

Justice and Qing-Li: The Influence of Favoritism-Based Versus Competence-Based Personnel Decisions on the Evaluations of Leader's Impartiality and Renqing

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The study aimed to examine the influence of favoritism-based vs. competence-based personnel decisions on evaluations of leader's impartiality and renqing. The study designed a scenario about personnel promotion in the context of hospitals. Two chief residents were candidates for a visiting staff. While the excellent candidate was described as not having a relationship with the superintendent, either as his alumnus or as his close friend, the other was incompetent, and his relationship with the superintendent was manipulated, according to guanxi and category group, as the "alumnus and non-friend," "non-alumnus and friend," or "non-alumnus and non-friend." The decision to promote either the excellent or the incompetent candidate was manipulated. Totally, 173 students of medicine school were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions: 2 (excellent vs. incompetent) x 3 ("alumnus and non-friend," "non-alumnus and friend," or "non-alumnus and non-friend"). It was hypothesized that procedural justice (PJ) intensified the effect of distributive justice (DJ) on the impartiality evaluation. High/low PJ (impartial/partial decision) was predicted to enhance the positive/negative effect of high/low DJ (promoting the competent/the incompetent candidate) on the impartiality evaluation. As predicted, the "promote-competence and reject-guanxi" effect and the "reject-competence and favor-guanxi" effect on the impartiality evaluation were found, but the "promote-competence and reject-category" effect and the "reject-competence and favor-category" effect were not confirmed. Furthermore, because of the unity of "qing and li," it was hypothesized that the "favor-guanxi" (he qing) effect of the decision can moderate the negative effect of the "reject-competence" (bu he li) on the renqing evaluation and that the "reject-guanxi" (bu he qing) effect can decrease the positive effect of the "promote-competence (he li)." As predicted, the "reject-competence and favor-guanxi" effect on the renqing evaluation was found, but the hypothesized "promote-competence and reject-guanxi" effect was absent. Category group effect on the renqing evaluation was not found, which implied that the concept of the "renqing" was not suitable for the category group. The study concluded with the discussions on impartiality and renqing from justice and "qing and li" perspectives, differentiation of guanxi and category, and the theoretical and practical implications.

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