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Research Report

SOEP-IS 2014 - Proposal to include justice sensitivity short scales

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Landau, den 10/01/2014

Proposal to include Justice Sensitivity short scales in the SOEP-Innovation sample 2014 and 2017

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Background

Individuals differ systematically in how *readily* they perceive situations to be unjust and how *strongly* they react to subjective injustice—cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Schmitt, 1996; Schmitt et al., 2009; Schmitt, Neumann, & Montada, 1995). These individual differences in justice sensitivity are consistent across situations and relatively stable over time (Schmitt, Gollwitzer, Maes, & Arbach, 2005). In other words, people differ systematically in their vulnerability to the adverse consequences of injustice. The quality of reactions to injustice depends on the perspective that a person adopts in an unjust situation. Individuals react with distinct emotions and behavioral tendencies if they perceive themselves to be potential victims of injustice, passive beneficiaries, active perpetrators, or neutral bystanders (e.g., Mikula, Petri, & Tanzer, 1990). Accordingly, justice sensitivity has been differentiated into victim sensitivity, beneficiary sensitivity, perpetrator sensitivity, and observer sensitivity.

All justice sensitivity perspectives have been found to share common variance that is assumed to reflect a general concern for justice. Importantly, however, they also show distinct patterns of correlations with external criteria. For example, beneficiary sensitivity, perpetrator sensitivity, and observer sensitivity are positively related to modesty and tender-mindedness as facets of agreeableness (Schmitt, Baumert, Gollwitzer, & Maes, 2010) and predict prosocial tendencies such as solidarity with disadvantaged others (Gollwitzer, Schmitt, Schalke, Maes, & Baer, 2005) or bystander intervention against norm violations (Baumert, Halmburger, & Schmitt, 2013; Lotz, Baumert, Schlösser, Gresser, & Fetchenhauer, 2011). By contrast, victim sensitivity was found to be negatively related to facets of agreeableness and moderately positively to neuroticism (Schmitt et al., 2010) and negative interpersonal feelings, such as jealousy, vengeance, and paranoia (Schmitt et al., 2005). Furthermore, victim sensitivity predicted antisocial tendencies, namely a reluctance to cooperate and invest in common goods (Gollwitzer, Rothmund, Pfeiffer, & Ensenbach, 2009; Rothmund, Gollwitzer, & Klimmt, 2011), and, thus, appears to reflect a concern for justice for the *self* rather than for *others*, and the fear of being exploited by interaction partners (Gollwitzer et al., 2005).

Highlighting the usefulness of justice sensitivity, research has shown that the perspectives cannot be reduced to general personality factors (Schmitt et al., 2005) or to a combination of personality

facets (Schmitt et al., 2010). Additionally, there is consistent evidence for the predictive value of justice sensitivity for reactions to injustice as well as for the intra- and interpersonal functioning above and beyond alternative constructs such as Big Five factors, trait anger, or self-assertiveness (e.g., Mohiyeddini & Schmitt, 1997).

In several domains, justice sensitivity was an important predictor of behavioral outcomes. For example, victim sensitivity was related to protest against one's own disadvantages (Schmitt & Mohiyeddini, 1996), to one's own norm transgressions (Beierlein et al., 2012; Gollwitzer et al., 2005), and to impairment of well-being at the work place (Pretsch, Hessler, & Schmitt, 2012; Schmitt & Dörfel, 1999). Beneficiary sensitivity was found to predict moral courage (Baumert et al., 2013), solidarity of West Germans with East Germans (Gollwitzer et al., 2005), and altruistic punishment and altruistic compensation in economic games (Baumert, Schlösser, & Schmitt, in press; Fetchenhauer & Huang, 2004; Lotz et al., 2011). Observer sensitivity was related to the level of political protest reported in reaction to the construction project aimed at renewing the Stuttgart Central Railway Station ("Stuttgart 21"; Rothmund, Baumert, & Zinkernagel, 2013). Finally, Stavrova, Schlösser, and Baumert (in press) reported results suggesting that perpetrator sensitivity determines the job-seeking behavior of unemployed people. In a survey study, they found that unemployed perpetrator-sensitive individuals were more likely to engage in active job-search behavior and had lower chances of long-term unemployment. As an explanation, the authors proposed that perpetrator-sensitive people may experience profiting from the welfare system as unjust and feel guilty about not contributing to the work force, thus being highly motivated to end their state of unemployment.

Measurement

Ten-item scales were developed to assess each justice sensitivity perspective and evidence for their reliability and validity has been reported (Schmitt et al., 2005, 2010). Recently, we developed ultra-short two-item scales (Baumert et al., 2013). Their four-factorial structure was supported by a latent-state-trait analysis that revealed good reliabilities of the scales and medium-size trait consistencies across a period of 6 weeks (Baumert et al., 2013). Moreover, factor correlations as well as correlations with the Big Five personality factors, with interpersonal trust, self efficacy, locus of control, inclinations toward social comparison, and positive and negative reciprocity as further personality dimensions and with life satisfaction supported the validity of the short scales. Several further studies have revealed promising results with regard to the scales' construct and criterion validity (Back et al., in press; Beierlein et al., 2012, 2013; Stavrova et al., in press; Rothmund et al., 2013).

Regarding the duration of assessment, in a study employing CAP-Interviews, 75% of participants took 2.5 minutes or less (Beierlein et al., 2012). Furthermore, measurement invariance was shown regarding education, age, gender, and residency in East or West Germany (Beierlein et al., 2013).

Justice Sensitivity Short Scales in English (and German)

Perspective	No. in original scale	Item wording
Victim	6	It makes me angry when others are undeservingly better off than me. (Es ärgert mich, wenn es anderen unverdient besser geht als mir.)
	7	It worries me when I have to work hard for things that come easily to others. (Es macht mir zu schaffen, wenn ich mich für Dinge abrackern muss, die anderen in den Schoß fallen.)
Observer	6	I get upset when someone is undeservingly worse off than others.

		(Ich bin empört, wenn es jemandem unverdient schlechter geht als anderen.)
	7	It worries me when someone has to work hard for things that come easily to others. (Es macht mir zu schaffen, wenn sich jemand für Dinge abrackern muss, die anderen in den Schoß fallen.)
Beneficiary	6	I feel guilty when I am better off than others for no reason. (Ich habe Schuldgefühle, wenn es mir unverdient besser geht als anderen.)
	7	It bothers me when things come easily to me that others have to work hard for. (Es macht mir zu schaffen, wenn mir Dinge in den Schoß fallen, für die andere sich abrackern müssen.)
Perpetrator	6	I feel guilty when I enrich myself at the expense of others. (Ich habe Schuldgefühle, wenn ich mich auf Kosten anderer bereichere.)
	7	It bothers me when I use shortcuts to achieve something while others have to struggle for it. (Es macht mir zu schaffen, wenn ich mir durch Tricks Dinge verschaffe, für die sich andere abrackern müssen.)

Response options: 0 (totally disagree/trifft überhaupt nicht zu) – 5 (totally agree/trifft voll und ganz zu)

General introduction:

Menschen reagieren in unfairen Situationen sehr unterschiedlich. Im Folgenden möchten wir wissen, wie Sie selbst in unfairen Situationen reagieren. In den folgenden Aussagen werden verschiedene unfaire Situationen angesprochen. Bitte geben Sie an, wie sehr die jeweilige Aussage auf Sie zutrifft. Sollten Sie eine Situation noch nicht selbst erlebt haben, antworten Sie bitte so, wie Sie Ihrer Erwartung nach reagieren würden.

Introduction of victim perspective:

*Zunächst geht es um Situationen, die zum Vorteil anderer und zu **Ihrem Nachteil** ausgehen.*

Introduction to observer perspective:

*Nun geht es um Situationen, in denen Sie mitbekommen oder erfahren, dass **jemand anderes** unfair behandelt, benachteiligt oder ausgenutzt wird.*

Introduction to beneficiary perspective:

*Hier geht es um Situationen, die **zu Ihren Gunsten** und zum Nachteil anderer ausgehen.*

Introduction to perpetrator perspective:

*Zuletzt geht es um Situationen, in denen **Sie selbst jemanden** unfair behandeln, benachteiligen oder ausnutzen.*

Research questions: Development of Justice Sensitivity

As empirical justice research up to now has rested mainly on experimental data or cross-sectional survey data there is little empirical knowledge if and how justice attitudes develop over the life span. Including the justice sensitivity short scales into the SOEP-IS and replicating it in a three-year

interval will enable us to identify factors that are responsible for stability or instability of justice attitudes and creates data which are – also from an international point of view – unique.

➔ Research question 1: Mean level changes in adulthood across 2 × 3 years

Comparisons of age groups from 10 to 17 years showed a substantial mean-level increase in victim sensitivity, a weak increase in observer sensitivity, and a weak decrease in beneficiary sensitivity (Bondü & Elsner, 2012). By contrast, comparisons of adult age groups showed a slight decrease in victim sensitivity and slight increases in observer, beneficiary, and perpetrator sensitivity with age (Schmitt et al., 2010). Longitudinal data is needed to separate mean level changes in justice sensitivity due to ageing from cohort effects.

➔ Research question 2: Predictors of changes in justice sensitivity

As a potential social-cognitive mechanism of development, it has been proposed that frequently being confronted with instances of injustice may raise the activation potential of injustice-related concepts and, thus, may lead to increases in justice sensitivity across time (Baumert & Schmitt, 2009). As a short-term effect, Wijn and van den Bos (2010) found that indeed, being confronted with in/justice increased self-reported justice sensitivity. A longitudinal study of undergraduate students across 6 months (Baumert, unpublished data) provided support for the assumption that frequently being confronted with injustice increases justice sensitivity in the long run. Students who reported having experienced many instances of injustice during their first semester displayed relative increases in victim, observer, and perpetrator sensitivity. These ideas and findings suggest that several variables of the SOEP-IS core module might be factors of differential changes in justice sensitivity, for example perceived fairness of income, effort-reward imbalance, unemployment, loneliness, or retirement.

➔ Research question 3: Justice sensitivity as predictor or outcome

Previous studies have predominantly relied on cross-sectional data. Therefore, the interpretation of correlations of justice sensitivity with potential outcomes such as life satisfaction (Baumert et al., 2013), health (Beierlein et al., 2012), effort-reward imbalance (Pretsch et al., 2012), or unemployment status (Stavrova et al., in press) remain ambiguous with regard to causality. The longitudinal data of the SOEP-IS can help to determine whether justice sensitivity indeed predicts these outcomes, and/or is in turn determined by these variables. For example, are justice-sensitive persons particularly prone to losing their jobs and/or does the event of losing one's job precede changes in justice sensitivity? In addition, do changes in justice sensitivity revert when unemployment ends?

➔ Research question 4: Justice sensitivity as a moderator of effects of perceived social inequalities

The impact of the degree of social inequalities in a society on well-being may be moderated by an individual's justice sensitivity, explaining why societal inequalities may affect some people's well-being and other's not. Including justice sensitivity in the SOEP-IS creates new research opportunities at the intersection of psychology and sociology to identify the psychological and social mechanisms of how people perceive and evaluate social inequalities. This kind of data will be especially useful in the context of the CRC 882 "From Heterogeneities to Inequalities" as they help to identify the behavioral consequences of societal inequalities and why existing inequalities are empirically connected with quite different reactions of individuals.

Procedure

Assessment: 2011 L; 2014 L; 2017 L

The justice sensitivity short scales were included in the 2011 assessment. Two papers resulted from these data (Baumert et al., 2013; Stavrova et al., in press).

Mode of data collection: questionnaire

Type of sample: Sample I

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