

INCREASING THE PERSUASIVENESS OF GAIN VS. LOSS FRAMING:
THE EFFECTS OF GENDER AND FEAR AROUSAL ON PROCESSING
GAIN- VS. LOSS-FRAMED BREAST CANCER SCREENING MESSAGES

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ABSTRACT

Based on prospect theory, the present study investigated gain vs. loss framing effects in the context of breast cancer screening (BCS) intervention. This study specifically assessed how the framing effect would be moderated by the gender of message recipients and their fear arousal.

The study used a 2 (male vs. female) x 2 (gain vs. loss) between-subject design experiment with 128 African American participants (mean age = 45.9). The results showed that men and women processed the BCS messages with a different elaboration depth, and that such differences led men and women to perceive gain- vs. loss-framed messages differently. That is, loss frame was more effective for women in increasing their message elaboration and supportive thoughts about BCS, while gain frame was more effective for men in increasing their memory, favorable attitudes toward BCS, and behavioral intentions. The theoretical implications for the interactions between gender and frame type were discussed based on prior framing and elaboration literature.

The findings provide practical implications for health communication practitioners into how to strategically use gain vs. loss framing in accordance with their target publics. As for the role of fear arousal, the results suggest that practitioners may need to actively utilize fear appeals, but use them cautiously by considering that the advantage of fear arousal might be contingent upon the combined frame type especially for systematic processors.