Title: The role of job relatedness and self-efficacy in applicant fairness perceptions in a high-stakes selection setting

Paper presentation.

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Abstract:
This paper reports findings from a field study examining selection method job relatedness perceptions and self-efficacy and their role in process fairness perceptions, using two samples of job applicants. Findings indicated that in both samples, perceptions of job relatedness measured immediately after testing positively predicted process fairness perceptions measured one month later following outcome (pass/fail); furthermore, self-efficacy added incremental variance to process fairness. The results are discussed in relation to their implications, both in terms of practice and future research.
This paper presents a field study conducted in a live high-stakes selection setting. The purpose of this paper was three-fold: (1) to explore job relatedness perceptions of selection methods as determinants of fairness using Gilliland’s (1993) organisational justice theory; (2) to explore whether self-efficacy is better conceptualised as a trait that predicts fairness, or an outcome variable negatively impacted by failing a selection process; (3) to address methodological limitations found in previous research where studies have been lab-based using student samples with cross-sectional designs (e.g. Elkins & Philips, 2000); this study is field-based and investigates perceptions longitudinally.

Two samples of qualified doctors applying for general practitioner (GP) posts in the NHS were used: Sample 1 (N=156) from shortlisting (2 tests, Job Knowledge Test [JKT] and Situation Judgement Test [SJT]); Sample 2 (N=212) from the assessment centre (3 selection methods: simulated patient consultation [SPC]; group [GE] and written exercise [WE]; Patterson et al, 2009a; 2009b). In both samples, job relatedness perceptions and self-efficacy were measured at testing (T1); one month later following outcome feedback, fairness perceptions and self-efficacy were measured (T2). Sample 1 outcome feedback, applicants found out whether they had been accepted for further consideration; Sample 2 applicants found out whether they had been accepted for GP posts.

**Hypothesis one:** Job relatedness as a determinant of process fairness is well established in applicant perception research (e.g. Schmitt et al, 2004; Truxillo et al, 2001). Therefore we hypothesised that for both samples job relatedness perceptions of selection methods measured at T1 will positively relate to fairness perceptions of the selection process at T2.

**Research question:** Gilliland’s (1993) organisational justice model proposes self-efficacy as a possible outcome variable where procedural justice rules (e.g. job relatedness) and outcome (pass/fail) interact to effect an applicant’s self-efficacy. This is supported by research (e.g. Gilliland, 1994; Bauer et al, 1998; Truxillo et al, 2001). However, other authors (e.g. Nikolaou & Judge, 2007; Ryan et al, 1996) view self-efficacy as a determinant, rather than dependent variable, in process fairness perceptions. Therefore, this study was designed to test the research question, “*is self-efficacy better conceptualised as a trait that predicts process fairness perceptions, or an outcome variable negatively impacted by failing a selection process?*”. If self-efficacy is a trait, T1 self-efficacy would add incremental variance to the prediction of fairness perceptions measured at T2.
beyond that accounted for by job relatedness perceptions; conversely, if self-efficacy is an outcome variable then job relatedness and pass/fail would interact to effect an applicant’s T2 self-efficacy.

**Method:** For both samples, T1 questionnaire entailed: demographic questions; 4-item measures of *job relatedness* for each selection method (Bauer et al; 2001; Gilliland et al, 2001); and a 6-item measure of *self-efficacy* (Schyns & von Collani, 2002). T2 questionnaire entailed: 1-item *outcome* (pass/fail); a 4-item measure of *process fairness* (Gilliland, 1994); and the same 6-item measure of *self-efficacy*.

**Sample 1 results:** A regression equation showed that, after control variables, the addition of JKT and SJT job relatedness added to process fairness perceptions, $\Delta R^2 = .15$, $F (2, 129) = 11.74$, $p < .001$ and self-efficacy added incremental variance, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F (1, 128) = 5.64$, $p = .02$. On the other hand, no interaction effects were found between job relatedness and pass/fail to impact T2 self-efficacy: (1) JKT, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F (3, 128) = 0.59$, $p = .62$; (2) SJT, $\Delta R^2 = .00$, $F (3, 128) = 0.28$, $p = .84$.

**Sample 2 results:** A regression equation showed the control variables predicted 33% of variance in fairness perceptions; the addition of job relatedness (SPC, GE and WE) added to the process fairness, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F (3, 189) = 2.78$, $p = .04$ and self-efficacy added incremental variance, $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $F (1, 188) = 4.81$, $p = .03$. On the other hand, no interaction effects were found: (1) GE, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F (3, 189) = 1.48$, $p = .22$; (2) SPC, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F (3, 190) = 1.66$, $p = .18$; (3) WE, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $F (3, 190) = 1.60$, $p = .19$.

**Conclusions:** (1) Job relatedness perceptions may be more or less important depending on the stage of the selection process: job relatedness accounted for more variance in fairness at shortlisting than the assessment centre. Indeed, at the final stage, passing the process was more important in predicting fairness perceptions than job relatedness of selection methods. Practically, this may indicate that organisations will have to “work hard” to overcome the disappointment from being rejected from a desirable job. (2) The research demonstrates a role for individual differences in fairness perceptions since self-efficacy accounted for a portion of variance in fairness. Although effects were small, it could imply a stable component to applicant perceptions, particularly since the finding was consistent across two field-based samples. (3) Findings suggest self-efficacy can be conceived of as a trait that *positively predicts* fairness perceptions, rather than an *outcome negatively impacted* by the selection process. (4) Finally, greater conceptual understanding of the nature of applicant perceptions has practical
implications: if negative perceptions of selection methods are due to a method’s content or the way it was administered, then it may be possible to encourage positive perceptions through modifying content or administration. Conversely, if applicant perceptions are due to stable individual differences, such as self-efficacy, then employers may only be able to influence applicant perceptions to some extent.

**Limitations:** Selection methods were created for the GP selection process, thus results might not generalise and participants’ base-rate for the variables were not collected and could not be controlled for.

**References:**


