Personality And The Perceived Justice And Suitability Of Occupational Selection Procedures

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membincangkan perkaitan antara aspek personaliti dan beberapa prosedur pemilihan personal. Di samping itu, artikel ini juga meneliti persepsi terhadap keadilan dan kesesuaian prosedur pemilihan yang berbeza. Prosedurprosedur pemilihan tersebut ialah temuduga, biodata, resume, percontohan kerja, ujian kemahiran menulis, rujukan dan ujian personaliti. Aspek personaliti diukur menggunakan item-item unipolar oleh Goldberg (1990) bagi mengukur kepersetujuan, ketelitian, surgensi, kestabilan emosi dan intelek manakala persepsi keadilan dan kesesuaian diukur melalui item yang menggunakan skala 5 poin Likert. Keputusan menunjukkan temuduga dipersepsikan sebagai lebih positif berbanding dengan prosedur pemilihan vang lain. Individu yang mempunyai skor yang tinggi dalam kepersetujuan mempersepsikan temuduga sebagai adil dan sesuai manakala individu yang mempunyai skor yang tinggi dalam ketelitian mempersepsikan biodata sebagai adil. Temuduga juga dipersepsikan sebagai adil dan sesuai di kalangan individu yang mempunyai skor intelek yang tinggi. Keseluruhannya, prosedur temuduga merupakan metod yang paling popular dipersepsikan sebagai metod vang adil dan sesuai.

INTRODUCTION

The extent to which different occupational selection procedures are perceived as just or fair has received considerable attention (see Rynes & Connerly, 1993; Schuler, 1993; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman & Stoffey, 1993; Thornton, 1993). A consistent finding is that interviews are perceived as relatively fair/just and personality test as less fair/just (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, Dunnette, Eaton & Kamp, 1990; Kravitz, Stinson & Chavez, 1996; Salgado, 2001; Rynes & Connerley, 1993; Smith & Roberstson, 1993; Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991). There is good reason to believe that personality should be related to such judgements. For example, there is evidence that personality is related to vocational interests and occupational choice (Riggio, 2003). It has also been said that individuals seek out situations that are congruent with their own personalities (Allport, 1937). As such, it would seem reasonable to hypothesize that personality should influence the extent to which people perceived different selection methods as fair and just. Therefore, this paper examines how perceptions of fairness and justice with respect to different occupational selection procedures are related to the Big 5 personality domains.

Perceived Justice/Fairness and Occupational Selection Procedures

According to Rynes and Connerley (1993), and Smither et al. (1993), there are three reasons why reactions to selection procedures are vital to employers (organizations). First, selection procedures are assumed to be a salient source of information about the desirability of organizations to attract and recruit workers. Applicants who feel offended by the selection procedures or practices may spread negative information about the organization to their friends and may withdraw themselves from the application process. Second, it is assumed that negative feeling about the selection procedures may increase the likelihood that applicants will file lawsuits. Third, negative attitudes toward selection procedures may decrease the motivation to perform at their best in the selection process. Furthermore, selection procedures can have a substantial effect on the subsequent motivation and loyalty of applicants who are hired since selection procedures are often an applicant's first contact with an organization (Gilliland, 1993; Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991; Singer, 1993).

There are a number of selection procedures available (interviews, personality tests, bio-blanks, resumes, work-sample tests, written ability tests and references) and some of these selection procedures are more widely used by the organizations than others (Cook, 1996; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996 Keenan, 1995; Levy, 2006; Robertson & Makin, 1986; Shackleton & Newell, 1991; Smith, 1991; Smith & Abrahamsen, 1992, 1994). There are some data on the perceived fairness/suitability of these selection procedures (see Kravitz, Stinson & Chavez, 1996; Smither, Millsap, Stoffey, Reilly and Pearlman, 1996; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). The evidence shows that applicants react more favourably to selection procedures that appear to be clearly job-related (Muchinsky, 2006; Robertson & Kandola, 1982; Schuler, 1993). Smither et al. (1993) found that interviews were perceived to be more job-related than personality, bio-data and cognitive tests. Rynes and Connerley (1993) also found that interviews were perceived to be better than other procedures such as personality inventories and references. Similarly Steiner and Gilliland (1996) report that interviews, work-sample tests and resumes were perceived as the most favoured and fair methods of selection. In addition, justice theory suggests that improper questions may negatively affect perceptions of fairness. Both reactions are more likely to occur when the personality inventory is used as a basis to screen out applicants with character flaws, compared to when the inventory is used to assess typical personality traits in normal daily functioning (Rosse, Miller & Stecher, 1994). Based on the above evidence it is argued that the interview will be perceived more positively than personality tests in terms of justice and suitability (hypothesis 1).

Personality, Selection Procedures and Perceived Justice/Fairness

Even though there is no existing literature to specifically indicate that individuals are attracted or likely to perceive selection procedures as just and suitable in regards with their personal characteristics, it has been said that individuals seek out situations that are congruent with their own personalities (Allport, 1937; Schultz & Schultz, 2005). In the selection and recruitment field, it is argued that the person-organization fit criteria are already included in the selection decision process despite mixed empirical support for the role of

person-organization fit in organizational selection decisions (Adkins, Russell & Werbel, 1994; Chatman, 1989; Ferris & Judge, 1991). A study on personorganization fit (see Kristof, 1996; Bowen, Ledford & Nathan, 1991) has indicated that selecting individuals whose personalities are compatible with the organizational culture creates a flexible workforce with workers or employees in the respective organization who can be moved easily between jobs. In the selection process, interviews are frequently used and reluctantly abandoned by organizations despite their questionable reliability and validity (McKenna, 1994). Most of the studies on fit have focused on the recruiter or organizational perspectives rather than the applicant perspectives (Saks & Ashford, 1997) and stressed on the importance of fit in selection decisions rather than selection procedures (Kristof, 1996). Nevertheless, the main idea that can be derived is that people are concerned with the compatibility of a person with the respective work, culture, norm, value or environment. In the context of this study, personality was explored in relation to the perceived justice/fairness of a variety of standard selection procedures. Specific hypotheses are developed with respect to the Big 5.

Goldberg (1990) suggests that there is a link between surgency and agreeableness since both prefer social interactions. Likewise, agreeableness is a domain of interpersonal behaviour. Those scoring high on surgency and/or agreeableness should prefer situations where they can use their interpersonal skills. In the selection process, interviews are considered as a procedure where social interactions occur. Therefore, participants with higher scores on surgency and/or agreeableness will perceive the interview as more suitable and just (hypothesis 2).

Individuals who score high on emotional stability are unlikely to exhibit characteristics such as nervousness, worry, rigid and timid (Wiggins, 1996). Those with low score dislike environments involving interpersonal conflict and decisiveness, as well as being prone to anxiety. Therefore, situations which deal with ego-threat may be seen as threatening. Thus, (hypothesis 3) participants with higher scores on emotional stability are expected to perceive the i) interview, ii) work-sample test, iii) written ability test and iv) personality test, as suitable and just.

As for conscientiousness, the personal characteristics to which it is related include being orderly, planful, careful, neat and attracted to detail oriented (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Sheridan, 1992). These characteristics underlie important attributes such as accomplishing work tasks since they are considered as hard working. Related to selection procedures, it is predicted that (hypothesis 4) participants with higher scores on conscientiousness will perceive i) biodata, ii) resume and iii) references as more suitable and just.

The trait of intellect describes individuals as curious, broadminded, intelligent, imaginative, unconventional, creative and independent (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae, 1987). Because of the creativity characteristics and intelligent trait of intellect, it is suggested that (*hypothesis 5*) participants with high scores high on intellect will perceive i) resume, ii) interview and iii) written ability test as more suitable and just.

METHODS

Participants

A total of 167 participants consisting of undergraduate and postgraduate students from a public university completed the questionnaire through random sampling. 117 (57 males and 60 females) were undergraduates and 50 (24 males and 26 females) were postgraduates who voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. This represented 83.5 percent of the 200 questionnaires distributed. Their ages ranged from 18 to 37 years (mean = 22.2, SD = 3.45) with prior interview experiences between 1 and 15 (mean = 4.1).

Procedure

Participants were approached at various locations in the university (academic departments, cafeterias, halls, etc.) and asked if they had been to any job interviews before and whether they would like to participate in a study regarding job interview perceptions. The purpose of the study was explained. A brief description of how to complete the questionnaire was given and participants were also assured of the confidentiality of the information they provided. The questionnaires were left to be completed by the participants. Most of the participants completed the questionnaire within 15 to 25 minutes.

Instruments

The questionnaire consisted of items to measure justice and suitability for 7 selection procedures and a measure of the Big 5 personality domains.

Suitability and Justice of The 7 Selection Procedures

Participant's general perceptions of suitability and justice of 7 selection procedures were based on their common use in personnel selection by organizations (see Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). Some of these procedures might not be familiar to the participants. As such, they are described to the participants as follows:

- 1. Biographical information blank (Biodata) (Forms requesting very specific information about your work experience, education and skills. They often include questions about your hobbies, interests and past accomplishments)
- 2. Resumes (A written description of information on all of your professional experiences, education, etc.)
- 3. Work-sample tests (Tests in which you actually perform as part of the job so that your success in doing that part of the job can be determined)
- 4. Written ability tests (Paper and pencil tests that evaluate your intelligence, reasoning, verbal or mathematical skill)

- 5. Personal references (In this method, you must request letters of reference or provide the names of your prior employers so that the employer can obtain information about your suitability for the job)
- 6. Personality tests (Paper and pencil tests that ask you questions/statements about your opinions regarding yourself or to describe yourself in order to assess your personality)
- 7. Interviews (Face to face interactions in which employers ask you a variety of questions about your background and qualifications)

Since participants may or may not have experienced these 7 procedures in their previous job applications, the same items used to measure suitability and justice of the interview were not applied. Measurement was based on general perceptions towards these procedures. Hence, suitability and justice was measured using two 5 point Likert-type scales to assess the general suitability and justice of each of the 7 procedures (Suitability: 1 = highly unsuitable, 5 = highly suitable; Justice: 1 = extremely unjust, 5 = extremely just).

Personality

The Big 5 Goldberg's (1992) 100 Uni-polar items were used to measure personality. The following alpha coefficients were recorded for the five personality domains: .86 for Agreeableness, .88 for Conscientiousness, .86 for Surgency, .82 for Emotional stability and .84 for Intellect.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Associations

The means, standard deviations (SD) and zero-order correlations for the 7 selection procedures (Bio-data, Resumes, Work-Sample Tests, Written-Ability Tests, References, Personality Tests and Interviews) and the Big 5 domains are displayed in Table 1. There are significant positive correlations between suitability and justice for each selection procedure.

The differences in means between interviews' and other selection procedures' justice and suitability are presented in Figure 1 and 2.

Following the above analyses, Tukey HSD test was employed to pinpoint precisely the differences in means. The results indicated that the differences between the following pair of means were significant. For justice, significant differences can be found between interviews and 1) written ability tests, 2) references and 3) personality testing while significant differences in suitability can be found between interviews and 1) biodata, 2) work sample tests, 3) written ability tests, 4) references and 5) personality tests. The findings supported Rosse, Ringer and Miller (1992) study where selection procedures which involved testing were not preferred by the applicants. As such, participants perceived i) the fairness of written ability tests and personality tests; and ii) the suitability of work-sample tests, written ability tests and personality tests as less positive compared to interviews.

Associations With The Big 5

Zero-order correlations were calculated between the five personality domains and the seven selection procedures' justice and suitability ratings (see table 1).

It was assumed that participants with high scores on surgency will perceive the interview as more suitable and just. However, there was no significant correlation found between neither surgency and interview's justice nor surgency and interview's suitability. Therefore, this hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, significant correlations were found between agreeableness and interview's justice (r = 0.23, p < .01) and also between agreeableness and interview's suitability (r = 0.26, p < .001). These findings supported prediction that participants with high scores on agreeableness will perceive the interview as more suitable and just. It was predicted that participants with high scores on emotional stability will perceive the i) interview, ii) work-sample test, iii) written ability test and iv) personality test as suitable and just. However, No significant associations were found between emotional stability and these selection procedures' justice and suitability. Looking at the association between conscientiousness and the selection procedures, it was hypothesised that participants with high scores on conscientiousness will perceive i) bio-data, ii) resume and iii) references as more suitable and just. The only significant result found was between conscientiousness and the justice for bio-data (r = 0.18, p < .01). Finally, participants with high scores on intellect should perceive i) resume, ii) interview and iii) written ability test as more suitable and just. Significant associations were found between intellect and interview's justice (r = 0.16, p < 0.16.05) and between intellect and interview's suitability (r = 0.23, p < .01)indicating the higher the intellect scores, the higher they perceived the interview as just and suitable.

Table 1: Intercorrelations of personality domains and the selection procedures' justice and suitability

Variable	M	SD	-	2	8	4	vo.	9	7	×	6	10	Ξ	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Agreeableness Conscientiousness Surgency	133.63 124.94 115.85	17.95 21.44 19.99	0.54***	*				_												
4. Emotional stability 5. Intellect 6. Interview (1)	98.86	19.21	0.14	0.18*	0.25**	0.03	*910													
7. Interview (S)	4.09	0.82	0.27***	0.16*			* *	0.67***	***000											
9. Biodata (S)	3.76	0.89	0.17*	0.11	0.13	-0.01	0.16* 0	.20*).34*** ().65***										
10. Resume (J)	3.67	98.0	0.12	0.12		-0.03		0.30*** (0.26** 0.44***	0.44*** 0.37***	37***									
11. Resume (S)	3.82	0.92	0.03	90.0		0.01	_		0.30*** ().34*** (.47**(
12. Work-Sample Test (J)	3.63	1.00	0.12	0.09		-0.11			0.20*	0.23**	0.05									
13. Work-Sample Test (S)	3.80	1.01	0.18*	0.18*		-0.07	0.16*		0.23**	0.23** (.18*			0.76***						
14. Written Ability Test (J)	3.34	96.0	-0.05	-0.12		-0.06		0.31***	* 0.26**	0.10	60.0			0.32***	0.26***	1				
15. Written Ability Test (5)	3.54	0.97	0.14	0.07	-0.04	-0.07	0.07	0.50***	0.77**	0.04	27***	-0.03	0.00	0.32***	0.02	00	90.0			
17. Reference (S)	3.43	1.06	0.07	0.04		-0.07		0.19*	0.23**	0.18	*91.0			9	-0.08	0.04	0.05	0.71***		
18. Personality Test (J)	2.92	0.97	-0.01	-0.07		-0.03	90.0-	0.13	80.0		-0.01	-0.04	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.38***	0.38*** 0.30*** 0.08		0.03	
19. Personality Test (S)	1.02	1.02	0.01	-0.01		0.04	-0.08		0.04	0.03	-0.05				0.02	0.35***	0.33***		0.11 0.8	0.81***
p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001	001	Key:	Key: J = Justice, S = Suitability	, S = Suit	ability															

Figure 1: Means of perceptions of selection procedures' justice

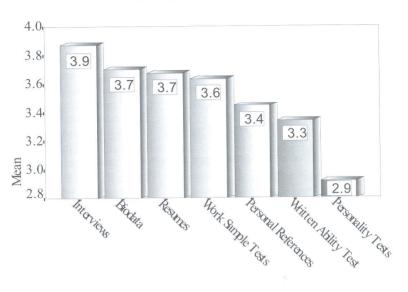
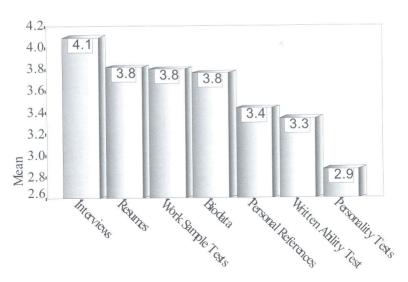


Figure 2: Means of perceptions of selection procedures' suitability



DISCUSSION

This study was aimed at examining and comparing perceptions towards interviews and other selection procedures, investigating differences of selection procedures' justice and suitability perception in each personality domain.

Perceptions of justice and suitability were highly correlated in all selection procedures (Interviews, Biodata, Resumes, Work-Sample Tests, Written Ability Tests, References and Personality Tests). Significant differences were found between interview and other selection procedures' justice and suitability perception which suggested that interview was perceived as more positive compared to other selection procedures while personality testing was perceived as being the least positive (hypothesis 1). Looking at the associations between different personality domains and selection procedures' justice and suitability, hypothesis 2 suggested that surgency and agreeableness will perceive the interview as highly suitable and just while emotional stability will perceive the i) interview, ii) work-sample test, iii) written ability test and iv) personality test as suitable and just respectively (hypothesis 3). Hypothesis 2 which predicted that agreeableness will perceive the interview as highly suitable and just was fully supported while hypothesis 3 was not supported. Regarding Hypothesis 4, a significant correlation was only found between conscientiousness and biodata's justice but not with other selection procedures while in Hypothesis 5, significant correlations were found between openness and interview's justice, and between openness and interview's suitability. Therefore, Hypotheses 4 and 5 can be considered as only partially supported.

All selection procedures were found to have strong association between justice and suitability. Since these two concepts involved positive and negative perceptions, it was expected that they will be highly correlated to each other since both were considered as indicators of job-relatedness of the selection procedures. All this indicated that the fairness (justice) and appropriateness (suitability) of any selection procedures are related together.

For interviews and other selection procedures' justice and suitability, the former was perceived as the most suitable and fair while personality test was perceived as the least suitable and fair. These findings support studies by Kravitz et al. (1996), Smith and Robertson (1993), Rynes and Connerley (1993) and Rosse et al. (1992) who found interviews to be better, more jobrelated and considered as the most satisfying procedure. Similarities in findings regarding the perceived fairness of personnel selection procedures (interviews, work-sample tests and resumes) in the present study could also be found in Steiner and Gilliland (1996). The findings regarding work samples are encouraging because of their consistently reported high validities (Robertson & Kandola, 1982; Schmitt, Gooding, Now & Kirsch, 1984) while interviews have the potential for acceptable validities if they are structured (Huffcut & Arthur, 1994). Unfortunately, resumes are rarely treated in a systematic fashion enough to determine validities. Nevertheless, it provides the organization with a thorough description of applicant's personal vitae which justified its usage in terms of justice or fairness. The personality test, as expected, was the least positively perceived in terms of justice and suitability. One possible explanation is because of the invasion of privacy it may have such as extracting undesirable information about the applicants. Despite the fact that certain personality domains may be useful for hiring qualified applicants, for example, the conscientiousness component which has been shown to be a predictor of job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough et al., 1990; Tett, 1991), it was

actually perceived as the least fair and suitable in this study.

Agreeableness was found to be associated with both the interview's justice and interview's suitability. As a domain of interpersonal tendencies, the agreeable individual can be seen as both socially preferable and psychologically healthier (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They are also rather competitive in nature. Since the interview can be considered a ground where they can have an opportunity to express and present themselves in a straightforward manner, this procedure has been perceived as a suitable selection procedure and also fair in selecting applicants. As predicted, high conscientiousness participants perceived the biodata as fairer (justice). Individuals high on this domain are capable of accomplishing task given, effective and well-organised. They are prepared and have the ability to motivate themselves to get the job done (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As biodata is an inventory that needs to be filled in personally, conscientiousness individuals are said to be cautious and deliberate in their action. Nevertheless, biodata have been perceived as fair. To attribute these findings to the non-intrusiveness criterion of biodata as a selection procedure might be exaggerating but the possibility is always there. Furthermore, a study by Stone and Jones (1997) has proved that biodata items were perceived as fairer if it not for personnel selection purposes. The significant association between i) intellect and interview's justice and ii) intellect and interview's suitability justified the intellectual curiosity of these individuals and also the open- mindedness and willingness to discuss or maybe argue new, unconventional ideas. These may be achieved in the interview where they will be able to enjoy formal or informal discussion. Perhaps, these are among the reasons why they perceived the interview as more suitable and just.

It should be noted that although significant correlations were found between these personality domains and the respective selection procedures' justice and suitability, the relationship was rather weak or moderate (rs ranged from 0.16 to 0.26). The perception on these procedures was based on general knowledge and explanations given in the questionnaire. It was not known whether participants have really experienced some or all of these selection procedures, except for interviews. Therefore, in the case of participants taking or having to go through all of the selection procedures, the findings might

somehow differ from what has been found.

CONCLUSION

Examining the selection procedures from the applicant's perspective may provide some insight on the issues of justice and suitability. Overall, the interview was found to be perceived as the most fair and suitable procedure. For organizations concerned about the use of their selection procedures, the most important findings suggested that procedures which did not use "testing" procedures were perceived as fair and appropriate. Even though test usage continues to grow (personality tests, written ability tests etc.), applicants remain sceptical of test validity. Thus, the present results lend support to Anastasi's (1997) recommendations that developers of test for selection procedure should increase its contextual relevance.

Because of the nature of each selection procedure which varies from one another, it is important to understand the personal characteristics of applicants in order to get the most accurate and reliable information by making sure it is suitable and fair. In this respect, a "person-selection-suitable-justice" fit model which incorporates personal characteristics (personality domains) of individuals and its fit with selection procedures and justice/suitability might be proposed. By examining the different personality of individuals in perceiving the different selection procedures, organization may tailor their selection methods to the needs of the applicants as well as their own although it will take further empirical research to put it into application. Nevertheless, with the growing amount of research in "person-organization", "person-job" and "person-environment" fit, the foundation of the proposed model framework may has already exist.

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