

Replications and Refinements

Under this heading are brief reports of studies providing data that substantiate, disprove, or refine what we think we know. These notes consist of a summary of the study's procedure and as many details about the results as space allows. Additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the author.

Effects of Own Versus Other's Fair Treatment on Positive Emotions: A Field Study

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RESEARCHERS ON FAIRNESS in the last two decades have devoted much attention to the issue of *procedural fairness*, that is, the decision-making procedures used by authorities to arrive at allocation outcomes. However, recently

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some researchers (e.g., De Cremer & Ruiters, 2003) have criticized the field by pointing out that the vast majority of research has focused only on how an individual's personal experiences with (un)fair procedures affects his or her own reactions but not on how the fairness experiences of another person affect one's own reactions. To date of publication of the present article, few researchers have examined this issue, and these few revealed mixed findings. Two studies indicated that people do not easily use the experiences of others to formulate their own reactions (Kray & Lind, 2002; Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998), whereas one study demonstrated that another's fairness experiences influence one's own reactions, especially when oneself is treated fairly (Van den Bos & Lind, 2001). The studies by Van den Bos and Lind used judgments as the dependent measure, and accordingly, those researchers wondered "whether these dependent variables are too cognitive or removed in terms of affective states" (p. 1332). All of these studies, however, have been experimental in nature, and in the present research we wished to provide evidence from the field that another's fairness experiences may matter to oneself.

To respond to this limitation in the present study, we assessed the participant's emotional reaction for the dependent measure, a measure that—Bies and Tripp (2002) argued—research on procedural fairness needs. The choice of an emotional measure is particularly relevant to research on the influence of others' fairness experiences, because emotions are affected by social influences. For example, others influence one's formation and regulation of emotions because one wishes to avoid being evaluated negatively by those others and wishes to please them and protect oneself from bad treatment from them (e.g., Fisher, Manstead, Evers, Timmers, & Valk, 2004).

Participants of the present study were 515 alumni of a Belgian University whom we contacted and to whom we sent a questionnaire with the measures of interest. Of the 515 questionnaires, participants returned 202 (return rate = 39%; M age = 29.33 years, SD = 5.75 years; 121 men [60%], 81 women [40%]). We explained the purpose of the present study in the cover letter, and respondents could contact us if they had questions. Respondents answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale (from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Items measuring the participant's own procedural fairness experiences assessed how fair their "performance evaluation," "payment procedure," and "procedures used by the organization" were (Cronbach's α = .80). Items measuring procedural fairness experiences of the participant's colleagues were the same as those measuring the participant's own experiences, except that the former items referred to the colleague (α = .88). Items measuring positive emotions assessed how active, enthusiastic, strong, elated, energetic, cheerful, and happy participants felt on a typical day at work (α = .87). The resulting measures of own procedural fairness correlated with those of other procedural fairness (r = .66, p = .001) and positive emotions (r = .21, p = .003). Similarly, the measures of other procedural fairness correlated with the measures of positive emotions (r = .15, p = .037).

We used standard hierarchical regression analysis to assess the interactive effect of procedural justice for oneself and for the other employees on positive emotions. We found no effects for gender, age, organizational size, or organizational tenure. Following Aiken and West (1991), we centered the independent variables to reduce potential collinearity. The present results indicated that procedural fairness for oneself was related to positive emotions ($\beta = .34, p < .05, d = .35$). The interaction between procedural justice for oneself and procedural justice for the other employees was significant ($\beta = .19, p < .01, d = .40$), showing that the slope of the relationship between procedural justice for oneself and positive emotions was greater for employees perceiving that the other employees are treated fairly than for those who perceive low procedural justice for their coworkers, $t(196) = 2.80, p < .01$. We found a reliable positive relationship between procedural justice for oneself and positive emotions at one standard deviation above the mean score of procedural justice for coworkers, $t(196) = 3.46, p < .001$. At one standard deviation below this mean score, procedural justice for oneself and positive emotions were not significantly related, $t(196) = 1.24, ns$.

The present findings show that one's own experiences of procedural (un)fairness do influence one's positive emotional reactions significantly as a function of other's treatment. Indeed, procedural justice for oneself was most strongly related to positive emotions when procedural justice for others was high. A strength of the present research is that it was conducted in a real-life setting with real-life employees, therefore having high external validity. However, in contrast to the earlier experimental findings, the present findings do not allow us to infer causality. Therefore, future researchers of the influence of other's fair treatment may benefit from use of a combination of experimental and field studies (see also De Cremer & van Knippenberg, 2002). Future researchers might also examine conditions under which other's fair treatment exerts more versus less influence on one's own reactions, especially if one is personally treated fairly. One interesting candidate that seems most likely to affect the influence of other's treatment is the quality of the relationship between oneself and the other person. Also, the present findings make clear that managers and organizations should pay attention not only to whether managers treat their direct subordinates fairly but also to how procedural justice is communicated to all group and organizational members. Also, the fairness experiences of others may influence the fairness experiences of direct subordinates.

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