherent image of a women manager, when women is acting consistently with the gender stereotype, they are viewed as not competent enough – too soft, while when women is inconsistent with the stereotype, she is perceived as unfeminine – too tough (Kellerman and Rhode, 2009).

There is also visible dichotomy in the attitude towards authoritarian female manager and authoritarian male manager, as there is more acceptance for men to be authoritarian than for a women (Becker and Eagly, 2004). When a female chooses authoritarian style, she is seen as aggressive and her leadership is rejected, as women are stereotypically perceived as the “nice ones”, thus the autocratic style does not go in line with the niceness- resulting is unfavorable evaluation of a women.

The experiment at Harvard Business School by Professor Cameron Anderson and Professor Frank Flynn, showed how gender may encourage different attitudes towards successful individuals. Students were given the case study with the history of the successful female entrepreneur Heidi Rozen. Half of the respondents got the case with real name, while the other half were given cases with fake, male name – Howard. Even though the evaluation of the competences did not change with regard to the gender of entrepreneur, the attitude has

changed significantly. Respondents considered Howard to be more likable, and an appealing colleague. In the same time Heidi was seen as selfish and “not a type of person you would want to hire or work for” (Flynn and Anderson, 2002). This experiment proves that for women it is either to be successful and competent or likeable, but rarely both (Sandberg, 2013). “Success and likability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women” (Sandberg, 2013).

From another perspective, women may also be faced with another type of discrimination, connected with the physical attractiveness – in general unattractive and highly attractive women are at a disadvantage as a candidate for a managerial position (Bartol, 1980).

Stereotypes are greatly influencing the perception of the employees and the whole society on the female managers. This differences in the perception are affecting the attitude, evaluation, promotion and getting the job itself. Additionally, prejudices against female leaders are especially visible in the male-dominated roles, which are traditionally top management positions (Eagly and Karau, 1999).

4. Methodology

The present study sought to test for differences in evaluation of equally qualified men and women- candidates for a CEO positions and the influence of how the experience of the recruiter is affecting the overall evaluation.

There have been prepared two versions of the CV and story- one of a male and one of a female, apart from the gender difference, both CVs and stories were identical. Experiment was conducted in a native language of the participants to minimize the error in the answers and not influence the results. Questionnaire was divided into 4 parts; a) hireability, b) offered income c) likeability d) comments.

The participants in this experiment were 50 MBA students and 50 Master program students from Koźmiński University in Warsaw.

MBA participants have managerial experience, thus are familiar with the recruitment process in the companies, while the other half have not a practical experience in recruitment. The CV of either male or female candidate was equally distributed between the respondents.

In order to avoid gender-conscious response, the question regarding gender of the participant was asked as the last question, thus after all the data were applied into the survey. Both survey and CV was consulted with the faculty doctor in Psychology to limit the possibility of bias and to ensure that presented scenario and CV were realistic.

Taking under consideration that respondents were given both types of measurements – CV (rational) and story (irrational), thus recruiters have a choice

whether to base their opinion on the facts or intuition. While it is stated that intuition is created after at least 10 years of expertise, it may suggest that MBA students will be basing their opinion on intuitive factors not the rational ones. While inexperienced on facts – as their intuition did not have time to build-up yet. It would suggest that the discrepancies between evaluation of male and female candidate should be less significant in case of master students – as (having no intuition yet) be more likely to base their evaluation on facts – not subjectivity.

On the other hand, more experiences recruiters, given the right tools-resume in this case, would be more effective in analyzing it – knowing what to focus on, therefore their evaluation of male and female candidate should be less differentiated than in case of the inexperienced respondents.

5. Results

Part 1

In part 1, participant were to rate candidate on the scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 stated for NO and 5 for YES). Out of six questions five of them were statistically significantly influenced by the experience of the respondent, in case of master students gender was influential in all the questions, while for MBA students only in two questions. Table 1 (in appendixes) presents the average results along with significance levels, for MBA students, Master students as well as MBA and Master students compared.

In the following part, there are visible discrepancies in the evaluation of male and female candidate between the MS students and MBA students. In case of MBA students, the only question that was significantly influenced by the gender of the candidate, regarded becoming friends with the candidate. While in case of MS students, all of the questions in this part were influenced by the gender of the candidate, which indicates that for less experienced recruiters gender of the candidate is more important. When comparing question regarding becoming friends (in both groups statistically significant, $p < 0.05$), the discrepancy between male and female candidate is 30% for MS students and only 17% for MBA (both on favor of male). It means that MS students are more critical towards a female candidate than MBA students. MS students results, indicate that they would prefer to be friends with a male by 30% higher than with a female, while MBA's discrepancy was lower by half for both candidates. Moreover, program of the participants, had a significant effect on the evaluation of the female candidate as a friend material ($p < 0.01$).

Results from this section clearly present that both gender of the candidate and the program of studies have significant influence on the perception of the

female candidate. In question “Would you recommend this candidate?”, MBA students, were not significantly impacted by the gender of the candidate, while MS students evaluated female candidate by 12% less favorably than male candidate. The difference between MBA and MS students was significant in this question, as MS students would on average recommend the candidate (with no regard to gender) by 21% more likely than the MBA students.

Similarly, in case of employability, where gender of candidate for MBA students, did not indicate any significant differences, while, they were judging both candidates less favorably than MS students. As a result, MBA candidate would hire female candidate by 31% less likely than MS student, and male candidate by 23% less likely.

In questions regarding being appropriate for the position and, coping on the position, the program of the participant had significant impact only on the evaluation of the male candidate, where again, MBA students were less likely to give positive scores, and the difference between the programs was 17% and 30% as following. The difference between the students of MBA and MS program was also significant in this part, as MBA students evaluated the adequacy of the candidate by 19% less, compared to MS.

Part 2

Program of the studies had a significant effect on the overall offered income to both male and female candidates in the study (Table 2). Thus, MBA candidates on average offered lower income to both candidates. For both MS and MBA respondents, gender of the candidate indicated statistically significant differences (in both $p < 0.05$). On average MBA students offered less income to female candidate by 16%, while MS students by 10%. Even though, MBA students, offered income for both male and female candidate was lower in comparison to MS students, still MBA students, were more critical towards female candidate than Master students.

Part 3

In third part, respondents were asked to choose on the blank scale amount to which they rate the candidate as likeable. Questions in this section were constructed with positive and negative adjectives on the opposite sides of the scale, where respondents had to choose which is more adequate for the described candidate. In analysis of the results, the scale has been divided into 10 points, where 10 stood for the most positive and 1 for least positive attitude. The middle value on the scale was 6, thus results below 6 indicate negative attitude, while

above 6 positive attitude towards a candidate. All the results are presented in Table 3 in appendixes.

When comparing statistically significant results from each group of students, with respect to gender, there are visible high discrepancies with regard to the program of studies.

Firstly, in case of MBA students there were less questions influenced by the gender of the candidates. Out of eleven questions in Part 2, five were affected by the gender, while in case of MS students, eight were significantly influenced by gender of the candidate (all $p < 0.05$).

Despite the fact that in case of MBA students, gender did not have any statistically significant effect on the "interesting personality" variable, in case of MS students there was observed a high significance ($p < 0.01$) and additionally high discrepancy. As a result, MS students evaluated female candidate as 24% less interesting than male candidate. Moreover, results of a female candidate were allocated in the negative part of the scale (below 6), thus evaluated as not interesting, while male candidate was positioned in the middle of the scale closer to statement of "interesting".

The only variable that was not significantly influenced by the gender among MS students, but only for MBA students, was perceived honesty ($p < 0.05$). MBA's perceive women as less honest than an identical male candidate by 11%. Despite the fact that MBA and MS students has practically the same overall evaluation on the honesty of candidates, the significance of gender was different with regard to experience. As not only, gender was important in the evaluation of honesty for MBA students, but in comparison to MS, they were less critical towards a male candidate and more critical towards a female. So despite, the overall difference was not large, the difference in perceived female candidate's honesty prevailed on the results.

In case of competence, both groups were affected by the gender of the candidate and both evaluated female candidate as 12% lower than male candidate with high significance level ($p < 0.01$). Both, MBA and MS, evaluated female candidate as less competent by 2 points lower, when compared to male.

For MBA students, perceived intelligence of the candidates were not dependent on the gender, while for MS indicated that gender affected the results with 99% sureness. In case of MS, female, similarly as in the previous question was evaluated by 12% lower than male candidate, but still her results were on the positive range of the scale (amounting to 8,28 points). Despite that the difference between perceived intelligence between male and female candidate was not large (12%), male candidate received twice as much results on the level of 9 and 10 than a women.

Perceived niceness was affected by gender in both groups with high significance (all $p < 0.01$), moreover in both of them the discrepancy was the highest between male and female candidates. MBA students have evaluated female candidate on average by 22% less nice, MS students by 26% less, compared to men. In case of MBAs, 92% of negative responses were allocated to female candidate, similarly, in case of MS all of negative responses were given to females. Similarly, in both cases, male candidate was ranged on the positive side of the scale, while female on the negative, thus male was perceived as nice, while female as not nice.

Perceived morality was not influenced by the gender of the candidate in case of MBA students, while gender was influential for MS group ($p < 0.05$). Perceived morality, has indicated least divergent results between male and female candidate. Still, male candidate was perceived as statistically significantly as more moral than a female by 9% and one fourth of all respondents gave him the highest mark in morality, while no respondent did give to female candidate. Gender of the analyzed candidate, has affected the results on perceived helpfulness for both groups of students (both $p < 0.05$). MBA on average have evaluated candidates as less helpful than MS did, moreover, the discrepancy between female and male candidate was higher for MBA's. It means that they not only overall evaluated candidates less favorably, but were even more critical to female candidates than MS students.

Perceived support was not influenced by the gender of the candidate in case of MBA students, while was influential for MS group ($p < 0.01$). On average male candidate was perceived as more supportive by 22%, with 99% sureness. Furthermore, male candidate was judged as positive, while female as negative in perceived support.

Similarly as in case of niceness, perceived friendliness indicated high discrepancy with regard to gender ($p < 0.01$). MBA students rated female as 18% less friendly, while MS students by 29% less friendly. In case of MS, friendliness indicated highest discrepancy, while for MBA the most visible difference is in niceness.

The overall attitude towards the female and male candidates indicates high significance value ($p < 0.001$), for both groups of students. Both had a 257% discrepancy between the results for male and female. And both had identical average scores for male and female (0,44 and -0,28 accordingly). Thus female candidate has elicited negative attitude, while male positive for MS and MBA students. Majority of evaluations in case of male candidate were neutral, while in case of female candidate – negative.

Part 4

When looking at comments which were given to male and female candidate, it was clear that female candidacy for the CEO position has aroused more emotional responses, while male's candidacy was neutral in majority (Table 4).

When it comes to description of each candidate, male and female were evaluated from different perspectives. Therefore, when female candidate was positively evaluated she was described as: *loyal, hardworking and experienced*, while male candidate when received positive responses was described as: *intelligent, skillful, professional, competent, nice and trustful*. Thus, female candidate was appreciated for things that are easy measurable: *loyalty* and *experience* (amount of time spent in one company) and *hard work* (characteristics that can be measured and evaluated), while male candidate was appreciated for soft issues, difficult to measure and analyze.

When it comes to negative attitude, male candidate did not receive any strictly negative response, but they were either mixed with positive or neutral. Among negative characteristics allocated to male candidate there was: *indistinct, grey, fuzzy, without personality*, thus all negativity was built around his lack of personality. In case of female candidate, respondents were less sympathetic, describing her as: *not nice, no potential, no authority, closed, introvert, not a leader*. In comparison to fuzzy picture of the male candidate, female candidacy gave a bright, negative picture of a female, where respondents were more judgmental towards her. Female candidacy has aroused not only negative attitude, but most importantly, strong emotionality between the respondents.

6. Conclusions

Recruiters evaluate candidates not only basing on the skills and knowledge of the candidates, but a large portion of the decision making is based by the intuition, which is affected by the perception and attitude. Research prove that intuitive judgments are not as effective as rational models, leading to biased decision making. Research also suggests that intuition in the recruitment process is created only after years of practice, thus experience and skillful recruiters may fall more likely to the intuitive judgments, not supported by skills or qualifications.

In recruitment for managerial position, stereotypes, male domination in the top managerial positions leads to the idea of a man as a leader by default and therefore resulting in discrimination of women.

Empirical research suggests that in fact more experienced and senior recruiters may turn out to be more susceptible to subtle gender bias. While

research indicated different conclusions, as with 95% sureness, less experienced recruiters may be more likely to evaluate female candidates in less favorable way. Additionally, unexperienced respondents significantly less often would hire a women, than men, while experienced where equally eager to higher both men and women. Both groups offered women significantly lower salary, than to men, while the discrepancy was higher for experienced than unexperienced recruiters, which additionally offered lower income overall for all candidates. Which suggests, that even though the average offered salary was lower, still women were offered substantially lower incomes than men, when being evaluated by experienced, recruiters.

From another side recruiters with no experience were more likely to be more critical towards women in terms of becoming friends, giving recommendations, adequacy for the position and coping on the position. While experienced recruiters, where not affected by the gender of respondent in the evaluation, in the same time, unexperienced were significantly affected by the gender as evaluation of women was negative, when compared to men. Overall, experience influences overall judgement of the candidates, as they tend to be more demanding. It means that overall, MBA's were more critical, evaluating candidates as less hireable, less appropriate for the position, offered less recommendation, with no regard to gender of the candidate. While in case of MS students, gender was an important differentiation, which affected the overall evaluation.

Experience of the recruiters, has also influenced the perceived competences of women, their perceived intelligence, morality and support, as for unexperienced recruiters, gender was an influential factors, on favor of men. Gender has influenced both groups in evaluation of perceived niceness, helpfulness and overall evaluation, where women on average were described in negative way while men in positive.

Gender of the respondents, had not significant effect on the discrepancies of men and women evaluation, which suggests that poorer evaluation of women are not due to hostility but, prevailing subtle gender prejudice.

The experiment presents, that both experienced and unexperienced recruiters may be susceptible to gender bias in recruitment for top managerial position. Both, have evaluated female less favorably in terms of offered income and perceived niceness. In the same time, unexperienced respondents in the recruitment field, were even more critical in terms of evaluation of females competences and employability.

Despite that more experienced recruiters, could be more volatile to basing their evaluation on intangible factors, the unexperienced recruiters presented large discrepancies between man and women evaluation.

Research proves, that still gender bias within the organization may influence the outcome of the recruitment process, especially in the men – dominated field as top management, but on the other side, it also proves that the more experienced the recruiters are, the less likely to be prone to biases towards women.

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Appendixes

Table 1. Average and significance of the first part of the questionnaire. $n_{master\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{master\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{all\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 50$, $n_{all\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 50$

	Master				MBA				Master vs. MBA (all)			
	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig.	male	female	difference	sig.
Employability	4.08	3.68	10%	p<0.01	3.32	2.8	-19%	p>0.05	3.88	3.06	-0.26797	P<0.05
adequate for position	4.16	3.6	13%	p<0.01	3.2	3.08	-4%	p>0.05	3.88	3.14	-0.23567	p>0.05
ability to cope on the position	4.08	3.6	12%	p<0.01	3.56	3.32	-7%	p>0.05	3.84	3.88	-0.11628	P<0.05
chance for success	4.16	3.6	13%	p<0.01	3.8	3.64	-4%	p>0.05	3.88	3.72	-0.04301	P<0.05
recommendaion of candidate	4.08	3.6	12%	p<0.01	3.24	2.8	-16%	p>0.05	3.84	3.02	-0.27152	P<0.05
friend material	3.52	2.48	30%	p<0.01	3.6	3	-20%	p<0.05	3	3.3	0.090909	P<0.01

Table 2. Average and significance of the second part of the questionnaire. $n_{master\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{master\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{all\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 50$, $n_{all\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 50$

	Master				MBA				Master vs. MBA (all)				
	min-max	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig.	male	female	difference	sig.
offered income	0-3500	2860	2562	-12%	p<0.001	2684	2264	-19%	p<0.05	2711	2474	-10%	p<0.001

Table 3. Average and significance of the third part of the questionnaire. $n_{master\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{master\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{all\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 50$, $n_{all\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 50$

	Master			MBA			Master vs. MBA (all)					
	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig.
interesting	6.8	5.2	-31%	p<0.01	6.84	6.04	-13%	p>0.05	6	6.44	7%	p<0.01
Honest	8.8	8.32	-6%	p>0.05	9.12	8.16	-12%	p<0.05	8.56	8.64	1%	p<0.01
competent	9.48	8.32	-14%	p<0.01	9.16	8.08	-13%	p<0.01	8.9	8.62	-3%	p<0.01
intelligent	9.36	8.28	-13%	p<0.01	8.76	8.48	-3%	p>0.05	8.82	8.62	-2%	p<0.01
Nice	7.28	5.4	-35%	p<0.01	7.12	5.56	-28%	p<0.0001	6.34	6.34	0%	p<0.01
Moral	8.28	7.56	-10%	p<0.05	8.08	7.32	-10%	p>0.05	7.92	7.7	-3%	p<0.01
conflicting	3.6	3.68	2%	p>0.05	3.64	4.28	15%	p>0.05	3.64	3.96	8%	p>0.05
helpful	8	6.88	-16%	p<0.01	7.68	6.32	-22%	p<0.05	7.44	7	-6%	p<0.01
career oriented	4.6	5.36	14%	p>0.05	3.8	4.68	19%	p>0.05	4.98	4.24	-17%	p>0.05
supportive	7.32	5.68	-29%	p<0.01	7.16	6.28	-14%	p>0.05	6.5	6.72	3%	p<0.01
friendly	7.32	5.2	-41%	p<0.01	6.36	5.2	-22%	p<0.01	6.26	5.78	-8%	p<0.01

Table 4. Average and significance of the fourth part of the questionnaire. Scale: 1 represents positive attitude, 0 neutral and -1 negative attitude. $n_{master\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{master\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{MBA\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 25$, $n_{all\ male\ candidate\ condition} = 50$, $n_{all\ female\ candidate\ condition} = 50$

	Master			MBA			Master vs. MBA					
	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig	male	female	difference	sig.
attitude	0.44	-0.28	257%	p<0.001	0.44	-0.28	257%	p<0.001	0.44	-0.28	2.571429	p<0.001