Games and Simulations in Soft Skills Training

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RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of the study was to determine if the use of a simulated interview program, Perfect Interview™ Interview Coach, improved confidence and preparedness of interview skills exhibited during the interview process.

HYPOTHESIS

Participants who completed four online interview simulations will report higher levels of perception in confidence and preparedness than participants who had no access to the online interview simulation.
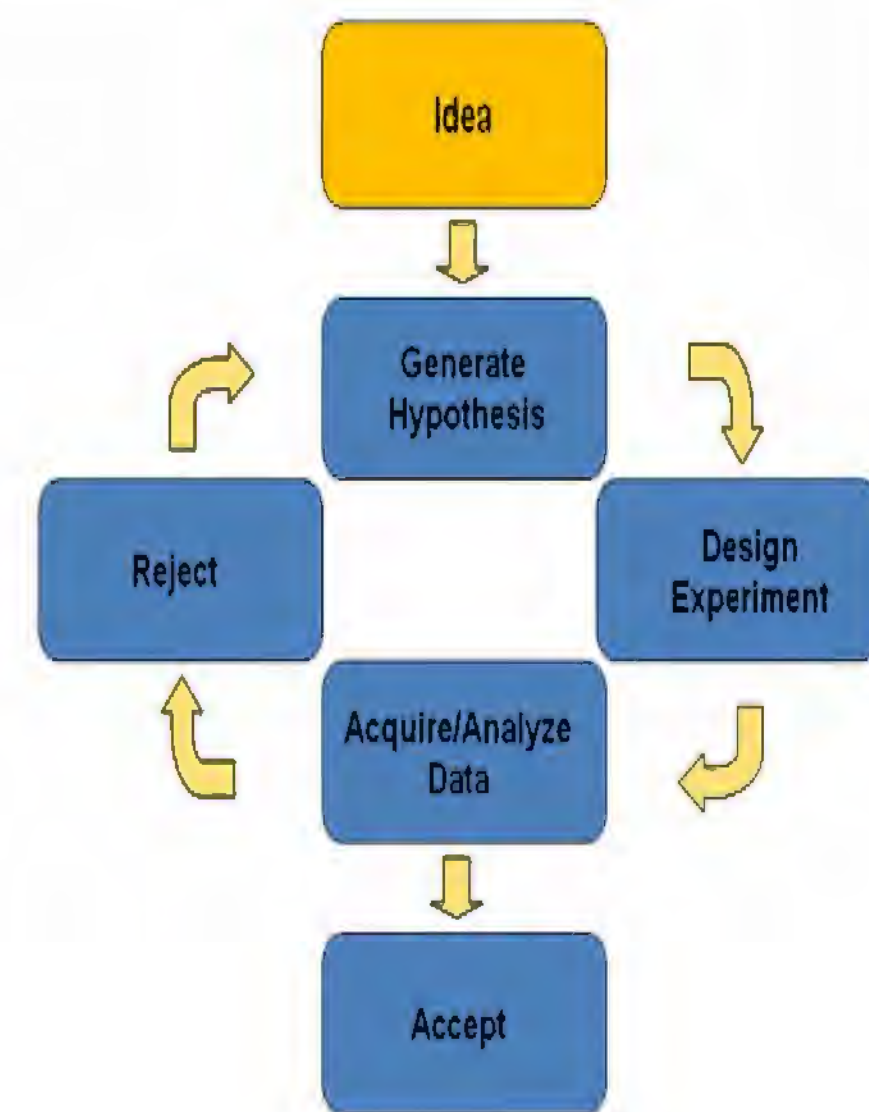
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Employers expect applicants to exhibit soft skills that include communication, decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving during the job interview, in addition to being prepared to answer, as well as ask questions, and promote a confident image (Deepa & Seth, 2013).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research indicates employers demand applicants exhibit soft skills such as communication, decision making, critical thinking, and problem solving in the interview process. In addition, research supports games and simulations as successful tools for soft skills training for businesses, military and service personnel, and medical personnel (Barjis, Gupta, Sharda, Bouzdine-Chameeva, Lee, & Verbraeck, 2012; Chad Lane, Hays, Core, & Auerbach, 2013; Klopfer, Osterweil, Groff, & Hass, 2009; Sharma, Shaba, Riddell, Kalsi, Arya, & Grange, 2009).

METHOD

Survey Instrument

The survey included elements from two instruments used in similar studies. The final survey included 8 demographic questions and 18 statements related to confidence and preparedness in a job interview process. A five response Likert scale was used to indicate participant perceived levels of confidence and preparedness for a real-life interview (strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree).

Focus Groups

Two focus groups were involved in validating the survey instrument. The first focus group consisted of five subject matter experts who work directly with the student population in career advising and workforce solutions. The second focus group consisted of ten students representing the target population. Both focus groups provided feedback regarding use of terminology and clarity of the instructions and statements.

Participants

Participants of this study included students enrolled in one of ten Interpersonal Communications courses at a southcentral Kentucky community college during the Fall 2015 semester. A total of 120 students were selected to potentially participate; however, 47 students agreed to participate. The experimental group that participated in the online interview simulation included 20 participants and the control group that had no access to the online interview simulation included 27 participants.

Simulation Activities

Participants in the experimental group participated in four online interview simulations. Perfect Interview™ Interview Coach established a webpage for the online simulations and set up logins for each participant. Participants used a webcam and recorded their interviews, which consisted of 7 -10 questions randomly selected from a database of 1,500 interview questions. Participants could review the recordings to determine areas of improvement. After four sessions were completed, participants had access to the survey instrument.

Data Analysis

This study used a two-tailed t-test to determine if there existed a significant difference in levels of confidence and preparedness between the experimental group and the control group.

FINDINGS

Results of the study did not reveal a significant difference between the control group, who had no access to the online simulation, and the experimental group, who participated in four sessions of the online simulation, regarding higher levels of confidence or preparedness as none of the eighteen t-tests were significant at $p < .05$.

Table 1 depicts the results of confidence as a percentage of the sample: control vs. experimental.

Table 2 depicts the results of preparedness as a percentage of the sample: control vs. experimental.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study did not support the hypothesis that participants who completed four online interview simulations would report higher levels of perception in confidence and preparedness than participants who had no access to the online interview simulation; therefore, we fail to reject the null.

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