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PERSONNEL SELECTION: SITUATIONAL TEST OR EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW? THE VALIDITY VERSUS JUSTICE DILEMMA

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ABSTRACT

This article compares the reactions of employment applicants to two different tools commonly used in screening applicants for positions: the employment interview and the work sample/situational test. The study was done in a real job setting. Over 150 applicants for a position as a campsite manager and/or instructor were interviewed for that position and participated in an assessment center. Before any decisions on the hiring decisions were announced, the applicants filled out questionnaires measuring their perception of the fairness of these selection methods and their satisfaction with them. This article reports the results of the subsequent analysis of these responses. The results supported hypotheses derived from procedural justice theories. Applicants were more satisfied with employment interviews, and employment interviews scored higher on perceived fairness, voice, control, trust, and clarity of information.

Industrial and organizational (I/O) psychologists are often consulted by corporations and other organizations to help design and evaluate hiring procedures and selection tests. For purposes of personnel selection, one or more of the following methods is generally used: application forms that request personal history, work history, and demographic data; the employment interview; cognitive ability tests; personality, temperament and motivation tests; paper-and-pencil integrity tests;

sensory, physical, and dexterity tests [1]. The employment interview seems to be the method that is most widely used. But many I/O psychologists prefer the use of work sample and situational tests to all other methods of personnel assessment and selection because of the high psychometric quality of work samples and situational tests.

This article explores the reactions of applicants to the two tools of selection. It shows that *applicants'* reactions to personnel selection methods are largely based on their own evaluation of procedural fairness aspects of selection methods. The research questions that we ask concern whether there are differences in applicants' perceived fairness of employment interviews and work samples/ situational tests, and whether there is a relationship between differences in the perceived fairness of these tools and the satisfaction of applicants with these selection methods.

BACKGROUND

Employment Interviews

The employment interview is usually regarded as the most important component of all instruments and procedures used during hiring people [2]. However, studies of reliability and validity of interviews performed over many years are rather sobering. The interrater reliability is typically rather low. Early studies indicated that interviewers were prone to halo bias, i.e., the tendency to rate a candidate high or low on all dimensions [3, 4]. Later researchers discovered that both the reliability and the validity of the employment interview could be increased by using more structured approaches, for instance, by conducting the interviews with a panel instead of a single interviewer [5]. Still, even though under carefully designed conditions, interviews can be made more reliable and valid, in its common application the employment interview is considered by experts as a somewhat inferior method of selecting people.

The interview is persistent, however, because of several practical considerations and other social reasons, including the very human, very important need of meeting persons who want to become your employee [6]. But most researchers have neglected another possible reason for the persistence of the interview: the possibility that the employment interview is seen as a very fair method. This is the central topic of this article.

Work Sample and Situational Tests

A work sample is a miniature replica of the job. The content of a job is carefully studied, and the elements that discriminate strong from weak candidates are selected to form a sample of the most important dimensions of the job [7, 8]. Often a distinction is made between work samples and *situational exercises.* In such

cases, a situational exercise is the white-collar equivalent of the work sample. The principle behind it is the same: applicants for a job are asked to perform under circumstances that are similar to the real work environment. Work samples and situational exercises with the highest validity show a remarkable resemblance to the criterion, the real-life job [7]. Some well-known examples are a typing test for office personnel (work sample) and the in-basket test for managers and administrators. Simulation tests and exercises are very important techniques used in assessment centers, where managerial potential is tested by multiple simulation techniques and observed and evaluated by senior managers who have been specially trained. Research has convincingly demonstrated that performance at assessment centers covaries strongly with later job performance [9].

Many experts believe that the use of work samples and situational exercises is the very best method of personnel selection because the best predictor of future performance is past performance in the same domain of behavior. Moreover, work samples and situational exercises have high face-value validity. Because candidates can see the relevance of the selected job domains for real-life performance, the method is highly acceptable to them, which is more than can be said about other methods used in personnel selection.

Procedural Justice Theories: A Brief History

The construct that provides the basis for our evaluation of the fairness of the selection procedures studied comes from procedural justice theories. From these theories we derive hypotheses implying that the employment interview, rejected by psychometric experts, is preferred to the method of situational exercises by applicants for a job.

Thibaut and Walker

Satisfaction of people in situations where outcomes are allocated is heavily influenced by the *procedures* used in such situations. Thibaut and Walker were, perhaps, the first to demonstrate that procedures used to arrive at a decision have profound effects on fairness judgments [10, 11]. Since the publication of their studies, a number of models have been advanced to explain the procedural justice phenomenon. Some researchers adhere to the "*instrumentality*" view, with the key characteristic being the distribution of control. The instrumental model advanced by Thibaut and Walker made a distinction between two types of control. *Decision control* refers to control over the actual decisions that are made, while *process control* is a somewhat "weaker" form and refers to control over the presentation of evidence (the first studies were done in legal settings). Today, process control is often equated with the concept of "*voice*": people have a say, they are allowed to present their view on reality without having the right to make the formal decision

[12]. According to Thibaut and Walker, people want control—either decision control or process control—because control is seen as instrumental in attaining the outcomes they desire.

Leventhal

Leventhal identified six important procedural justice rules, to be used in the context of outcome allocation: *consistency* in the application of the rules; *bias suppression; accuracy* (decisions should be based on good information); *correctability* (opportunities to appeal and to ask for modification of decisions); *representativeness* (the concerns of all important subgroups and individuals should be represented in the allocation process); and, finally *ethicality* (the allocation process and the allocation rules must be compatible with high ethical standards) [13].

Tyler and Lind

In the last 15 years, a new model of procedural justice has become popular: The *relational* or *group value model,* proposed by Tyler and Lind [14, 15]. This model focuses on relationship issues and especially on perceptions of the relationship between authorities and those group members who are subject to their decisions. This model suggests that procedures are evaluated for what they seem to indicate about how one is viewed by the group or the authority using the procedures. Procedures have implications for feelings of self-worth and for beliefs about the fair and proper functioning of the group and/or the authority. To the extent that a procedure is seen as indicating a positive relationship between the person and his group or authority, it is judged to be fair. Procedures that appear to imply that a person has a negative relationship with an authority or institution are perceived as unfair.

Three factors are seen as especially important for procedural fairness judgments: *trust, standing,* and *neutrality.* Trust involves beliefs about the good intention of the authority (the group leaders). Authorities that act ethically and demonstrate concern for the needs of group members and consideration of the views of their subordinates can be trusted to try to behave fairly. Information about one's status position in a group ("standing") is communicated by the treatment one receives. Dignified, respectful, and polite treatment implies that one is seen as a valuable, full member of the group, and such behavior is seen as fair. Neutrality involves the absence of bias or prejudice; neutral decision making that is based on objective facts and honesty [14, 15]. Apparently, the way you treat persons to whom outcomes are to be allocated is categorized by researchers such as Tyler, Lind (and others) as a form of procedural justice. Some researchers distinguish explicitly between procedural (in)justice and *interactional (in)justice* [16, 17].

The Importance of Information

Many aspects may influence the experience of procedural fairness, and one of the most important aspects has not been mentioned so far: giving clear and adequate *information* to people. It is a well-known fact in organizational change projects that keeping people well-informed is a necessary condition for the successful implementation of changes [18]. Still, this aspect of *adequate notice* or *advance notice* has been somewhat neglected by many researchers, although it should be mentioned that recently, attention has been paid to this factor in several studies—in particular in studies that focused on performance appraisal systems [19-24].

SELECTION SYSTEM FAIRNESS RESEARCH

Selection procedures that are psychometrically valid may not be perceived as being fair, and this perception may have several dysfunctional consequences, including low acceptance of results of the selection process, applicant withdrawal, low organizational commitment by applicants who are hired, low job satisfaction, and legal challenges. There also may be unfortunate "spillover" effects, such as applicants not recommending the organization to others and/or no longer purchasing the organization's products or services. Self-perceptions including self-esteem and (test-taking) self-efficacy could be affected as well [25-28].

About a decade ago, researchers in the area of applicant reactions to selection processes started to use procedural justice theories. This research has been largely driven by a theoretical model developed by Gilliland [29]. Gilliland outlines dimensions along which procedural, interactional, and informational justice rules can be managed in the selection process, and he suggests a variety of positive consequences of managing selection processes fairly [29-31]. These justice rules can be grouped into three broad categories.

- The formal *characteristics* category includes job-relatedness, i.e., face validity and predictive validity; the opportunity to demonstrate one's abilities (a form of "voice"); reconsideration opportunity; and consistency.
- The second category focuses on the aspects of *explanation* and includes the justice aspects of giving feedback; information; and openness, i.e., treating applicants honestly and openly during the testing process.
- The category of *interpersonal treatment* (interactional justice) consists of treatment at the test site, i.e., the way applicants are treated by the testing staff and the test administrators; two-way communication; and propriety of questions (i.e., questions should not be prejudiced, or too personal).

Gilliland also discussed the well-known criteria of distributive justice, but later researchers paid far less attention to this part of his model than to the procedural, interactional, and informational parts. Gilliland's model stimulated researchers to

study the fairness of selection systems and the consequences of unfair systems. The number of publications inspired by (procedural) justice theories is still growing [26, 27, 31-43].

The results of most studies support Gilliland's model and there are two interesting recent developments. First, international and cross-cultural perspectives were introduced in this domain of selection research, and although there is consistency in reactions and underlying procedural dimensions across countries, it also seems to be true that some cultural dimensions are likely to influence the salience of justice rules in personnel selection [32, 34]. Second, a comprehensive measure of Gilliland's procedural justice rules has been developed. This measure, the "Selection Procedural Justice Scale" (SPJS) meets the criterion of psychometric quality, and the established procedures for scale development were followed [38]. The instrument may be used to test Gilliland's model and to assess particular dimensions of fairness in field settings.

However, in spite of the increased research attention, one cannot help noticing that some problems exist. Research has frequently relied heavily on student samples and studies often used scenarios, i.e., subjects had to react to a description of a situation, and they had to imagine that they were applicants for a job with a fictitious organization. But even in field settings there may be problems. For example, outcomes (pass/fail decisions) influence the evaluation and the perceived fairness of selection systems. Researchers often used only global measures of fairness when comparing selection procedures [some exceptions are 28, 36]. Finally, the contribution of individual test fairness to perceptions of overall system fairness has not been explored systematically. Therefore, it remains necessary to conduct studies of procedural justice aspects of selection systems to fill the still-existing knowledge gaps in applicant reactions.

HYPOTHESES: PROCEDURAL JUSTICE, INTERVIEWS, AND GROUP EXERCISES

From this brief history of procedural justice research, it should be clear that departures from such procedural justice standards lead to strong feelings of injustice. The most likely consequences of such feelings of injustice are dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, and low commitment to the organization, the group, and the authority responsible for the procedures. In the present study we focused on dissatisfaction with selection methods. In this study, applicants compared several procedural fairness aspects of the employment interview and with group exercises. Restraints imposed by managers of the organization hiring personnel made it impossible to study all the fairness norms described by theorists. Thus, we had to make choices of the criteria to be included in the study.

We chose to focus on voice, control, trust, and information. The "voice" effect is probably the most widely replicated finding in all procedural justice studies published so far [15]. The concept of "control" plays a central role in several

justice models as do several recent studies of trust in organizations. Finally, many researchers have neglected the aspect of information, but it seems to be important [19-24]. However, it is possible to receive an "overload" of information, and people seem to prefer clear, transparent, and unequivocal information to a large amount of information. Therefore, it was decided to focus on "clarity" of information.

Control and Voice

During group exercises, candidates more or less "compete" for attention. This implies that they differ in the actual amount of control and "voice" they have during group exercises. In the employment interview, however, applicants for a job generally have many opportunities to exercise forms of control, and they certainly have a say in what is happening. For example, candidates are allowed to ask many questions and to present their views. Therefore, *Hypothesis 1* was stated as follows:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Applicants for a job will perceive more (1a) voice and more (1b) control in selection interviews than they perceive during the group-exercises methods of assessment.

How about trust? In the present study, participants were asked how they were treated during the personnel selection procedures, but the item measuring this aspect did not allow distinction between assessors (observers) of group exercises and interviewers during employment interviews. But all respondents had to indicate in a rather direct way how much trust they put in, respectively, the interviews and the group exercises. Since interviewers who are actively involved in social interaction have more opportunity to demonstrate concern for the needs of applicants than do the assessors (who are silently observing group members), we suggest that:

> *Hypothesis 2:* Applicants put more trust in the employment interview than in the situational exercises.

More or less the same reasoning may be applied to the aspect of clarity of information. During interviews, applicants can ask actively for more information, but during group exercises assessors do not actively interact with the candidates. Therefore,

> *Hypothesis 3:* Applicants will perceive the "clarity" of employment interviews as higher than the clarity of situational group exercises.

If these hypotheses are supported, the employment interview scores better on norms of procedural justice than do the situational tests (group exercises). This leads directly to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Applicants will experience more fairness during employment interviews than they will experience during group exercises.

Hypothesis 5: Applicants are more satisfied with employment interviews than they are with group exercises.

In general, a variable function as a mediator to the extent that it accounts for the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion (see Figure 1, based on the well-known article by Baron and Kenny [44]). According to the theory of procedural justice, perceived fairness is a mediator variable, intervening between inputs—the procedural justice aspects—and the outcome variable: satisfaction (or motivation, or commitment). Hypotheses 1 to 5 form a logical, causal "chain" in which the procedural justice aspects (voice, control, trust, and clarity) function as predictor variables; the experience of fairness as a mediator variable; and satisfaction with the selection method as the dependent variable.

In the present study, this mediational model of procedural justice was tested 1) by using each separate procedural justice aspect as the independent variable, 2) while perceived fairness functioned as the mediator, and 3) satisfaction with the method of personnel selection was the dependent variable.

METHODS

Subjects and Procedure

The study was done in a real job setting. All subjects (N = 158; 48 male subjects and 110 female subjects) had applied for a job (campsite manager and/or

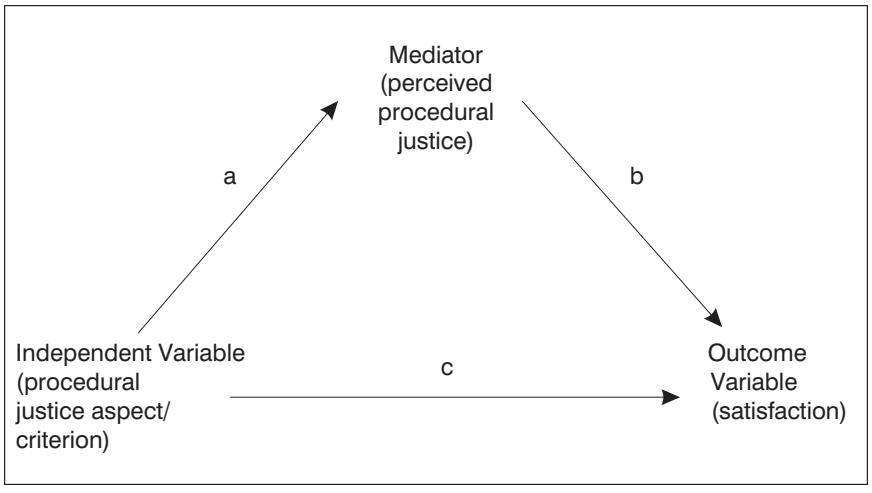

Figure 1. The mediational model of procedural justice.

instructor) in the department ("campings") of a large organization that specialized in mass tourism. These jobs are popular, even though they are often temporary (2-5 months). All applicants had at least completed high school, and they had to have a good command of at least two modern languages. Their mean age was 21 years. Their application forms had been screened by two experienced members from the personnel (HRM) department; applicants who fulfilled certain requirements were invited to visit the personnel department.

All subjects participated in an assessment center, where they had to perform three group exercises in groups of 12 persons. All of these exercises had been developed for this assessment center, and the simulations were similar to real life situations. One exercise was a group game, in which team members had to cooperate to score points. A leaderless group discussion was a second exercise. A third group exercise focused on solving a conflict between families. Assessors scored applicants on the following key skills and behaviors: team skills; problem solving; organization/planning; communication; customer focus; safety awareness; enthusiasm.

Six assessors who had special training observed each group exercise. The assessors each focused on two applicants, and they reached an interassessor-agreement of at least 80% of their observations. The second author of the present study participated in all group exercises, to ensure some standardization of experiences from subject to subject.

After the group exercises, the applicants participated in a one-on-one individual employment interview. Interviews were largely based on the method of "behavioral interviewing," in which applicants are asked to give descriptions of their behavior in certain situations (critical incidents). They also had to demonstrate their knowledge of foreign languages. The second author of the article was involved in 63% of the interviews.

Right after the subjects had completed the group exercises and the interview, they were asked to fill out (anonymously) a questionnaire to evaluate the selection methods. At this time, respondents did not know their results, so the outcome of the hiring process could not affect their opinions.

Variables

Scores on relevant variables were gathered with single-item measures.

Perceived fairness was measured by the following items: "I feel that the group exercises were fair." "I feel that the employment interview was fair." (The 5-point scale, from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" was employed in this and other questions below.)

Satisfaction with the selection method: "I am satisfied with the group exercises," "I am satisfied with the employment interview."

Control: "I had control over the group exercises," "I had control over the employment interview."

Voice: "I got the opportunity to present my views during the group exercises," "I got the opportunity to present my views during the employment interview."

Clarity: "To me, it was clear what was expected from me during the group exercises," "Questions asked during the employment interview were clear."

It should be noted that this measure of clarity is more related to the concept of advance/adequate notice in the case of the group exercises than it is in the case of the interview.

Trust: "I trust the group exercises," "I trust the employment interview."

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Differences between scores of male and female subjects fell within acceptable limits of chance fluctuations. Therefore, their data were combined. All data needed to test hypotheses 1 to 5 are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparisons of Mean Values between Measures of Justice Aspects, Perceived Fairness, and Satisfaction in the Group Exercises and the Employment Interview

Justice aspect	Group exercises: Mean scores*	Interview: Mean scores*	Paired-samples: *t*-values	Significance
Clarity	3.61 (0.78)	4.11 (0.58)	–7.42	.000
Voice	3.97 (0.69)	4.19 (0.58)	–4.02	.000
Control	3.53 (0.67)	3.80 (0.69)	–4.23	.000
Trust	3.80 (0.68)	4.08 (0.59)	–5.60	.000
Perceived fairness	3.85 (0.67)	4.12 (0.53)	–5.37	.000
Satisfaction	3.89 (0.65)	4.03 (0.64)	–2.34	.02

*In parentheses: standard deviations

Table 1 shows that all hypotheses are supported by the results of the present study:

- Applicants perceived more "voice" and control in the method of employment interview than in the method of selection based on performance during group exercises (H-1).
- Applicants demonstrated more trust in the method of employment interviews (H-2).
- "Clarity" of information presented to applicants was perceived to reach the highest levels during the employment interviews (H-3).
- The perceived fairness of employment interviews was higher than was the perceived fairness of group exercises (H-4).
- Satisfaction with employment interviews was higher than was satisfaction with group exercises (H-5).

Fairness as a Mediator

Table 2 presents us with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients between procedural justice aspects, perceived fairness of, and satisfaction with the method of group exercises. Table 3 contains the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients between procedural justice aspects, perceived fairness of, and satisfaction with the employment interview.

All correlations between justice aspects, perceived fairness, and satisfaction reach very high levels of statistical significance. Therefore, it is highly improbable that these results could be attributed to chance factors. Tables 2 and 3 show the same pattern of correlations. The higher the scores on the procedural justice criterion (clarity, voice, control, trust), the higher are the scores on perceived general fairness (the assumed mediator variable) of the selection

Table 2. Group Exercises: Pearson Product Moment Correlations* between Procedural Justice Aspects, Perceived Fairness, and Satisfaction with Group Exercises

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Clarity	1.00	.63	.42	.51	.48	.51
2. Voice		1.00	.58	.59	.54	.66
3. Control			1.00	.43	.39	.43
4. Trust				1.00	.65	.61
5. Fairness					1.00	.65
6. Satisfaction						1.00

*All correlations are significant at $p < .001$ two-tailed.

Table 3. Employment Interview: Pearson Product Moment Correlations* between Procedural Justice Aspects, Perceived Fairness, and Satisfaction with Employment Interview

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Clarity	1.00	.67	.35	.50	.56	.39
2. Voice		1.00	.48	.63	.57	.56
3. Control			1.00	.57	.57	.59
4. Trust				1.00	.72	.69
5. Fairness					1.00	.63
6. Satisfaction						1.00

*All correlations are significant at $p < .001$ two-tailed.

system, and the higher are the scores on satisfaction with the selection system (the assumed outcome or "dependent" variable). Moreover, the higher the scores are on perceived fairness (the assumed mediator variable), the higher the scores on satisfaction.

So, interviews are seen as fairer than group exercises (Table 1), but in the case of both interviews and group exercises, differences exist between the perceptions of applicants. And these differences covary in accordance with the model of procedural justice. This is true for group exercises (Table 2) and for interviews (Table 3).

Apparently, individual differences between persons are important factors in the perception of (in)justice, and the perception of injustice is a function of the characteristics of both the selection system and the person.

That the perception of injustice is a function of the characteristics of the selection system can be seen by comparing the mean values of the fairness measures in Table 1. Apparently, characteristics of interviews are perceived as fairer than the characteristics of the method of group exercises: tnterviews score higher on all relevant justice aspects (clarity, voice, control, trust) and on the general measures of perceived fairness and satisfaction. It should be noted that both group exercises and interviews were evaluated positively on all relevant variables (mean scores were above the neutral point), but interviews consistently had the highest means. At the same time, and almost by definition, individual differences play a role: standard deviations show that, even though the mean justice levels of the interviews are higher, some variance exists in the perceptions of justice levels of both group exercises and interviews.

According to the justice model, all procedural justice aspects (clarity, voice, control, trust) should correlate positively with perceived fairness. This is true for the method of group exercises (Table 2, see the correlations in the "fairness"

column 5) and for the interviews (Table 3, see the correlations in the "fairness" column 5). Moreover, the perceived fairness of a selection method should correlate with the satisfaction with that method. Again, this is true for group exercises (where perceived fairness correlates $r = .65$ with satisfaction with group exercises) and also for interviews (Table 3, where perceived fairness of the interview correlates $r = .63$ with satisfaction). Finally, the justice model predicts that scores on the justice aspects of a selection method correlate positively (via direct and/or indirect effects) with the scores on the satisfaction with that method. According to Table 2, the clarity, voice, control, and trust aspects of group exercises correlate positively with the satisfaction with group exercises (column 6), and the same pattern of results is seen in the case of interviews (Table 3, column 6).

So far, the results presented in Tables 2 and 3 correspond to the mediational model that was presented in Figure 1. According to that model, such justice aspects as clarity, voice, control, and trust affect satisfaction through the applicant's perception of procedural fairness. But, is it really true that (procedural) fairness is a mediator variable? There are several ways to test this mediational model. Baron and Kenny developed an elegant method using a series of regression equations [44]. Most researchers are more familiar with the concept of partial correlation, and using partial correlations also offers insight into the potential mediator status of the perceived fairness variable [45, 46]. The partial correlation is an estimate of the correlation found between two variables when a third variable is actually held constant (i.e., the effects of this third variable are removed).

Partial correlations between the procedural justice criteria of a selection method and the satisfaction with that method were computed, while scores on the perceived fairness of the selection method were partialed from the scores on the criterion and the satisfaction. If the effect of a procedural justice criterion (aspect) on satisfaction follows only the a, b paths of Figure 1, the partial correlation should approach zero. If the effect follows only the direct path c, the partial correlation should be equal to the "raw" correlation. And, if the effect follows both paths a, b (indirect effect) and path c (direct effect), the partial correlation should be "inbetween," i.e., significantly higher than zero, but lower than the raw correlation between procedural justice aspect and satisfaction.

As for the group exercises, all correlations between the procedural justice aspects and satisfaction with the group exercises diminished after partialing, but did not disappear completely. This indicates that the procedural justice aspects of clarity, voice, control, and trust had both a direct and an indirect positive effect on satisfaction with group exercises. For the group exercises, *partial* correlations of clarity, voice, control, and trust with satisfaction with group exercises and controlling for the mediator effect of perceived fairness are, respectively, .30 ($p < .000$), .48 ($p < .000$), .25 ($p < .002$), and .32 ($p < .000$). These partial correlations are statistically significant, but at the same time they are lower than the raw correlations of clarity, voice, control, and trust with satisfaction, which are,

respectively, $r = .51$, $r = .66$, $r = .43$, and $r = .61$. The correlations and partial correlations for the interview showed a similar pattern for three aspects. Correlations of voice, control, and trust with satisfaction with the interview were, respectively, .56, .59, and .69 (all significant, $p < .000$), and after partialing out the perceived fairness of interviews, the partial correlations with satisfaction were much lower, but still significant: $r = .31$ ($p < .000$), .36 ($p < .000$), and .44 ($p < .000$). Clarity, however, shows a different pattern: The correlation between clarity of interview and satisfaction with interview is $r = .39$ ($p < .000$), the partial correlation (after partialing out the effect of perceived fairness of the interview) approaches zero: $r = .06$ (not significant). Apparently, clarity only followed the indirect paths a and b (see Figure 1) to exercise its positive influence on satisfaction with the interview, while voice, control, and trust had both a direct and an indirect positive effect on satisfaction with the interview method.

DISCUSSION

The answers to the research questions are clear. According to applicants, the perceived procedural fairness of employment interviews is higher than is the perceived fairness of group exercises, and perceived fairness correlates positively with applicants' satisfaction.

The results of the present study make it understandable why the employment interview, in spite of its often poor psychometric qualities, is preferred to many other methods of personnel selection. Perceived fairness is a motivator of importance to most people. Therefore, fairness often outweighs other considerations when persons evaluate the attractiveness of several options in daily life. The perception that the interview is a fair method is one of the reasons why those who design personnel selection procedures continue to hang on to the interview. But there are other reasons, of course. To mention only a few, comfort with an old practice will almost certainly play a role, too. Moreover, flexibility may be another important factor: the interviewer is able to respond to facial and nonverbal cues and to be sensitive to the applicant's needs. And, one of the purposes of an interview is to assure that the applicant has a positive experience with the organization so that even if the applicant is rejected s/he will not think too badly of the organization, and, if accepted, will more likely accept the job offer. Again, a good reason to use the interview.

The present study has several strong points. Data were gathered in a real job setting. A comparison was made between two of the most popular selection methods. Data could not be affected by the outcome (pass/fail) of the selection decision; therefore, rather "pure" measures of procedural fairness could be obtained.

More studies are, of course, necessary. In the present study not all aspects of procedural justice could be included. And, perhaps, there exist situational tests that are seen as fairer than the group exercises used as selection instruments in

the present study. In future studies, attention should be paid to the relationship between satisfaction with the selection method (based on the fairness variables) and the applicant's acceptance or rejection of job offers. Moreover, other samples of applicants, with other demographic characteristics, should be included in future studies, to be able to generalize results to a larger population. Also, it is desirable to use standardized measures in future studies. The use of standardized measures makes it better possible to compare results of studies. The Selection Procedural Justice Scale (SPJS) has good psychometric properties and is a potentially useful instrument [38]. Finally, perhaps personality factors of applicants play a role, too, and this aspect deserves more attention in future studies.

CONCLUSION

To date, almost all studies in personnel selection and assessment focus on psychometric aspects: the reliability and validity of the instruments used. These studies are extremely worthwhile because employees and applicants for a job have a right to be assessed and selected by means of high-quality instruments that are reliable and valid. This study adds another dimension: that organizations, employees, and applicants would also benefit by employment instruments that are perceived as being fair. The present study makes it clear that procedural justice aspects are very important. There is a slowly growing body of knowledge about justice and selection systems. The effects of fairness in the selection system are positive. Therefore, these justice aspects should be researched systematically in future studies dealing with personnel selection.

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