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Procedural injustice in the workplace, sensitivity to befallen
injustice, and job satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

Two hypotheses were tested using data from 295 employees: (1) Procedural injustice at work has negative effects on psychosomatic well-being. (2) The impact of procedural injustice depends on the person's justice sensitivity. Justice sensitivity as well as desired and perceived procedural fairness according to Leventhal's criteria (consistency, nonpartiality, accuracy, correctability, representativeness) were measured via questionnaire. Job satisfaction, number of sick days during the last six months, and number of days a person felt sick at work during the last six months served as indicators of psychosomatic well-being. The difference between desired and perceived procedural fairness (Ought-Is discrepancy) was used as a measure of procedural unfairness. Psychosomatic well-being was predicted from the Ought-Is discrepancy with justice sensitivity serving as a moderator. Hypotheses were tested via moderated regression analyses. In line with the first hypothesis, procedural unfairness had a negative effect on psychosomatic well-being. In partial support of the second hypothesis, justice sensitivity moderated this effect on two measures of psychosomatic well-being.

The allocation and exchange of positive resources (money, rights, honors, etc.) and negative resources (taxes, duties, obligations, etc.) are core components of social life. Many duties and losses are unavoidable and many goods are limited due to natural constraints (e.g., material resources) or human decision (e.g., privileges). Conflicts emanating from allocation and exchange processes are therefore recurrent social phenomena. In order to prevent and resolve such conflicts, societies and groups establish standards both in the sense of formal codes and in the sense of informal guidelines (Montada, 1995). Although these standards reduce the amount and severity of conflicts, they cannot preclude them entirely for several related reasons. (1) Norms are usually stated in a general manner and with regard to prototypical cases. Before such abstract principles as the equity principle (Adams, 1965) or the principle of impartiality (Barry, 1989) can be used in a specific situation, they need to be transformed into operational rules. This implementation is standardized in some areas such as the legal system. Often, however, the transformation of an abstract principle into a concrete procedure has to occur ad hoc, and different parties may disagree on the appropriate implementation. (2) Formal and informal norms are selected from a large set of alternatives by social discourse or by verdict of authorities. As a result, allocation norms differ between societies and groups (Törnblom & Foa, 1983), and members of different groups may not agree on which norm is appropriate. In addition, individuals may not accept norms set by authorities, and minorities may refuse norms chosen by a majority. (3) Several norms often apply to the same case on principle, and different parties may prefer different norms. (4) Even if the parties agree on which norm is appropriate for a case, dissent may arise from disagreement whether the case is given or not. Consider the need principle as an example. Most cultures have a norm prescribing compensation for innocent victims. Although agreement on this norm may be given, individuals and groups may disagree on who is an innocent victim (Lerner, 1980).

Due to these intertwined mechanisms, the allocation and exchange of benefits and costs are complex social processes. They are intellectually interesting and crucial for the functioning of social systems. It is not surprising, therefore, that allocation and exchange procedures have been matters of scientific inquiry and lay debate for at least more than two milleniums (Aristotle, 1962). They have been subjects of various sciences such as philosophy, political science, law, theology, sociology, and psychology (Scherer, 1992). While the first four of the forementioned sciences treat the problem from a normative point of view, the latter two follow descriptive and explanatory aims, their research interest being to explore when and why which individuals consider which allocation of which resources as just (Schmitt, 1994).

Over the last three decades, sociologists and social psychologists have invested considerable effort in providing answers to various parts of this general question. At the beginning, equity theory was offered as a parsimonious and general theory (Adams, 1965; Walster, Berscheid & Walster, 1973). Conceptual analyses and empirical findings revealed rather soon, however, that the psychological mechanisms of allocation behavior and justice judgments are too complex to be explainable by such a simple model (Deutsch, 1985; Pritchard, 1969). Subsequently, equity was considered as only one of many allocations rules and justice norms (Deutsch, 1975; Reis, 1984). This move from single-principle to multiple-principle approaches constitutes a first trend in the history of social justice theory and research.

A second line of change may be called from distributive justice to procedural justice. This shift was instigated by scholars who submitted that the procedure which leads to a certain allocation may contribute to the experience of justice and injustice as much or more than the result (Bierhoff, 1992; Leventhal, 1980; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Empirical studies have supported this conjecture (Lind & Tyler, 1988). Several principles of procedural justice have been suggested based on theoretical reasoning and empirical investigation. Thibaut and Walker (1975) described process control and outcome control as two general procedures in the legal context. Leventhal (1980) suggested six general principles: consistency across time and person, nonpartiality or suppression of bias, accuracy of information, correctability of decisions, representation in the decision-making body, and maintenance of ethical and moral standards. Greenberg

(1986) identified a similar set from interviews with managers. Tyler (1988) distinguishes three relational determinants of procedural fairness: neutrality, trust, and standing (status recognition). Schreier, Groeben, and Blickle (1995) have proposed 11 ethical standards for argumentative discussions which can be considered special procedural fairness rules for the domain of verbal interactions.

A third trend in social justice goes from basic and laboratory research to applied and field research. If we consider Adams' (1965) seminal chapter as the onset of systematic justice research, basic experimental laboratory research prevailed during the first two decades (Messick & Cook, 1983; Walster, Walster & Berscheid, 1978). During the last decade, field studies have appeared in the literature (e.g., Kitzmann & Emery, 1993; Prentice & Crosby, 1987) and social justice concepts, theories, and findings are being imported increasingly into applied research such as research on justice in risk insurances (e.g., Schmitt, Barbacsy & Wunsch, 1997), justice in the legal system (e.g., Tyler, 1984, 1990), justice regarding the gender issue (e.g., Crosby, 1981; Reichle, 1994), justice in close relationships (e.g., Lerner & Mikula, 1995; Mikula, 1992), justice regarding the global distribution of wealth (Montada, Schmitt & Dalbert, 1986; Montada & Schneider, 1989), justice regarding the distribution of life quality in Germany after the reunification (e.g., Montada, 1995), justice regarding the distribution of labor (e.g., Montada, 1994), justice regarding the distribution of income (e.g., Nepl, 1986), and justice in the workplace (e.g., Bies, 1993; Greenberg, 1996; Meindl & Stensma, 1994).

A fourth development in social justice theorizing and research may be termed from general psychology to differential psychology. If we adopt Cronbach's (1957) distinction of psychology in a general and a differential discipline, social justice began, like many other fields, as a general discipline. The first studies on allocation behavior and distributive justice were experiments--designed to investigate, e.g., whether the choice of a particular allocation principle depends on the kind of resource to be distributed (e.g., material vs. symbolic), the social context of the distribution (e.g., competitive, cooperative, alimentary), the social relation between the recipients (e.g. difference in status and power), the existence and visibility of achievement or need differences between the recipients, as well as the attribution of achievement differences (e.g., effort vs. ability) and need differences (e.g., self-inflicted vs. not self-inflicted). Reviews of this research have been provided by Walster, et al. (1978), Mikula (1981), Deutsch (1985), and Törnblom (1992). Given the large proportions of variance that remained unexplained in these experiments and the more or less incidental evidence on group differences in allocation behavior (Gergen, Morse & Gergen, 1980; Major & Deaux, 1982), scholars became increasingly interested in individual differences and thus developed measurement instruments for the justice motive (e.g., Rubin & Peplau, 1973), for equity sensitivity (Huseman, Hatfield & Miles, 1985), for individual allocation preferences (e.g., Jasso, 1983; Sabbagh, Dar & Resh, 1994), for centrality of justice (e.g., Dalbert, Montada & Schmitt, 1987), and for other justice related constructs (cf. Schmitt, 1994).

Acknowledging these changes as progress in social justice research, the present field study continues along the last three of the forementioned lines of development. The general conjecture to be explored empirically is that the perception of procedural injustice in the workplace has negative effects on the job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being of employees. Additionally, it is proposed that these effects are not equal for all employees, but rather a function of individual justice sensitivity. It is suggested that the effect of perceived procedural unfairness on the outcome variables considered will be amplified by the individual's justice sensitivity. Regarding the first assumption, a number of previous empirical studies have compiled a considerable amount of evidence that procedural justice in the workplace is important for the efficient functioning of organizational structures, for the mental health of employees, for their attitudes toward superiors and toward the company, for organizational citizenship behavior, and, last but not least, for the economic health of a business (e.g., Bies, 1987, 1993; Folger & Konovsky, 1989; Greenberg,

1996; Konovsky, Folger & Cropanzano, 1987; Lowe & Vodanovich, 1995; McFarlin & Sweeney, 1992; Sheppard & Lewicki, 1987; Sheppard, Lewicki & Minton, 1992).

The group-value model proposed by Lind and Tyler (1988) offers a psychological explanation for the effects of procedural justice on these outcome variables in the context of work and in other social contexts. The model assumes that procedural justice informs employees about their relations to other group members and to authorities. More specifically, fair treatment indicates a positive and respected position of the person in the group and makes the person feel proud of being a group member. These two consequences, respect and pride, have positive effects on self-esteem and motivate the person to engage in positive group-oriented behavior. Tyler, DeGoey and Shmith (1996) present data from four cross-sectional survey studies that are consistent with this path model.

The present investigation extends previous research on the effects of procedural justice in the workplace in several regards: First, it is suggested that individuals differ in how important they consider procedural justice to be in general. This proposal is consistent with research showing that individuals differ in their need for justice (e.g., Lipkus, 1991; Maes, 1994) and in the extent to which they consider justice to be a central human value (Dalbert et al., 1987; Schwartz, 1992). Second, it is proposed that different individuals prefer different principles of procedural justice. This suggestion is adopted from a study by Wahner (1986) and from studies that found individual differences in attitudes towards principles of distributive justice (e.g., Jasso, 1983; Sabbagh et al., 1994). Third, it is assumed that due to unequal perceptual thresholds, individuals differ in the extent to which they perceive procedural justice principles as being met or violated. Fourth, it is offered that the difference between desired procedural justice (Ought component) and realized procedural principles (Is component) may reflect the experience of injustice more precisely and predict emotional and behavioral outcomes better than the perceived violation of principles alone. Fifth, it is suggested that individuals differ in their general sensitivity to experienced injustice and that this disposition has three related effects: (a) Compared to insensitive individuals, sensitive individuals should display a stronger desire for procedural justice. (b) Due to a lower perceptual threshold, sensitive individuals should perceive cases of procedural justice more easily and more often than insensitive individuals. (c) Justice sensitivity amplifies the effects of perceived procedural unfairness on outcome variables.

These latter reflections on justice sensitivity and its effects follow from work by Schmitt, Neumann, and Montada (1995) who have recently introduced the construct of Sensitivity to Befallen Injustice (SBI) to the social justice literature. Extending previous work in which consistent and stable differences were found in how easily individuals judged personal advantages as undeserved and reacted with feelings of guilt (Montada et al., 1986; Montada & Schneider, 1989), Schmitt et al. (1995) suggest that individuals may also differ in how easily they feel treated unfairly and deprived of deserved outcomes. The questionnaire devised by Schmitt et al. (1995) for measuring SBI employs four types of indicators. (1) The Frequency Indicator follows directly from the perceptual threshold notion contained in any sensitivity concept (Gordon, 1989). (2) The Anger Indicator draws upon research showing that the experience of injustice is linked more closely with anger than with any other emotion (Mikula, 1986; Mikula, Petri & Tanzer, 1990). (3) The Intrusiveness Indicator adopts the rumination concept from emotion theory (Rime, Philippot, Boca & Mesquita, 1992) and coping research (Klauer & Filipp, 1993). (4) The Punitivity Indicator implements the concept of retributive justice and contains the wish for retaliatory actions against the perpetrator (cf. Birnbacher, 1984). The convergent and discriminant validity of these indicators was tested successfully by Schmitt et al. (1995). Two additional studies attest to the construct validity of the indicators. Schmitt and Mohiyeddini (in press) found that individuals high in SBI reacted with more resentment to a natural deprivation of a desired outcome than subjects low in SBI. Mohiyeddini and Schmitt (in press) replicated this result for unfair treatment in the laboratory. In both studies, resentment could be predicted better from

SBI than from measures for "competing" constructs such as frustration tolerance, self assertiveness, trait anger, and anger out.

To summarize the reasoning outlined so far, the present study was designed for testing the following 8 hypotheses:

1. Individuals differ in their general desire or need for procedural justice in the workplace.
2. Different individuals prefer different principles of procedural justice in the workplace.
3. Individuals differ in the perception of procedural injustice in the workplace.
4. The perceived violation of procedural justice principles in the workplace has negative effects on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being.
5. The difference between desired and realized procedural justice principles (Ought-Is) has negative effects on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being.
6. The effect predicted in Hypothesis 5 will be stronger than the effect predicted in Hypothesis 4.
7. Dispositional sensitivity to befallen injustice has a positive effect on desired procedural justice (Ought) in the workplace and a negative effect on perceived procedural justice (Is).
8. Dispositional sensitivity to befallen injustice amplifies the effects of perceived injustice and of the difference between desired and perceived justice (Ought-Is) on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being.

METHOD

Design, Research Setting, Subjects, and Procedure

This research was conducted as a cross-sectional questionnaire field study with employees of a large German automobile company. Subjects were 295 laborers who worked in small autonomous groups. Subjects were invited to participate during group meetings. Participation was voluntary. The study had been announced earlier by the investigators and shortly before data collection again by the group advisors. Subjects were handed a booklet containing all questionnaires in the following order: procedural justice, job satisfaction, psychosomatic well-being, sensitivity to befallen injustice. Questionnaires were filled in individually and anonymously.

Measurement Instruments

Procedural Justice

Preparatory Interview Study

In order to operationalize procedural justice in a most relevant way for the specific context, a sample of advisors and laborers were interviewed extensively about group work 3 months before the main study. Interviews were conducted by the second author in a nonstructured fashion. This method was chosen to collect as many diverse ad hoc reflections on procedural justice as possible. A total of 40 persons were interviewed. Interviews lasted between 20 minutes and an hour. Brain protocols were taken immediately after the interviews. Phrases from the interviews served as a semantic reservoir for constructing questionnaire items measuring the Is and Ought components of procedural justice. A second purpose of interviewing was to establish trust between the workers and the investigators. Employees in the present company, and perhaps in similar companies as well, are extremely sensitive to anything that remotely sounds like psychological testing. It was important, therefore, to earn the workers' confidence and to convince them that their interests would not be threatened by the main investigation.

Scales for the Is and Ought components of Procedural Justice

Many ad hoc statements on procedural fairness that were obtained in the prestudy matched with the first five Leventhal (1980) rules: Consistency, nonpartiality, accuracy, correctability, and representativeness. Few statements could be interpreted as appeals to general ethical and moral standards according to Leventhal's sixth principle. However, there was a group of frequent statements which may be called open information that is not contained explicitly in Leventhal's system. The impression from the interviews was that the withdrawal of information which is needed for evaluating individual and group performance, for making plans, decisions, and judgments is considered a severe case of procedural unfairness. Therefore, Leventhal's sixth principle was replaced by the principle of open information.

Based on the material of the prestudy, Leventhal's (1980) and other writers' definitions of the principles, and operationalizations of the Leventhal principles by Wahner (1986), each principle was operationalized by five items. An example is given for each principle:

- Consistency: The evaluation of peers should always rely on the same criteria.
- Nonpartiality: A superior should not prefer one subordinate over another.
- Accuracy: Every available piece of information should be taken into account before a decision is made.
- Correctability: If something is obviously wrong, everybody should make an effort to correct it, no matter what it is.
- Representativeness: Before a decision is made, the interests of everybody who is affected should be considered carefully.
- Open Information: Bad news should not be disguised.

The 30 statements were mixed in a random order. Each statement was followed by two questions and rating scales. The first question (How important is this to you?) was intended to measure an individual's preference, attitude, or desire for the principle (Ought component). Subjects had to answer each Ought item on a six-point rating scale ranging from 1/rather unimportant to 6/very important. The second question (How often is this followed in the area of your work?) was intended to measure the extent to which the principle is obeyed or violated according to the person's point of view (Is component). Subjects had to answer each Is item on a six-point rating scale ranging from 1/very rarely to 6/very often.

Sensitivity to Befallen Injustice (SBI)

A limited amount of time was granted by the management for this investigation that took place during work hours. For this reason, only one of the four scales developed by Schmitt et al. (1995) was used for measuring SBI. Schmitt et al. (1995) reported the highest convergent validity for the Intrusiveness scale. Therefore, this scale was used. It contains 19 items each referring to a particular type of unfair treatment or deprivation such as: Performing better than others without getting any appreciation or reward. Items were formulated as conditional statements, the condition being the unjust event and the consequence being a long mental preoccupation with the event, phrased, e.g., as: I cannot forget about it for a long time. Items had to be answered on six-point rating scales reflecting the degree to which the statement is considered a correct description of the individual (1/totally false; 6/totally true).

Job Satisfaction

In order to obtain a parsimonious instrument for measuring job satisfaction, five indicators were adopted from the literature (e.g., Fischer, 1991; Gawellek, 1987; Neuberger, 1985) and rephrased to fit the specific context of the present study: (1) I enjoy the work I am doing. (2) I like working in my group. (3) I would rather move to a new area. (4) I would rather go back to my former area. (5) I consider quitting my

current job. Each item had to be answered on a six-point frequency rating scale ranging from 1/never to 6/very often. Items 3 through 5 were recoded before statistical analyses.

Psychosomatic Well-Being

Psychosomatic well-being was operationalized as sickness. Sickness was measured as (1) the number of sick days during the last six months and (2) the number of days during the last six months the person felt sick but nevertheless came to work. Both indicators rely on research showing links between psychological and physical well-being (Stoudemire, 1995). Three causal mechanisms for this link have been discussed in the literature: Physical illness can cause depression (e.g. Erickson, 1993). Stress and negative emotions can harm physical health (Johnson, 1990). In addition, both mechanisms may combine into a reciprocal synergetic interaction across time. In the present study, we draw upon the second mechanism. It is assumed that the experience of injustice evokes negative emotions (Mikula et al., 1990), and that the frequent experience of negative emotions injures physical health (Johnson, 1990). A second psychological mechanism may also contribute to the expected effect of procedural unfairness on sick days. Employees may pretend to be sick but truly stay home because they want to get even with procedural unfairness (Greenberg, 1996; Marr, 1996).

Although the first indicator of psychosomatic well-being, the number of sick days is an objective indicator, it had to be measured via self-report. The union was opposed to disclosing any personal data from the workers' files although a procedure was suggested that would have guaranteed perfect anonymity. Consequently, both indicators of psychosomatic well-being are subjective measures. Subjects were asked to give the number of days during the last six months that they had been absent from work due to sickness and the number of days during the last six months that they had worked despite feeling sick. No criteria were provided for defining sickness. Instead, it was left to the subjects how they defined sickness.

RESULTS

Factorial Structure, Internal Consistency, and Distribution of the Measures

Exploratory principle axes factor analyses and internal consistency analyses were conducted to explore the correlational structure of the measures and to estimate their reliability. In part, these analyses also served to test some of the hypotheses.

Procedural Justice

Separate analyses were conducted for the Ought items, the Is items, and the difference between corresponding Ought and Is items. The first 4 eigenvalues of the 30 Ought items amounted to 11.4, 1.7, 1.5, and 1.3. There was no remarkable drop in eigenvalues after the fourth eigenvalue. According to Cattell's (1966) scree test, the items clearly have only one common factor. This factor accounts for an average of 38% of the variance of the items. Alpha for the Ought scale was .93. Item-total correlations ranged from .40 to .70. The 30 items are homogeneous and measure the same latent trait with sufficient reliability. In order to retain the metric of the rating scales, Ought scale scores were computed by averaging the 30 Ought items. The mean and standard deviation of the scale are given in Table 1. The distribution of the scale scores was negatively skewed with most subjects considering procedural justice to be very important. Nevertheless, and in line with Hypothesis 1, individuals differ in their general need for procedural justice in the workplace. Contrary to Hypothesis 2, however, individuals do not differ in their preference for specific procedural justice principles. The a priori principles did not emerge as distinct factors. Instead, the within principle correlations among items were similar in size to the between principle correlations. Subjects did not discriminate between principles, but differed only in their general attitude toward procedural justice as defined by our items.

Results for the Is items were similar except that the homogeneity of the scale was even higher. The first 4 eigenvalues of the 30 Is items amounted to 16.1, 1.3, 1.1, and 1.0. There was no drop in eigenvalues after the fourth eigenvalue. It is obvious that the items have only one factor in common according to the scree criterion. The first factor accounts for an average of 54% of the item variance. Alpha for the Is scale was .97. Item total correlations ranged from .53 to .78. Once again, scale scores were computed by averaging items. The mean and the standard deviation of the scale are given in Table 1. The distribution of the scale scores was bell-shaped. The scale mean shows, in comparison with the mean for the Ought scale, that subjects perceive considerably less procedural justice than they desire. Furthermore, and in line with Hypothesis 3, individuals differ in the perception of procedural injustice in the workplace. However, they again do not discriminate between principles. Rather, they differ only in the degree to which they perceive procedural justice to be obeyed or violated in a general sense according to our operationalization.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of and Correlations among the Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<i>M</i>	5.47	3.94	1.53	4.00	4.84	1.23	13.78	15.01
<i>s</i>	.46	.93	1.01	1.02	.96	3.16	33.45	34.44
1 Procedural Justice: Ought								
2 Procedural Justice: Is	.08							
3 Procedural Justice: Ought-Is	.28**	-.93**						
4 Justice Sensitivity	.16**	-.19**	.24**					
5 Job Satisfaction	.25**	.45**	-.35**	-.10				
6 Sick Days	-.07	-.12*	.09	.08	-.06			
7 Days Felt Sick	-.16**	-.18**	.17**	.06	-.10	.14**		
8 Sickness	-.16**	-.19**	.17**	.06	-.10	.23**	.99**	

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Differences between corresponding Ought and Is items were also analyzed. The first 4 eigenvalues for the 30 Ought-Is "items" amounted to 14.7, 1.4, 1.2, and 1.0. There was no drop in eigenvalues after the fourth eigenvalue. According to the scree criterion, the "items" have a single factor in common. This factor accounts for 49% of the "item" variance. Alpha was .96 and item-total correlations ranged from .49 to .79. The Ought-Is scale may thus be accepted as a reliable measure for the degree to which a person feels that procedural justice at the workplace falls below an ideal level. Ought-Is "items" were averaged to obtain Ought-Is scale scores. The mean and the variance of this discrepancy scale are given in Table 1. The distribution of the scale scores was positively skewed with large discrepancy scores being rare. The important conclusion from the reported analyses is that a reliable measure is available for testing Hypothesis 5. The mean of the Ought-Is scale shows again that most subjects desired more procedural justice in the workplace than they were actually perceiving.

Sensitivity to Befallen Injustice

In line with previous results (Schmitt et al., 1995), the 19 items of the Intrusiveness scale had only one common factor. The first 4 eigenvalues amounted to 9.5, 1.3, 1.1, and .8. Alpha was .95. Item-total correlations ranged from .50 to .76. Scale scores were obtained by averaging items. The mean and the standard deviation of the scale are given in Table 1. The distribution of the scale scores was bell-shaped.

Job Satisfaction and Psychosomatic Well-Being

The five items for measuring Job Satisfaction were homogeneous with the first two eigenvalues amounting to 2.4 and .8. Alpha was .69 which is satisfactory for such a short scale. Item-total correlations ranged from .38 to .56. Items were averaged to obtain scale scores. The mean and the standard deviation of the scale are given in Table 1. The distribution of the scale scores was slightly negatively skewed with more subjects being satisfied than dissatisfied.

The distributions of Sick Days and Days Felt Sick deviated considerably from a normal distribution. Both indicators of psychosomatic well-being were positively skewed and platykurtic. Their means and standard deviations are given in Table 1. The correlation between Sick Days and Days Felt Sick amounted to .14. This value shows that both indicators overlap only to a small degree. Several explanations can be considered for this phenomenon. A first possible explanation was offered earlier. If employees take sick days for other reasons than being sick, a correlation with feeling sick at work cannot be expected. A second explanation for the low correlation may be that both indicators tap different types or degrees of sickness. Feeling sick at work may differ quantitatively or qualitatively from the kinds of sickness that make employees stay home. A third possible reason for the low correlation may be the intrinsic negative interdependence of both measures. On a given day, a person cannot feel sick at home and stay home. However, a negative interdependence is a possible explanation only for subjects with high scores on either variable. Whatever the causes for the small correlation between the two indicators may be, it seems necessary to regress them separately on the independent variables. Despite their low correlation, both indicators were added to obtain a more reliable index of Sickness. The sum of raw scores was chosen instead of averaging standard scores because both variables were measured on the same natural frequency metric (number of days). However, since the number of Sick Days varied much less than the number of Days Felt Sick, Sickness parallels the former component more than the latter (Table 1).

Correlations Among the Variables

The correlations among the three procedural justice measures (Ought, Is, Ought-Is), Justice Sensitivity, and the four dependent variables (Job Satisfaction, Sick Days, Days Felt Sick, Sickness) are given in Table 1. The pattern is noteworthy with respect to Hypotheses 4, 5, 6, and 7, and in several other regards as well.

First, it is interesting that the Is and Ought components of procedural justice are independent. This finding is not trivial. A negative correlation could have been predicted from the perspective of justice as a motivation or need (Lerner, 1977). It follows directly from the need concept that justice concerns become more salient if justice is threatened or violated. Similar contrast effects have been assumed for values (Schwartz, 1992). However, a positive correlation between the Is and Ought components of procedural justice could also have been expected based on accommodative processes. It is dysfunctional to adhere to unobtainable goals. Research with the elderly has shown that adapting personal goals and expectations to realistic options buffers negative effects of losses in the course of aging (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Brandtstädter, Wentura & Greve, 1993). The independence of the Is and Ought components may be due to a neutralization of these two mechanisms that may counteract within an individual or balance on the group level.

Second, it is worth noting that the pattern of correlations between the three indicators of psychosomatic well-being and the remaining variables is similar for all three indicators. All three indicators thus seem to be equivalent outcomes of the antecedent justice variables.

Third, the correlations between job satisfaction and the sickness variables are noteworthy. Although these correlations are consistent in direction, with a low job satisfaction corresponding to more sickness, they are too small to be significant. This finding, which is consistent with results from a meta-analysis on the

relation between job satisfaction and achievement (Six & Eckes, 1991), suggests that job satisfaction and sickness have no causal factors in common. Obviously, sickness has many causes that are unrelated to work and that have no direct impact on job satisfaction. However, it might be premature to conclude from the low correlations that both outcome variables have distinct antecedents. It is possible, for instance, that job satisfaction and sickness do share some factors but reflect different styles of dealing with the situation. Dissatisfaction follows from a cognitive judgment and requires that an Ought-Is discrepancy has been noticed. Furthermore, the dissatisfaction items 3, 4, 5 imply options for change. Options for change permit offensive coping. By contrast, feeling sick or getting sick does not require a conscious awareness of stress. Individuals differ in the perception and admittance of threat (Bell & Byrne, 1978), in their coping repertoire (Klauer & Filipp, 1993), in their action versus state orientation (Kuhl, 1985), in their flexible goal adjustment versus tenacious goal pursuit (Brandtstädter & Renner, 1992), in the way they express negative emotions (Spielberger, 1988), and in other personality variables that moderate the effects of threat, frustration, and stress on outcomes variables like the ones considered in this study.

The correlations between the procedural justice variables and the outcomes provide direct support for the conjecture that job satisfaction and sickness may share, despite their correlational independence, at least some antecedents. In line with Hypothesis 4, the perception of procedural fairness (Is component) has a positive effect on job satisfaction and a negative effect on all three indicators of psychosomatic well-being. Supporting Hypothesis 5, the difference between desired and realized procedural justice (Ought-Is) has a negative effect on job satisfaction and a positive effects on sickness.

Interestingly, the Ought component has the same, albeit weaker, effects on the outcome variables as does the Is component. Employees with a strong desire for justice are more satisfied with their work and report lower sickness. Limited space does not allow speculation about psychological mechanisms that may account for this phenomenon. Consistent with this phenomenon, but in contrast to Hypothesis 6, the Ought-Is discrepancy is not a better predictor of the outcome variables than the Is component alone. In fact, it seems that the Ought-Is difference correlates even weaker with job satisfaction and sickness than does the Is component. However, the corresponding differences in correlations are not statistically significant.

The pattern of correlations between Justice Sensitivity and the procedural justice variables is consistent with Hypothesis 7. Justice sensitive individuals have a stronger desire for procedural justice at the workplace and perceive cases of procedural unfairness more easily and more often than justice insensitive individuals. Consistent with this reciprocal pattern, the highest correlation was obtained between Justice Sensitivity and the Ought-Is discrepancy.

Moderating Effects of Justice Sensitivity

It was predicted in Hypothesis 8 that Justice Sensitivity would not only covary with desired (Ought) and perceived (Is) procedural justice, but also amplify the effects of procedural unfairness on job satisfaction and psychosomatic well-being. This hypothesis was tested via moderated regression analysis (Aiken & West, 1991). A series of regression analyses was conducted with the Is component and the Ought-Is discrepancy serving as predictors, Justice Sensitivity serving as a moderator, and the four outcome variables (Job Satisfaction, Sick Days, Days Felt Sick, Sickness) serving as criteria. Separate analyses were conducted for both predictors and for all four dependent variables. Analyses revealed two significant interaction effects of Justice Sensitivity x Is-Ought discrepancy on Days Felt Sick [$F(1,238) = 5.23, p < .05$] and on Sickness [$F(1,240) = 5.67, p < .05$].

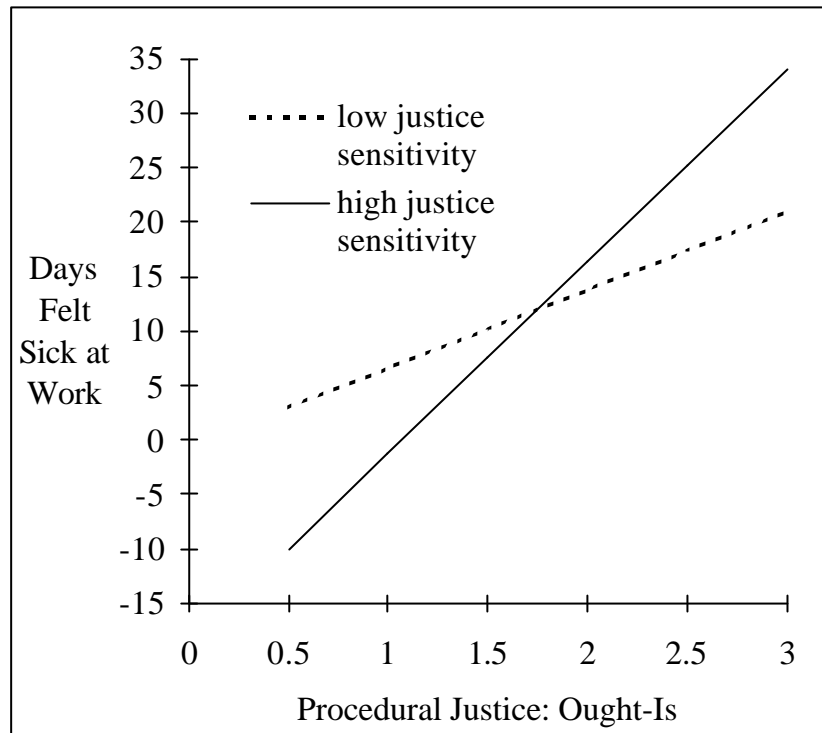


Figure 1

Interaction Effect of Procedural Unfairness and Justice Sensitivity on Days Felt Sick at Work

Both interaction effects accorded in direction with Hypothesis 8, i.e., the effect of Ought-Is on the dependent variables increased with increasing Justice Sensitivity. In order to illustrate this pattern, the moderator effect with respect to Days Felt Sick is displayed in Figure 1. The two regression lines describe the conditional effect of Ought-Is on Days Felt Sick for subjects scoring one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the sample mean of Justice Sensitivity.¹

DISCUSSION

Supplementing previous research showing that justice plays an important psychological role in the workplace both for the well-being of individuals and the functioning of groups (e.g., Bies, 1993; Deutsch, 1985; Greenberg, 1996; Sheppard et al., 1992), the present field study was devised to explore the general hypothesis that perceived procedural unfairness reduces job satisfaction and increases sickness. Support for this general hypothesis was obtained. Perceived procedural injustice correlated negatively with self-reported job satisfaction, positively with the self-reported number of sick days and positively with the self-reported number of days an employee felt sick at work.

It might be objected that the assumed causal direction cannot be confirmed with correlations from a cross-sectional survey. Although this is true on principle, theoretical arguments and data from experimental and longitudinal research support the present causal interpretation (cf. Tyler et al., 1996). Nevertheless, it is a possibility, of course, that employees attribute their job dissatisfaction and their sickness to procedural unfairness at work. However, this does not seem likely given the large number of alternative causes to which dissatisfaction and sickness can also be attributed. Furthermore, it is much more plausible to assume that workers who feel treated unfairly react with dissatisfaction, negative emotion, and eventually psychosomatic symptoms. This theoretical conjecture is supported empirically (1) by a large number of

¹ Note that the regression lines are fitted regression lines that deviate from the conditional sample means of the dependent variable. The dependent variable cannot have negative values. The negative conditional expectations for the dependent variable are due to its skewed distribution. For this reason, nonlinear conditional regression effects were tested, but these effects were not significant. Therefore, the model with linear conditional regression effects was accepted.

experimental studies that have found negative cognitions (dissatisfaction) and emotions (predominantly anger) being common reactions to unfair treatment (e.g., Hasebrauck, 1984; Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, in press) and (2) by considerable evidence that negative emotions can harm the immune system and eventually impair physical health (e.g., Johnson, 1990).

As a second objection, it might be argued that the correlation between self-reported unfairness, job satisfaction, and self-reported sickness is spurious due to common causes such as the general complaint proneness (Brose, 1982)--which is a component of anxiety and depression (Ahrens, 1986). This hypothesis cannot be excluded with data from the present study because complaint proneness and other third variables that may cause the spurious correlation at issue were not measured and can thus not be controlled for statistically. However, data from field experiments (e.g., Greenberg, 1990) have clearly shown that procedural unfairness has a causal effect on outcome variables that are functionally equivalent to the outcome variables of this study.

A third issue to be addressed is the size of the correlations between procedural unfairness and the outcome variables. While the correlation between perceived fairness and job satisfaction was moderate (.45), the correlations between perceived procedural justice and the sickness variables were low with the highest correlation amounting to -.19. The size of the correlations between unfairness and sickness can be discussed from a practical and from a scientific perspective. Regarding practical implications, the regression lines in Figure 1 show that the difference in number of days a worker felt sick at work varies from about 0 to 25 for the smallest and the largest empirical discrepancy between desired fairness and perceived fairness. Assuming that the performance of an employee who feels sick at work is lower than the performance of an employee who feels well, the economic effect of procedural fairness is obvious. From a scientific perspective, the small size of this effect is hardly surprising for two reasons. First, physical illness has multifold causes and a strong effect of a single factor cannot be expected. Second, psychosocial variables as the one investigated here do not have direct effects on health. Rather, the impact of psychosocial stress is mediated and dispersed by biological mechanisms (Friczewski, Maschewsky, Naschold & Wotschack, 1982) and moderated by psychological factors such as justice sensitivity and coping style (Klauer & Philipp, 1993).

Justice sensitivity was explored as a moderator variable in this study. In line with expectations and previous findings (Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, in press; Schmitt et al., 1995; Schmitt & Mohiyeddini, in press), it was found that the impact of perceived procedural unfairness on three of four indicators of psychosomatic well-being depended on individual justice sensitivity. For employees who scored high on a self-report measure for Justice Sensitivity, the impact of perceived unfairness on sickness was stronger than for subjects scoring low on Justice Sensitivity. However, the moderator effect was not found for self-reported job satisfaction as a criterion, and it was found for only one of the two measures for perceived unfairness (Ought-Is discrepancy). No coherent explanation for this inconsistency can be offered.

Nevertheless, the significant moderator effects of justice sensitivity provides some support for previous claims that it may be worthwhile to include individual difference variables in social justice research (e.g., Jasso, 1983; Rubin & Peplau, 1973) and, more generally, in social psychology (Krahé, 1992). While this request has been followed in research on the justice motive (for a review see: Furnham & Procter, 1989) and in research on distributive justice (e.g., Bossong, 1983; Herrmann & Winterhoff, 1980; Montada et al., 1986; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Schwinger & Winterhoff-Spurk, 1984; Sabbagh et al., 1994), individual differences in attitudes toward procedural justice principles have rarely been considered in laboratory experiments, field experiments, and survey research. One of the few attempts to explore individual differences in attitudes toward principles of procedural justice has been made by Wahner (1986). Her approach was to combine the consistency, nonpartiality, accuracy, correctability, and representativeness rules according to Leventhal (1980) with the distribution of six different resources (pay

raises, tax deductions, free days from work, reduction of mass unemployment, permanent positions, natural resources of the oceans) and to ask subjects how important they considered each rule to be in the decision making process--independent from the distribution principle that was finally chosen. Factor analysis of the 30 items revealed a large first eigenvalue of 7.97 corresponding to 27% explained item variance. Consequently, and in accordance with the present study, individuals differed substantially in their general desire for procedural justice. However, four additional eigenvalues were large enough to suggest the existence of additional common factors. After varimax rotation to simple structure, Wahner (1986) identified five factors with a clear loading pattern: all items loaded on their a priori common factor. In other words, individuals differed not only in their general desire for procedural justice but in their preferences for specific principles as well. A similar result could not be found in the present study. One reason why Wahner (1986) may have found a more differentiated structure is that in her attitude measure, very similar statements were used for the same principle. Only the content of the distribution at issue was changed. This strategy excludes irrelevant sources of variance due to changing the verbal operationalization of a principle. However, this desirable effect can be obtained only at the risk of artificial proportions of covariance due to repeated formulations. In other words, it is uncertain to what extent subjects reacted to a constant wording as opposed to a constant principle. Answering this question will require including rule-specific validation criteria. One possibility is to regress individuals' cognitive (judgment), emotional (anger) and behavioral (protest) reactions to an experimental violation of a specific principle on their attitudes toward various principles. Discriminant validity would require a stronger regressive dependence of these reactions on the corresponding attitude than on the remaining attitudes.

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