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Sensitivity to befallen injustice and reactions to a
real life disadvantage

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the construct validity of a self-report questionnaire for dispositional sensitivity to befallen injustice (SBI; Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada, 1995). The items are combinations of four indicators of SBI (frequency of perceived injustice, intensity of anger, intrusiveness/perseverance of thoughts about the event, punitivity) with various types of unfair situations (e.g., performing better than others without getting any appreciation or reward). At Occasion 1, SBI, trait anger, anger in, anger out, anger control, self-assertiveness, belief in a just world, and attitudes towards principles of distributive justice (equity, equality, need) were measured. At Occasion 2, the subjects (55 advanced psychology students) took part in a lottery for distributing scarce teaching resources among students. The lottery led to objective advantages for some students and to objective disadvantages to others. Four reactions to the event were measured at Occasion 3: judgment of the lottery as just, anger about the lottery, experiencing the lottery as demotivating, and approval of activities against the lottery. These reactions were regressed on the variables measured at Occasion 1. SBI was the only significant predictor of the justice judgment and the approval of activities. Anger about the lottery depended only on objective disadvantage/advantage. Experiencing the lottery as demotivating depended negatively on anger control and positively on the intrusiveness/perseverance of thoughts about the event, a subscale of the SBI inventory. Inconclusive interaction effects of belief in a just world x objective advantage/disadvantage on anger and approval of activities were found.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Untersucht wird die Konstruktvalidität eines Fragebogens zur Messung dispositioneller Sensibilität für widerfahrene Ungerechtigkeit (SWU; Schmitt, Neumann & Montada, 1995), dessen Items Kombinationen aus vier Indikatoren (Häufigkeit wahrgenommener Ungerechtigkeiten, Ärgerintensität, Penetranz des Ereignisses, Punitivität) und verschiedenen Typen ungerechter Situationen sind (z.B. mehr leisten als andere, ohne daß es anerkannt oder vergolten wird). Zum Zeitpunkt 1 wurden SWU, Trait Ärger, Anger In, Anger Out, Anger Control, Selbstsicherheit, Glaube an eine gerechte Welt sowie Einstellungen zu Prinzipien distributiver Gerechtigkeit (Beitragsprinzip, Gleichheitsprinzip, Bedürftigkeitsprinzip) erfaßt. Zum Zeitpunkt 2 nahmen die Versuchspersonen (55 Psychologiestudierende im Hauptstudium) an einer Verlosung knapper Plätze im klinischen Anwendungspraktikum teil, die zu einer objektiven Benachteiligung oder Bevorteiligung führte. Zum Zeitpunkt 3 wurden vier Reaktionen auf die Verlosung erhoben: Urteil über die Gerechtigkeit der Verlosung, Ärger über die Verlosung, Einschätzung der demotivierenden Wirkung der Verlosung, Zustimmung zu Aktivitäten gegen die Verlosung. Diese Reaktionen wurden aus den zum Zeitpunkt 1 gemessenen Variablen vorhergesagt. SWU war der einzige signifikante Prädiktor des Gerechtigkeitsurteils und der Zustimmung zu Aktivitäten gegen die Verlosung. Ärger hing nur von der objektiven Benachteiligung/Bevorteiligung ab. Die Einschätzung, daß die Verlosung demotivierende Effekte habe, hing negativ von Anger Control und positiv von Penetranz ab, einer Teilskala des SWU-Fragebogens. Schließlich fanden sich Wechselwirkungseffekte zwischen dem Glauben an eine gerechte Welt und der objektiven Benachteiligung/Bevorteiligung auf Ärger über die Verlosung und auf Zustimmung zu Aktivitäten gegen die Verlosung. Für diese Effekte konnte jedoch keine konsistente und schlüssige theoretische Interpretation gefunden werden.

SENSITIVITY TO BEFALLEN INJUSTICE AS A PERSONALITY CONSTRUCT

Sensitivity to Befallen Injustice (SBI) was recently introduced to social justice literature as a new trait construct by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995). The formulation of this construct follows from two lines of reasoning which themselves are based on two general presumptions, one of them metatheoretical and the other substantive in nature.

The first, metatheoretical assumption starts out from the observation that social justice has traditionally been the domain of social psychologists. Research questions were mostly formulated from the viewpoint of general psychology and focused on situational determinants of behavior. Consequently, traditional research was almost exclusively experimental (cf. Berkowitz & Walster, 1976; Deutsch, 1985; Mikula, 1980, 1981; Törnblom, 1992). With the exception of one construct, belief in a just world (cf. Furnham & Procter, 1989), individual differences in personality, attitudes, values, and beliefs were deemed either uninteresting or unimportant. Given the large proportions of variance which have remained unexplained in experimental justice research and given more or less incidental evidence on group differences in allocation behavior (Gergen, Morse, & Gergen, 1980; Major & Deaux, 1982), scholars and research groups have become more and more interested in individual differences in justice attitudes and justice behavior. Measures for belief in a just world (Rubin & Peplau, 1973; Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987; Furnham & Procter, 1992; Lipkus, 1991; Maes, 1994), for attitudes towards principles of distributive justices (Bossong, 1983; Herrmann & Winterhoff, 1980; Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983; Sabbagh, Dar, & Resh, 1994; Schwinger & Winterhoff-Spurk, 1984; Schmitt & Montada, 1982; Schmitt, Maes, & Schmal, 1995), for attitudes towards principles of procedural justice (Dörfel, 1995; Wahner, 1986), for centrality of justice as a value (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987; Maes, Schmitt, & Schmal, 1995), and for dispositional sensitivity to unjust own advantages (Montada, Dalbert, Reichle, & Schmitt, 1986; Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1986; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Schmitt, Behner, Müller, & Montada, 1992) were developed and related to various psychological antecedents and consequences such as to indicators for the secondary victimization of victims (e.g., Maes, 1994, Schmitt, 1991; Schmitt et al., 1991) and to allocation behavior (e.g., Schmitt et al., 1994). The last abovementioned construct, sensitivity to unjust personal advantages, is of special interest in the present context. In several studies it was found that sensitivity to unjust personal advantages varies consistently between individuals, remains relatively stable across time, and predicts prosocial behavior towards the disadvantaged (e.g., Montada & Schneider, 1989).

The second, substantive assumption draws upon these finding regarding sensitivity to unjust personal advantages. Justice judgments can be made from at least three perspectives: the perspective of the victim or unfairly disadvantaged, the perspective of the victimizer or unfairly privileged, and the perspective of the neutral outside observer or judge (Mikula, 1994). If individuals differ in a trait-like manner regarding their sensitivity to injustice from the victimizer's perspective, similar trait-like individual differences may exist for the other two perspectives as well. Regarding the victim's perspective, a study by Dar & Resh (1993) provides first empirical evidence in support of this assumption. These authors found that sense of deprivation is generalized across type of resource (instrumental rewards, symbolic rewards, relational rewards), across reaction modes (judgments, feelings) and across contexts of deprivation (school, society). Most interestingly, sense of deprivation was largely unrelated to objective deprivations due to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. This result is important because it supports the notion that sense of deprivation is part of an individual's personality and not just a reflection of the individuals objective environment.

In order to investigate this conclusion more thoroughly, Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) suggested four different indicators for a person's sensitivity to befallen injustice and developed a questionnaire for measuring these four indicators: (1) the frequency of perceived unjust events, (2) the intensity of anger evoked by an unjust event, (3) the intrusiveness of thoughts about the event, and (4) the punitivity, i.e., the desire to punish the victimizer.

Frequency (FRE): This indicator is based on the general threshold concept in perception (Gordon, 1989). The lower a person's threshold for a class of stimuli (in this case unjust treatments), the more such stimuli should be perceived. Memory functioning provides a second basis for this indicator. Unjust treatments are emotionally significant and emotionally significant events are remembered better than neutral events (Christianson, 1992).

Intensity of Anger (INA): When asked to describe situations which made them angry, most subjects in a cross-cultural study by Scherer, Wallbott, & Summerfield (1986) reported episodes in which they were treated unfairly by others. Findings from other studies are consistent with this result (Törestad, 1990). Furthermore, anger was reported by victims as their predominant emotional reaction in Mikula's (1986) research on the experience of injustice. Consequently, anger seems to be the best emotional indicator of SBI.

Intrusiveness (INT): Research on emotion (Rime, Philippot, Boca, & Mesquity, 1992) and on coping with critical life events (Klauer & Filipp, 1993) has revealed that strong emotions, which may result from experiences of injustice, tend to preoccupy the mind and often lead to enduring rumination. Intrusiveness was therefore chosen as a third indicator of SBI.

Punitivity (PUN): Justice norms are social norms; they originate from a society's need to protect its members against antisocial transgressions (Vermunt & Steensma, 1991). Since all members of a society are possible victims of antisocial behavior, they share a common interest in preserving social norms. Social norms would lose their function if violations had no negative consequences. Therefore, the members of any social unit are interested in raising the costs and reducing the benefits of moral transgressions by other members of their unit. Retaliatory and retributive actions to unjust treatment are an effective and typical way to raise the costs for the victimizer. Punitivity was therefore chosen as a fourth indicator of SBI.

Four self-report scales were constructed by relating each indicator to 18 types of situations such as performing better than others without getting any appreciation or reward. The PUN scale consisted of 10 items only because only 10 situations could be combined meaningfully with retaliatory intentions.

An exploratory principle axes analyses of the 64 items was conducted by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) to investigate the factorial validity of the questionnaire. Varimax rotation of the first four axes to simple structure yielded an ideal loading pattern, i.e., all items had their highest loading on the a priori factor.

The following internal consistency coefficients alpha were determined for the scales: FRE (.92), INA (.93), INT (.93), PUN (.87). These coefficients affirm the sufficiently high reliabilities of the scales.

The emergence of four factors suggests that besides their common factor SBI, each indicator measures a specific factor of its own. FRE may not only indicate a person's SBI but also reflect his or her objective living conditions (gender, job, roles, socioeconomic status, etc.) and therefore the objective number of unjust treatments that occur to this person in a given period of time. INA may

not only be a function of the person's justice sensitivity but also vary depending on his or her general anger proneness (Spielberger, 1988). Furthermore, an additional source of variance of INT could be the general tendency of a person to ruminate (Klauer & Filipp, 1993). Finally, PUN may contain specific variance stemming from dispositional aggressiveness (Choynowski, 1995; Olweus, 1979).

To investigate the extent to which each indicator reflects SBI, i.e., the extent of convergent validity, Schmitt, Montada, & Neumann (1995) specified a confirmatory factor model for scale halves and tested this model via LISREL. The model contains one common factor (SBI) for all eight scale halves and four specific factors, each of which is a common factor for parallel scale halves. The loadings of the manifest indicators on their common factor SBI can be interpreted as coefficients of convergent validity. All loadings were significant and substantial, but they varied considerably between indicators. The highest loadings were obtained for INA and INT. The lowest loadings were found for FRE. The best indicators for an individual's sensitivity to befallen injustice therefore seems to be his or her anger reaction (INA) and the intrusiveness of the event (INT). The number of unjust events a person recalls (FRE) does not seem to be a good measure for his or her sensitivity to such events. Following our reasoning from above, this result may mean that individual differences in the objective number of unfair treatments have a stonger impact on the number of events stored in memory than the subject's threshold to perceive such events.

Scientific parsimony requires that a new construct should not be proposed unless it is sufficiently distinct from established constructs. For a latent trait construct, this means that the discriminant validity of indicators for the new construct must be demonstrated vis a vis indicators for established constructs that are conceptually and theoretically related (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In order to investigate the discriminant validity of the SBI scales, Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) measured, as reference constructs, trait anger, anger in, anger out, frustration tolerance, life satisfaction, centrality of justice, interpersonal trust, and need for control. The entire pattern of correlations cannot be given here. Only the most important results will be mentioned.

First, a moderate correlation of .59 was found between the common factor of the SBI scales and the common factor of two measures for frustration tolerance. A moderate correlation between SBI and frustration tolerance had been expected because frustrating and unjust events share, as a common element, the violation of an expectation. Unlike frustrations that may result from a blockage of mere desires, unjust events usually result from the violation of a moral rule by another person. While an unfair treatment implies a frustration, a frustration must not necessarily originate from an act of injustice. Consequently, there is only a partial conceptual overlap between frustration and injustice (cf., Deutsch, 1985, Chapter 12). Consequently, a substantial, but not a perfect correlation was expected between frustration tolerance and SBI.

Second, the common factor of the SBI scales was not correlated with the anger scales. This had been expected because the common factor of the SBI scales cannot explain specific variance of a SBI indicator such as intensity of anger. Although anger is a typical reaction to unjust treatment and therefore provides a good method for measuring justice sensitivity, the general anger proneness and dispositional modes of expressing anger seem to be independent from SBI.

Third, and in line with the reasoning just given, the specific factors of the SBI scales correlated significantly with the anger scales. For instance, the correlation of the trait anger factor with the specific SBI factors INA (intensity of anger), INT (intrusiveness of thoughts), and PUN (punitivity) amounted to .89, .76, and .74, respectively.

Fourth, a moderate negative correlation was predicted between life satisfaction and SBI because the experience of injustice should impair a person's psychological well-being. The highest correlation was predicted for the frequency scale. Both expectations were supported. The correlation between a measure for life satisfaction and the SBI total score was $-.32$, and the frequency scale had the highest correlation of all SBI scales ($-.38$).

Fifth, a moderate positive correlation was predicted between centrality of justice as a value and SBI because central values are more ego-involving than peripheral values. Since threats to the person's value system are emotionally and mentally involving, the highest correlations were predicted for the intensity of anger scale and the intrusiveness scale. The correlation between a measure for centrality and the SBI total score was low ($.18$), but in line with assumptions, higher correlations were obtained for the intensity of anger scale ($.18$) and for the intrusiveness scale ($.25$) than for the other scales.

Sixth, a moderate negative correlation was predicted for interpersonal trust because in ambiguous situations, trusting individuals should give the perpetrator more easily the benefit of the doubt. The highest correlation was expected for the frequency scale. The correlation between a measure for interpersonal trust and the SBI total score was $-.55$, and as anticipated, the highest correlation of all SBI scales was obtained for the frequency scale ($-.50$).

Seventh, a moderate positive correlation was predicted for need for control because control and justice both serve a more basic need for security. Accordingly, a correlation of $.38$ was obtained between the SBI total score and a measure for need for control.

All of these correlations show that SBI is sufficiently distinct from these constructs, but at the same time, related to them in psychologically meaningful ways. Together with the empirical evidence from Dar & Resh's (1993) research, the results obtained by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) provide sound empirical support for the general assumption that individuals differ consistently across a wide range of situations in their sensitivity to unfair treatment.

The present research was conducted to provide further evidence for the construct validity of the SBI scales over and above their correlations with self-report measures for related constructs. In the present study, reactions to an unjust real life event were observed and regressed on SBI which had been measured several weeks earlier. In addition, measures for personality variables which might also predict reactions to unjust treatment were measured. The general assumption was that the SBI scales would predict subjects' reactions to the unfair event. Furthermore, it was assumed that the SBI scales would predict reactions to the event better than measures for the "competing" personality constructs. A more detailed formulation of the hypotheses necessitates specific knowledge of the variables and will therefore be given after the method section.

METHOD

Setting and Stimulus Event

At Trier University, where the study was conducted, psychology students can take two types of applied clinical courses. These courses are very attractive for students because they are a good preparation for work in clinical psychology after graduation. In one type of course, a group of five students participate in clinical work with real clients. In the other type, a group of 10 students develop a training program for hypothetical clients (e.g., an assertiveness training). Usually, the training cannot be applied during the course. Students generally prefer the first type of courses. Due to limited resources, not all students can participate in the more attractive type of course. A lottery is therefore

conducted each semester for distributing students into the types of courses. It can be assumed that students who do not draw the preferred type of course feel disadvantaged and develop a sense of unjust deprivation. If this assumption is correct, students with a high SBI should resent the distribution more than students with low SBI.

Subjects, Design, and General Procedure

At Occasion 1, 110 advanced psychology students who were eligible for a clinical practicum received a letter from the first author asking them to participate in a large scale survey on justice and related issues. The letter contained the questionnaires for measuring the independent variables described below. At Occasion 2, the lottery occurred. Before the lottery, each student had to indicate the preferred type of course and the preferred teacher. These informations are collected regularly for administrative purposes. In the present study, the type of preferred course and the result of the lottery served to define the stimulus event variable, i.e., the subject's objective advantage or disadvantage. At Occasion 3, about 10 weeks after the lottery, the psychology student parliament started an activity aimed at changing the current procedure for the distribution of clinical courses. Students who had participated in the last lottery were mailed a questionnaire by the student parliament. This questionnaire contained items for measuring the students' opinion about the current lottery and alternative solutions to the distribution problem. It also contained the items for measuring the dependent variables for this study (see below). 57 from the original 110 students returned the questionnaire.

Independent Variables

Objective Disadvantage (OD)

The variable Objective Disadvantage (OD) was created from the student's preference and the result of the lottery. This variable indicates whether or not the student had received what he desired.

SBI Scales

The questionnaire developed by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) consists of four scales. Three of these scales were adopted for the present study, the frequency scale (FRE), the intensity of anger scale (INA), and the intrusiveness scale (INT). The punitivity scale was not used because this indicator cannot be related to as many situations as the other indicators. In the original version of the SBI questionnaire, each of the three scales (FRE, INA, INT) contains the same 18 types of situations such as performing better than others without getting any appreciation or reward. Examples of the wording of the corresponding items and the response scales are as follows:

Frequency (FRE): I perform better than others without getting any appreciation or reward (Response scale: 1/rarely ... 6/often).

Intensity of Anger (INA): If I perform better than others without getting any appreciation or reward, I get angry (Response scale: 1/not at all ... 6/extremely).

Intrusiveness of Thoughts (INT): If I perform better than others without getting any appreciation or reward, I cannot forget about it for a long time (Response scale: 1/completely false ... 6/exactly true).

In the present study, 14 types of situations were added to the original 18 types of situations. The new situations pertain to specific agents of unfair treatment such as authorities in public agencies, to additional contexts such as work, to additional forms of unfair treatment such as lack of respect, and to situations from childhood and adolescence such as unfair treatment in school. The purpose of

adding these items was to explore in more detail the generalizability of the justice sensitivity disposition across a larger variety of situations and across a larger segment of the person's own biography. In the present version, each scale consists of 32 items (cf. Mohiyeddini, 1995). The response scales used by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) were adopted.

Attitudes Towards Principles of Distributive Justice

Attitudes towards principles of distributive justice were measured to explore the possibility that a student's sense of unfairness regarding the lottery may be a function of the person's attitude towards different distribution rules. Specific hypotheses will be formulated later.

Equality of Chances (EC): Four items from the equality of chances scale developed by Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert (1983) were used. All items suggest the lottery principle as a fair way for deciding to whom out of several applicants a job or position should be given. Since this distribution principle was realized in the present research context and created objective advantages and objective disadvantages, it is most relevant here.

Factual Equality (FE): Four items from the factual equality scale developed by Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert (1983) were used. These items state that distributions are fair if all recipients are given exactly the same share of the resource. Since the lottery led to an objective advantage or disadvantage for the subject in the present research context, the attitude towards this principle is of major interest here.

Equity: Four items from a scale developed by Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert (1983) for measuring attitudes towards the equity, contribution, or achievement principle were used. Seven additional items were suggested by the second author of this paper (cf. Mohiyeddini, 1995). The items of this scale state that distributions of outcomes are fair if they are conditional upon or proportional to inputs. Attitude towards equity is not of major interest in the present study. It was measured in order to explore the possibility that subjects with a positive attitude towards this principle resent the lottery more than subjects with a negative attitude. This effect would be reasonable because a lottery neglects individual contributions.

Need: Four items from the need scale developed by Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert (1983) were used. Four additional items were suggested by the second author of this paper (cf. Mohiyeddini, 1995). The items of this scale suggest that a fair distribution has to take the needs of the recipients into consideration. Attitude towards need as a distribution criterion is not of major interest in the present study. It was measured in order to explore the possibility that subjects with a positive attitude towards this principle resent the lottery more than subjects with a negative attitude. This effect would be reasonable because a lottery neglects individual needs.

Belief in a Just World (BJW)

Belief in a just world was measured because it can be reasoned that subjects who score differently on this trait also differ in how unjust they perceive the distribution and how they react to it. More specific hypotheses will be formulated later. Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt (1987) developed a scale for measuring individual differences in the justice motive according to Lerner's (1980) construct "Belief in a Just World". This scale was developed because Dalbert (1982) had found poor psychometric properties for a German version of the Rubin & Peplau (1973) scale. The Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt (1987) scale consists of six items and was administered in the present study. The items are

embedded in those for measuring attitudes towards principles of distributive justice (see previous section).

Anger Proneness and Anger Expression

Trait anger and anger expression styles were measured as constructs which could also explain certain reactions to a disadvantageous event. A crucial assumption following from our central construct states that sensitivity to befallen injustice predicts reactions to unjust or disadvantageous events better than other constructs such as trait anger or self-assertiveness. A German version of Spielberger's Anger Inventory (1988; Schwenkmezger & Hodapp, 1989) was used for measuring trait anger (TRA), anger in (ANI), anger out (ANO), and anger control (ANC).

Self-Assertiveness

Besides the anger dispositions, self-assertiveness was selected as a second type of construct which "competes" theoretically with SBI for explaining reactions to disadvantageous events. Ullrich de Muynck & Ullrich (1976) developed an inventory for measuring six components of self-assertiveness. One of the scales measures the capability to make demands. This scale was selected for the present study because this component of self-assertiveness is conceptually related most closely to the kinds of reactions to unfairness that were observed in the present study (see below).

Gender

Gender (SEX) was recorded as a control variable because various gender differences have been assumed (e.g., Rubin & Peplau, 1975) and reported (Ambrosio & Sheehan, 1990; Major & Deaux, 1982; Whatley, 1993) in justice literature. More specifically, one might argue that women are deprived more often than men from societal resources (Dar & Resh, 1993) which could either make them more sensitive for unjust experiences or, on the contrary, raise perceptual defenses or inoculate them against such experiences.

Dependent Variables

Among several other items, the questionnaire given to students at Occasion 3 contained items for measuring their sense of injustice and related judgments and reactions. All items had to be answered on six-point rating scales. Since the subjects were advanced psychology students, it was necessary to disguise the present purpose of the questionnaire. This was realized by two means: First, items needed for the present study were mixed with items which had no obvious psychological content but dealt with specifics of the curriculum and the department, and second, only one or two items were included for measuring the following construct (for details see Mohiyeddini, 1995).

Retrospective Justice Evaluation (RJ). This measure consisted of two items pertaining to (1) how fair the distribution was, and (2) whether or not the lottery should be replaced by a fairer procedure in the future. The correlation between both items was .48.

Retrospective Anger (RA). In a single item, subjects were asked to indicate how angry they felt at present when thinking about the distribution.

Demotivating Distribution (DD). In a single item, subjects were asked to indicate how strongly they felt that the lottery was demotivating for students.

Agreement with Activity of Student Parliament (AA). In a single item, subjects had to indicate how useful they considered their fellow students' activity towards changing the distribution procedure.

HYPOTHESES

(1) Main Effects of Attitudes Towards Principles of Distributive Justice

Since individuals who consider equal distributions as fair should resent any deviation from this principle, it was expected that subjects with a favorable attitude towards factual equality (FE) would consider the distribution less fair (RJ) than subjects with a less favorable attitude. Equivalent main effects of FE were expected for the other dependent variables (RA, DD, and AA).

The opposite effects were expected for attitudes towards equality of chances (EC) because lotteries can be considered a special procedure for this principle.

From a pure normative point of view, the effects of FE and EC should be independent from whether the subject had been objectively advantaged or disadvantaged by the lottery (OD). Given that justice judgments are often biased egoistically, however, first order interactions between FE/EC and OD would not be surprising.

(2) Main Effect of Belief in a Just World

According to Lerner's (1980) theory, individuals are motivated to believe that the world is just, i.e., that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get. Rubin & Peplau (1973) have suggested and shown that the strength of this motive differs among individuals. Subjects with a strong belief in a just world are supposed to invest more effort and energy into fighting injustice by compensating the victim or retributing the victimizer. If they cannot actively resolve observed instances of injustice, they try to resolve them psychologically, i.e. by perceptual defense, by distortion, or by post hoc justification. Regarding the event and setting of the present study, subjects with a strong belief in just world could either react to the unequal distribution by denying justice (RJ) or by supporting activities for changing the procedure (AA). Given that both strategies might be followed by different individuals or simultaneously by the same person (although that appears to be a psychological contradiction), it was predicted that BJW correlates negatively with RJ, RA, and DD, but positively with AA.

(3) Interaction between Belief in a Just World and Objective Disadvantage

Assuming that unjust events are more threatening for a person's belief in a just world if the person is victimized by the event, it was predicted that the main effects of BJW would be stronger if the subject was objectively disadvantaged by the lottery than when one profited from it.

(4) Interaction Between SBI and Objective Disadvantage

SBI was predicted to have a positive effect on all dependent variables for subjects who had been disadvantaged objectively by the lottery. Formally, this corresponds to two-way interaction effects between the SBI measures [SBI (total score), FRE, INA, INT] and Objective Disadvantage (OD).

Furthermore, it was predicted that the OD-conditional effects of SBI on the dependent variables would be stronger than the corresponding effects of the anger dispositions and self-assertiveness.

(5) Interactions Between Objective Disadvantage, SBI, and Attitudes Towards Principles of Distributive Justice

The two-way interaction effects between SBI and OD were expected to be stronger for subjects with a favorable attitude towards factual equality (FE) than for subjects with an unfavorable attitude. For subjects with a positive attitude towards FE, the result of the lottery does not only mean an objective disadvantage but also a violation of their sense of fairness.

The opposite three-way interaction effects was expected for Attitude Towards Equality of Chances (EC). More specifically, the two-way interactions between SBI and OD were expected to be weaker for subjects with a favorable attitude towards equality of chances than for subjects with an unfavorable attitude. Subjects with a positive attitude are only objectively disadvantaged but should not feel treated as much unfairly as subjects who consider the lottery principle as unfair.

RESULTS

Factor and Reliability Analyses of the Measures for the Independent Variables

The sample of the present study and the sample of a second study were pooled to obtain a sufficiently large sample for analyzing the statistical properties of the questionnaires administered at Occasion 1 of the present study for measuring the independent variables. Data from 281 subjects were available for the factor and reliability analyses.

SBI Scales

The 96 items of the three SBI scales used here were submitted simultaneously to a principle axes analysis. The eigenvalue plot suggested three common factors. After varimax rotation of the first three principle axes to simple structure, a loading pattern appeared which corresponded perfectly to the a priori structure. All FRE items loaded on a common factor, all INA items loaded on a common factor, and all INT items loaded on a common factor. Together, the three factors explained 38.8% of the total variance of the items. The corresponding result reported by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) were thus replicated. In a second step of analyses, the 32 items of each scale were submitted separately to principle axes analyses. The eigenvalue plots indicated clearly that the items of each scale had only one factor in common. Consequently, each scale measures a one-dimensional construct. The reliability turned out to be very high for each scale. The internal consistency coefficients alpha amounted to .95, .93, and .94 for the FRE, INA, and INT scales, respectively. These results show that the three indicators for an individual's sensitivity to befallen injustice are not only generalized across broad classes of situations, as Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) have shown, but also across more specific situations in the person's present life and across situations which the person remembers from childhood and adolescence.

Attitudes Towards Principles of Distributive Justice and Belief in a Just World

The items for measuring attitudes towards principles of distributive justice and belief in a just world were submitted simultaneously to a principle axes analysis. The eigenvalue plot did not display a distinct scree (Cattell, 1966). Moderate scree appeared at the third and at the seventh factor. Several solutions were explored. None of them had a satisfactory simple structure after varimax rotation and none had a loading pattern which corresponded satisfactory with the a priori scales (for details see Mohiyeddini, 1995). More specifically, the old and the new items for measuring attitude towards equity tended to load on different factors. The same was true for the old and the new need items. In

a second step of analysis, the new equity and need items were removed, and the reduced set of original items (Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983; Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) was submitted once again to a principle axes analysis. As in several previous studies (e.g., Schmitt et al., 1994), five common factors appeared whose loadings corresponded, after varimax rotation, almost perfectly to the a priori scales. Only one equity item had a substantial loading on the "wrong" factor, namely the belief in a just world factor. All other items had their highest loadings on the a priori factor. Based on these and additional analyses (for details see Mohiyeddini, 1995), the following scales were formed.

The belief in a just world scale (BJW) consists of the six a priori items (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) and has an alpha of .76.

Two equity scales were formed, one consisting of the four original items (Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983; alpha = .46), and the other consisting of the seven new items (alpha = .65).

The factual equality scale (FE) consists of the four a priori items (Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983) and has an internal consistency of alpha = .54.

The equality of chances scale (EC) consists of the four a priori items (Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983) and has an internal consistency of alpha = .88.

Two need scales were formed, one consisting of the four original items (Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1983; alpha = .71), and the other consisting of the four new items (alpha = .44).

Anger Scales

The 34 items of the German anger inventory for measuring trait anger (TRA), anger in (ANI), anger out (ANO), and anger control (ANC) were submitted simultaneously to a principle axes analysis. The first four principle axes were varimax rotated to the best possible simple structure. No satisfactory simple structure could be obtained, however. Furthermore, the empirical loading pattern deviated substantially from the theoretical loading pattern. The TRA items had their highest loadings on three different factors, and the expression styles did not appear as distinct factors either. Several additional analyses were conducted with subsets of the items. None of the solutions that were explored came close to the theoretical structure (for details see Mohiyeddini, 1995). In order to make the present research comparable to other research with Spielberger's anger inventory, the a priori scales were taken for testing hypotheses. The internal consistency coefficients alpha for the scales amount to .79 (TRA), .90 (ANI), .84 (ANO), and .85 (ANC).

Self-Assertiveness

The eigenvalue plot for the self-assertiveness scale ascertains that the items measures a single common latent trait. Item total correlations for two of the 15 items were low. These items were removed. The remaining 13 items had in internal consistency of alpha = .80.

Results from Testing the Hypotheses

All hypotheses stated above were tested separately and simultaneously using the multiple regression framework. Product variables were included as predictor terms to test the expected interaction effects (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, 1978; Dalbert & Schmitt, 1986). Separate multiple regression analyses were computed for each dependent variables. In addition to the predictors mentioned in the hypotheses, the remaining personality variables (trait anger, anger in, anger out, anger control, self-assertiveness) were included to obtain estimates of the unique effects of the justice variables and to

test the general hypothesis that these variables would predict the reactions to the event better than the competing constructs.

Simultaneous Test and Estimation of Unique Effects

In order to test for and estimate the unique contributions of the predictor terms, all relevant predictor terms were considered simultaneously in multiple regression analyses for each dependent variable. In these simultaneous analyses, none of the expected interaction effects were significant but only main effects. These are summarized graphically as a path model in Figure 1.

The standardized path coefficients in Figure 1 show that the retrospective evaluation of the distribution as unfair (RJ) could be predicted significantly only by the combined SBI scale. Furthermore, SBI was the only significant predictor of the student's agreement with the activity of the student parliament (AA). Both effects were independent from Objective Disadvantage, i.e., independent of whether or not the student had received the type of practicum he wanted.

Together with Anger Control (ANC), one of the three indicator specific SBI scales, Intrusiveness of Thoughts (INT) predicted the extent to which a student felt that the lottery had demotivating effects on students (DD). This result may mean that students who ruminated a lot about the distribution and did not or could not control their anger tended to perceive a greater demotivating effect of the distribution than students who were not preoccupied by the event and controlled their anger.

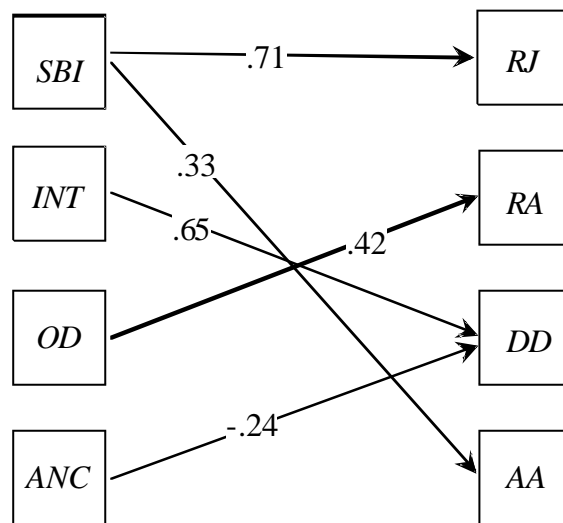


Figure 1. Path Model for Significant Main Effects

Retrospective anger (RA) was only predicted by whether or not the student had received what was desired.

Separate Tests for Interaction Effects

In a second series of analyses, the interaction effects stated in the groups of hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 were tested separately, i.e., without considering main effects of variables which were not part of the interaction effect at issue and without considering other interaction effects. In this type of analyses, two significant interaction effects appeared (note that these effects disappeared in the simultaneous

regression analyses reported above): First, there was a significant interaction between belief in a just world (BJW) and objective disadvantage (OD) on retrospective anger (RA). Second, BJW and OD had a significant interaction effect on AA (agreement with activity of the student parliament).

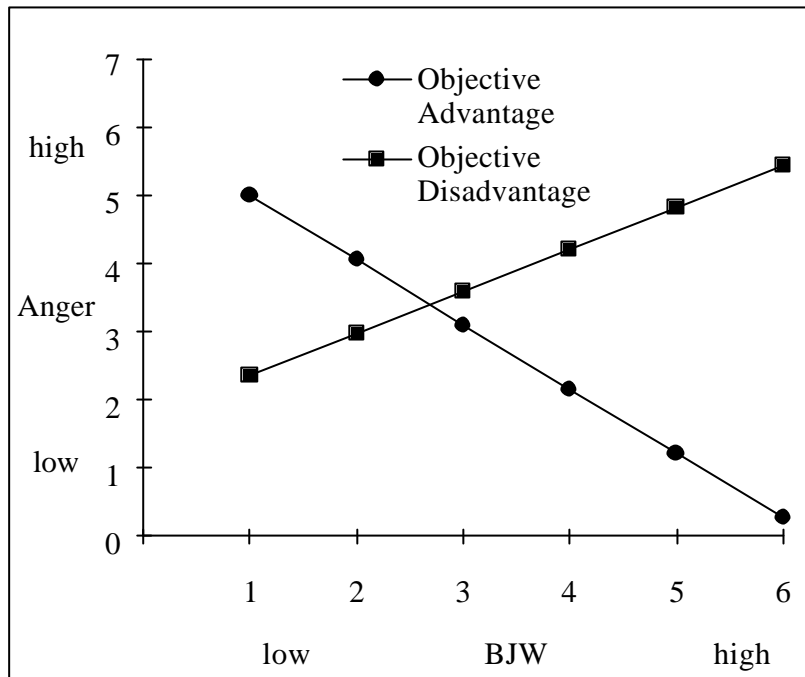


Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Belief in a Just World and Objective Disadvantage on Retrospective Anger

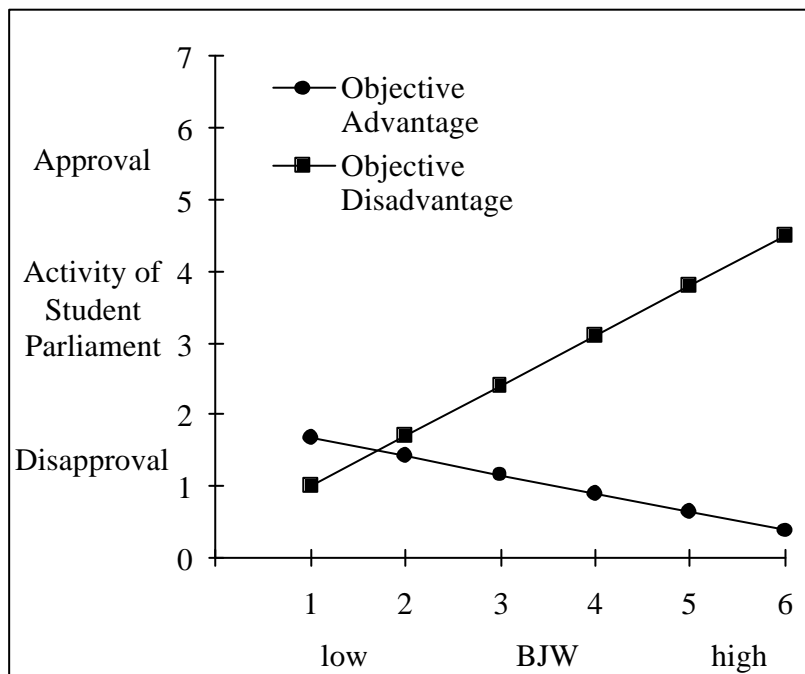


Figure 3. Interaction Effect of Belief in a Just World and Objective Disadvantage on Approval of Activity of Student Parliament

The first effect is displayed in Figure 2, the second effect is shown in Figure 3. Both effects are consistent among each other. Nevertheless, the conditional effects of BJW given OD do not agree with our expectations. Possible interpretations for the obtained results will be offered later.

DISCUSSION

The study provides considerable support for our general assumption that individual differences in sensitivity to befallen injustice play an important role in how individuals react to naturally occurring inequalities. However, the results are not in total agreement with our expectations. First, the effects of SBI were not conditional upon objective disadvantage. Second, the only significant effect of a competing personality variable, anger control, was also independent on whether or not the student had been advantaged or disadvantaged by the lottery. Third, individuals' reactions to the lottery did not depend on their attitudes towards principles of distributive justice (Hypothesis 1), and these attitudes did not increase or decrease the effects of SBI (Hypothesis 5).

The unexpected results may at least partly reflect some shortcomings of the study which follow directly from its specific field context. The first problem is the unclear and probably low reliability of the dependent variables that were measured with single items. The largest path coefficient was found only for the dependent variable that was measured with two items (RJ). The lower path coefficients of the remaining dependent variables may partly stem from an attenuation of the true effects. Given this well known problem of single item measures, the sizes of the regression coefficients in Figure 1 are substantial. For example, the multiple correlation between DD and its two predictors (INT, ANC) amounts to .61.

A second weakness of the study is its low statistical power. Only 57 subjects remained for measuring the dependent variables and this may explain why the expected interaction effects were not significant. The skewed distribution of OD may be a second reason. 35 subjects did not receive what they wanted, while 22 subjects were lucky in the lottery. With 22 subjects only, the standard error of estimates for the conditional regression coefficients is high and only large effects can be detected with a sufficiently low risk of type I errors.

Despite these weaknesses, the study provides -- in combination with the results obtained by Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada (1995) -- empirical support for the usefulness of the SBI construct and the validity of the SBI scales. Of course, additional studies are needed to investigate more thoroughly the psychological functioning of SBI and the properties of the SBI scales. Longitudinal studies are needed to investigate the stability of individual differences in SBI. Peer rating studies could provide additional evidence on the validity of the scales. Studies including established personality questionnaires and tests would help to locate SBI in the multidimensional personality space. Finally, it would be interesting to reveal the relations between SBI and justice sensitivity from both the victimizer's and the observer's perspectives (cf. Schmitt, Maes, & Schmal, 1995).

The effects of belief in a just world deserve to be commented upon briefly although they were only a side product of this study. It had been expected that BJW would motivate individuals to believe that the event was not unjust after all. Consequently, less anger was expected for subjects with a strong belief in a just world than for subjects with a weak belief in a just world. This pattern of results was found only for subjects who were objectively advantaged by the event. Apparently, these subjects were able to justify their advantage and consequently had no reason to be upset about the lottery. For subjects who had been disadvantaged, however, the opposite effect was found, i.e., a positive correlation between belief in a just world and anger. At least two lines of reasoning may be considered in order to explain this effect post hoc.

First, one could argue that subjects with a high belief in a just world have a strong motivation for justice. For them, an unjust disadvantage implies a severe violation of their value priorities and makes them react with strong emotions. Note that this motivational interpretation is not consistent with the defensive function that has often been ascribed to the belief in a just world.

Second, one could argue that belief in a just world is not driven by a motivation for justice and security but merely reflects experience ("knowledge"). Subjects who have experienced a just world probably develop expectations based on their "knowledge". If these expectations are transformed into goals, their violation implies a frustration and instigates anger. According to this rationale, subjects with a low belief in a just world do not expect that they receive what they could expect if justice would rule the world. Consequently, they are less frustrated by unjust events and react with less anger.

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