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Save the Last for the Best: The Halo Effect and the Impact of Last Experience on Judgment

Ni Wayan Yuli Anggreni
Universitas Pendidikan Nasional, Indonesia
Email: wayanyulianggreni@undiknas.ac.id

KEYWORDS
End experience; posivity bias; early adulthood

ABSTRACT
Early adulthood is a developmental stage characterized by increased autonomy, where individuals actively make independent decisions and explore various choices to gain experience. College students, as part of this stage, often utilize opportunities to evaluate products and experiences that may shape their preferences and judgments. One psychological phenomenon related to decision-making is the end experience effect, which suggests that the final part of an experience can disproportionately influence overall evaluations, potentially leading to a positivity bias. This study aimed to examine the effect of end experience on individual assessments of chocolate consumption among college students, specifically investigating whether end experience influences positivity bias. The hypothesis proposed that participants exposed to a more positive end experience would demonstrate higher positivity bias in their evaluations. The study employed an experimental posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups, consisting of an experimental group and a control group. A total of 24 participants (12 male and 12 female), aged 19–24 years, were involved in the study. Data were analyzed using an independent samples t-test to compare the assessment outcomes between groups. The results indicated that there was no significant effect of end experience on positivity bias among students ($t = -0.801$, $p = 0.432$). These findings suggest that, within this context, end experience alone may not be sufficient to shape evaluative bias in early adulthood. The study contributes to the understanding of decision-making processes and highlights the need for further research with larger samples and varied stimuli to better capture the complexity of experience-based evaluations.

INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood is a developmental stage characterized by individuals' desires to achieve autonomy and prove their capabilities through independent decision-making (Arnett, 2015). Typically spanning ages 20 to 25, this phase includes many undergraduate and postgraduate students (Tanner & Arnett, 2021). Key cognitive characteristics of early adulthood include the capacity for reflective and abstract thinking (King et al., 2022). Reflective thinking enables individuals to actively, persistently, and carefully evaluate information and beliefs by weighing supporting evidence (Magolda, 2019). Concurrently, abstract thinking allows for the analysis of various opportunities in one's environment to realize personal aspirations (Kuhn, 2020).

Various opportunities arise in the surrounding environment, and it depends on how one seizes them (Lerner et al., 2020). In pursuing these opportunities, individuals categorized as early adults try to use their analytical skills to achieve the best outcomes (Fischer & Bidell, 2017). However, not all efforts made through analysis yield the best results (Schwartz et al., 2020). Every effort sometimes leads to failure but sometimes to success (Hoyt, Burnette, & Mui, 2019; Duckworth & Gross, 2014).

Opportunities are well executed one after another, but the majority of people strive to perform their best on the last opportunity. Early adults behave similarly (Beier et al., 2022). After realizing that a moment or event is the last chance, they will try their hardest to make the best impression. This can be described as a positive bias. Positive bias is a behavioral approach associated with achieving survival and self-actualization (Peeters, 1971). Positive bias allows individuals to recall good experiences more readily than bad ones. When individuals undergo various events, those who tend to remember and interpret experiences more positively are said to demonstrate positive bias in cognition.

Previous research has shown that a prominent end can foster a more positive attitude toward preceding events. For example, students reminded of graduation felt greater affection for their school than students who were not given such reminders (Ersner-Hershfield, Mikels, Sullivan, & Carstensen, 2008). Similarly, people who were relocated valued their hometown friends more than those who did not consider relocation (Fredrickson & Carstensen, 1990). A journal from the Association for Psychological Science examines "Save the Last for the Best: The Halo Effect and the Impact of Last Experience on Judgment" with the example of "The last kiss before going off to war". Consequently, individuals experience something "last" with deep pleasure and affection. The last is best bias also applies to non-specific events, as people show preference when something is presented as the latter. Based on this explanation, the researcher aims to study the influence of recent experiences on positive bias assessment in students.

METHOD

This study is a direct replication of the experiment conducted by O'Brien & Ellsworth (2012). Participants were 24 students (12 male, 12 female) aged 19 to 24 years. A quasi-experimental method was employed, utilizing a posttest-only design with nonequivalent groups. This design involves measuring outcomes only after treatment administration without random assignment of participants to conditions.

x	O1
	O2

Information:

X = Perlakuan/*Treatment*

O1 = *Post-test* for the Experimental Group

O2 = *Post-test* for the Control Group

Figure 2. Research Design

The design of this research can be explained as follows:

1. *Treatment*

The 24 participants will be divided into two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group consisted of 12 people (6 males and 6 females), as well as the control group consisted of 12 people (6 males and 6 females). Each participant in each group will be given 5 pieces of chocolate with dark, white choco, praline, 3613aramel and milk choco flavors. The participants were not told how much chocolate to taste. An experimenter randomly took one chocolate at a time from each flavor hidden in a bag filled with chocolate (a hidden bag was used so participants wouldn't know how many pieces of chocolate they would be given). The description of the implementation is as follows:

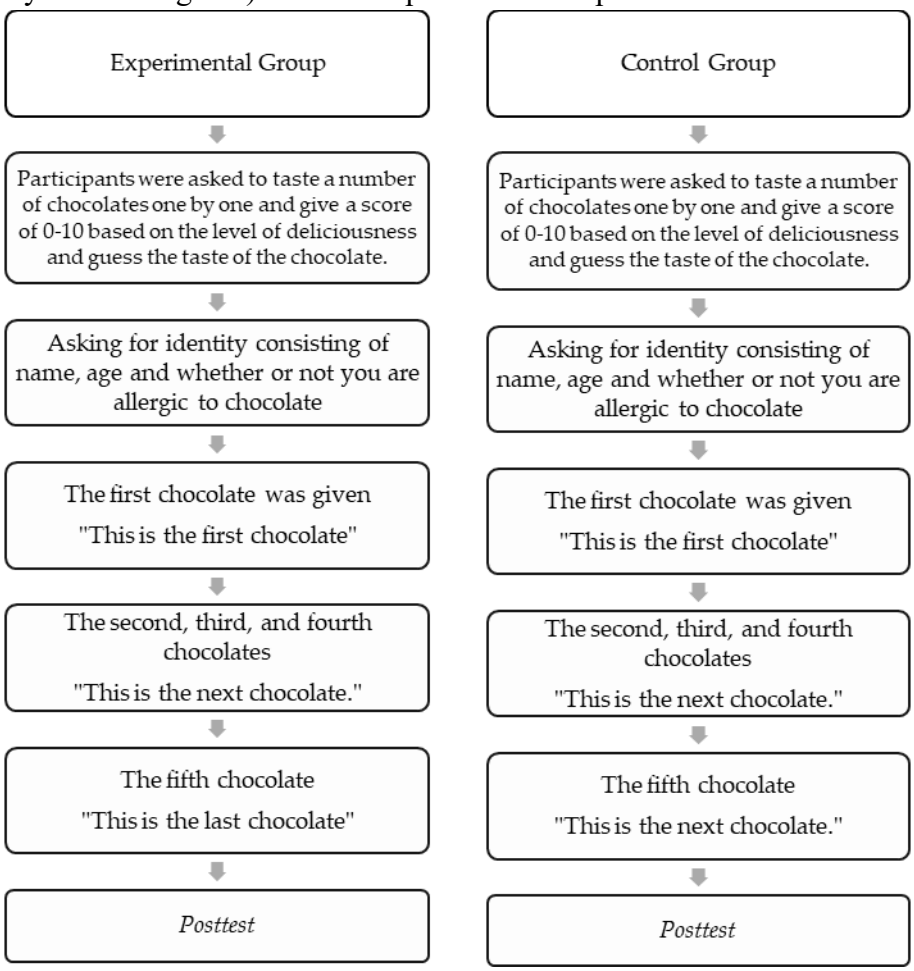

Chart 1. Experimental Execution

2. *Post-test*

At this stage, participants are asked to give value (enjoyment) to each chocolate that has been tasted. The range of values that can be given is 0-10. The higher the score given, it indicates that the stronger the chocolate affects the level of enjoyment of the participants. Participants were also asked to guess the flavor of the chocolate they tried. It is used as one of the controls to find out the chocolate that is randomly given.

Data collection was carried out individually using the quota sampling method where the researcher found subjects one by one in the campus environment who were willing to be the research subjects. Once the sample quota desired by the researcher is met, the data collection is stopped. Data analysis in this study used an independent t-test sample, namely by comparing the assessment on the 5th chocolate between the control group and the experimental group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results of the analysis of the different tests using independent t-test samples, it was found that there was no difference in the value (enjoyment) in the 5th chocolate between the control group (M = 6.98, SD = 1.12) and the experimental group (M = 7.37, SD = 1.26), t(22) = -0.801, p=0.432. This suggests that the last chance given to try chocolate does not increase the enjoyment of the individual. The average results of the overall participant scores both in the control and experimental groups can be explained as follows:

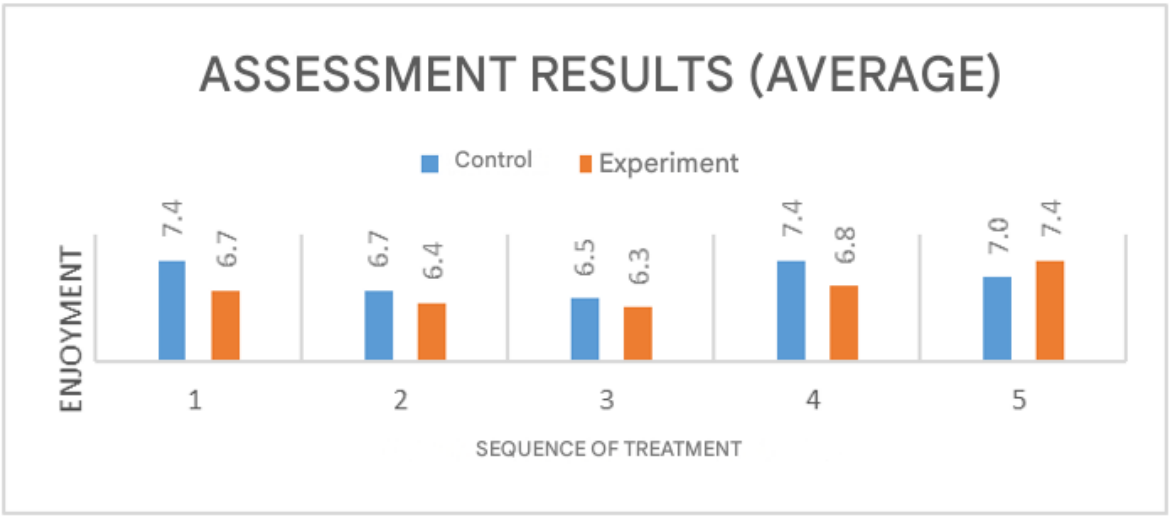

Chart 2. Average Assessment Results

Chart 2. Shows that in the first, second, third and fourth chocolates, the average score of the control group was higher than that of the experimental group. In contrast, the last brown (5th) showed that the average score of the assessment in the experimental group (χ = 7.4) was higher than that of the control group (χ = 7.0). This suggests that the treatment of saying that the 5th chocolate is the last chocolate can increase the average chocolate score in the experimental group. Based on the average chocolate score, there was a difference in the average five-fold chocolate score in the experimental group and the control group (0.4 difference) so that a person would increase enjoyment if he knew that the opportunity was his last chance.

Table 1. Distribution of Participant Values

No	Coklat 1	Coklat 2	Coklat 3	Coklat 4	Coklat 5
1	8,5	8	7	7	8
2	7	5	7	8	7
3	8	8,5	7,5	8	8,5
4	8	6	7	9	10

5	6	8	3	8	7
6	6	7,5	7	4	6
7	6	7	4	6	7
8	5	6	8	9	9
9	8	5	4	7	7
10	5	4	7	5	6
11	7	6	7	5	6
12	6	6	7	6	7

In the calculation of the percentage of participants in the experimental group who gave a higher value (enjoyment) to chocolate 5 than to the previous chocolate, it was found that 5 out of 12 people from the experimental group who gave the highest value to the 5th chocolate which can be interpreted that 41.67% of the sample felt that the last chocolate behwa had more influence on enjoyment (enjoyment).

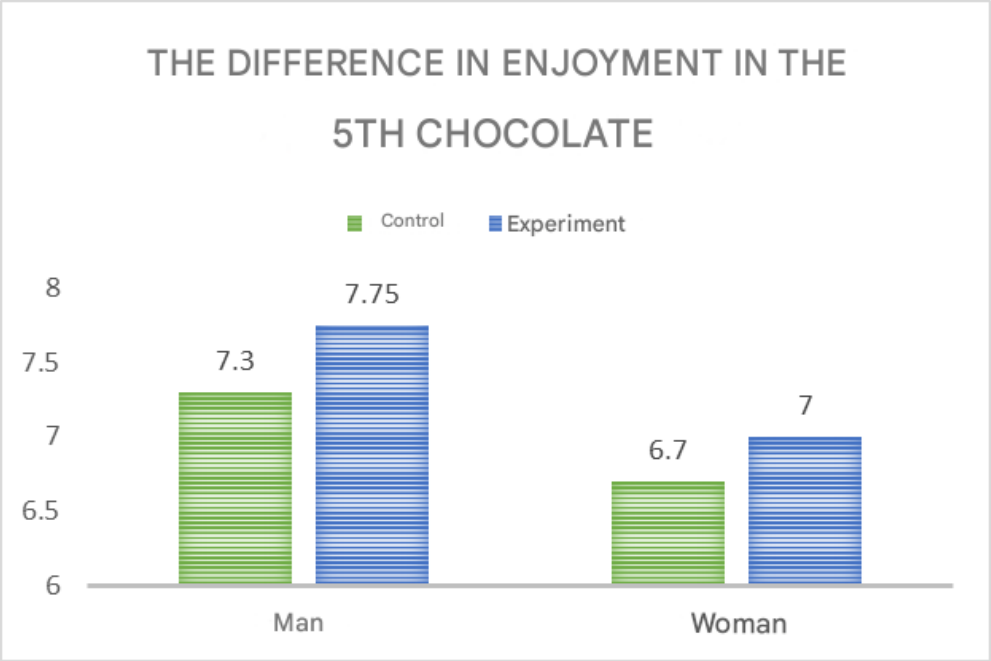

Chart 3. Gender Differences

In chart 3. Overall, both males and females, based on the average score of the 5th brown score in the experimental group, were higher than in the control group. When compared by gender, men tended to give a higher rating on the 5th brown both those who were given treatment (experimental group: last word) and those who were not given treatment (control group).

Discussion

The hypothesis in this study is that chocolate that is known to be the last, will taste better than other chocolates, no matter what the chocolate tastes. However, the results showed that there was no difference in the assessment of pleasure in the group of students who knew that the chocolate they ate was the last (the experimental group), and the group of participants who did not know that the chocolate they ate was the last (the control group). Therefore, the hypothesis in this study is rejected. The rejection of the hypothesis in this study shows that there is no effect of recent experience on positive bias in students.

The results of this replication study differed from the original study by O'brien and Ellsworth (2012) which showed that the group of participants who knew that the chocolate they ate was the last gave a higher assessment of taste, enjoyment, than the group of participants who did not know the chocolate they ate was the last. There are several possible reasons for the failure to replicate the results of the O'Brien and Ellsworth studies. First, the size of the chocolate given to the participants was too small so that the participants could not really enjoy it. In O'Brien and Ellsworth's own study,'the size of the chocolate given was not mentioned, making it difficult for future researcher' to replicate. Second, the sample size is too small. The number of participants in this study was only half of the number of participants in the original study. This may affect the existing results.

The next reason the hypothesis is not accepted depends on the tastes of each individual. This is also possible to be one of the reasons why the unproven recent experience can improve his assessment of the taste of chocolate. This is supported by research from Li & Epley (2009) which states that the order in which choices are given depends on the dependence on each individual's choice. Individuals who like a certain chocolate flavor such as caramel but this caramel flavor lies in the 3rd chocolate sequence will tend to give a high rating. Similarly, when the 5th ch'colate happens to be the preferred chocolate, then the individual will give a high rating on the taste of the 5th chocolate. In addition, Li & Epley (2009) also stated that it is possible for individuals to make explicit comparisons to each serving of chocolate, where sensory experiences can change over time, either because they learn to distinguish based on previous experiences.

Furthermore, the existence of strong emotional factors, both positive and negative, also affects individuals where when individuals have strong emotions, they tend to be more cognitively strong to anticipate events that will occur compared to remembering previous experiences (Van Boven & Ashworth, 2007). In this study, there is no strong control over the emotional state of the participants, so it is possible that emotions between one participant and the participant are different. This can affect the judgment given by individuals to the chocolate served.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the last experience did not significantly influence positive bias in students. Possible reasons include participants' personal taste preferences for chocolate, the influence of strong emotional content when comparing chocolates, the small chocolate size, and the limited number of participants. Additional analysis revealed that students aware the 5th chocolate was the last gave higher ratings to it compared to those who only knew it was the next chocolate, and that male students rated the 5th chocolate higher than female students. Future research could explore these effects with larger sample sizes, varied stimuli beyond chocolate, and consider emotional and gender differences more deeply to clarify their role in positive bias formation.

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