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COMPARING FAIRNESS PERCEPTIONS OF PERSONNEL SELECTION TECHNIQUES OF AMERICAN, FRENCH AND SOUTH AFRICAN JOB APPLICANTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to determine whether job applicants' perceptions of commonly used selection procedures vary across nationalities, because a negative impression of prospective employers that use selection techniques that are viewed as unfair, may result. In this study the fairness perceptions of 179 South African employees were compared with results obtained with 142 American and 117 French participants with regard to ten selection techniques using the framework of organisational justice theory. Overall, the perceptions of the South African White group were most positive toward the selection techniques. The results of the American and South African White and Black groups were also more similar than the results of the French group.

OPSOMMING

Die doel van die ondersoek was om te bepaal of werkaansoekers van verskillende nasionaliteite se persepsies van bekende keuringsprosedures verskil. Indien voornemende werkgewers keuringstegnieke wat as onbillik beskou word, gebruik, kan 'n negatiewe beeld van hul organisasies geskep word. In hierdie studie is 179 Suid-Afrikaanse werknemers se persepsies van tien keuringstegnieke binne die raamwerk van organisasiebillikheidsteorie vergelyk met persepsies van 142 Amerikaanse en 117 Franse respondente, In die algemeen was die Suid-Afrikaanse Wit groep die positiefste teenoor die keuringstegnieke. Daar was meer ooreenstemming tussen die resultate van die Amerikaanse en Suid-Afrikaanse Swart en Wit groepe onderling as met die Franse groep.

Recruitment and selection are critical organisational functions that include advertising vacant positions, screening initial applications, administration of psychometric tests and selection of suitable applicants. Recruitment and selection are important processes, because they regulate the mobility of newly appointed employees into an organisation, whereas promotion regulates the movement of existing employees through an organisation (Boolsen & Theron, 1996). Usually organisational inducements, positive features and benefits offered by an organisation, are used to attract external job applicants (Byars & Rue, 1995). They named the following organisational inducements as providing a strong negotiation basis, namely the organisational remuneration system, career opportunities and organisational reputation or image. Although competitive remuneration packages and career opportunities are very attractive inducements, the value of the third type of inducement should not be underrated. According to Byars and Rue (1995) the way employees are treated, the nature and quality of the organisation's products and services, as well as its participation in community services or projects, are important factors that affect an organisation's positive image and hence its attractiveness to prospective applicants. Garonzik, Brockner and Siegel (2000) furthermore believe that employees and applicants will be more committed to an organisation if the employer uses fair procedures in planning and implementing decisions. In order to be perceived as an attractive employer, organisations therefore need to focus on the above-mentioned aspects when recruiting and selecting applicants.

The objective of a selection process is to select the most suitable applicants from the applicant pool, in other words, selecting applicants who are most likely to adjust to the organisational procedures and policies and who will perform the job successfully (Van Niekerk, 1996; Byars & Rue, 1995). Criterion predictors such as attained educational level, previous work experience and performance appraisals, scores achieved on personnel selection techniques, including results of interviews can be used to predict future work performance. However, all predictors used in selection decisions must be valid and reliable in order to be fair (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The fundamental principle underlying the empirical fairness of predictors used as selection instruments, is that selection techniques should not have an adverse impact on employment opportunities for individuals from different races, ages, gender, religion or national origin (Byars & Rue, 1995). Applicants in most countries enjoy protection against unfair discrimination. Therefore their fairness perceptions have to be taken into account when developing selection batteries.

Recently the focus of research concerning selection fairness has fallen on this additional factor, namely applicants' perceptions of selection techniques as a component of test fairness. Although various studies have analysed this aspect (e.g., Arvey & Sackett, 1993; De Jong & Visser, 2000a; De Jong & Visser, 2000b; Harland, Rauzi, & Biasotto, 1995; Kluger & Rothstein, 1993; Macan, Avedon, Paese & Smith, 1994; Robertson, Iles, Gratton & Sharpley, 1991; Rynes & Connerley, 1993; Smither & Pearlman, 1991; Steiner & Gilliland, 1996), little attention has been given to comparing fairness perceptions of applicants originating from different nationalities. Given the exponential growth of international organisations in recent years (Love, Bishop, Heinisch & Montei, 1994; Sunter, 1997; Veldsman, 1997), accompanied by a worldwide focus on fair labour practices, a definite need exists to identify fairness perceptions that employees of different national backgrounds hold with regard to various selection techniques.

Bauer, Dolen, Maertz and Campion (1998) propose that selection is a two-way interactional process. They assert that both prospective employee and employer gather relevant information during a selection process in order to make an employment decision. Attractive organisational inducements facilitate a positive organisational image and hence interested applicants, whereas negative perceptions may influence applicants' attitudes, intentions and behaviours negatively toward an employer (Macan et al., 1994; Ployhart & Ryan, 1998; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman & Stoffey, 1993). Research conducted by Macan et al. (1994) indicate that those applicants who perceived selection techniques as fair, were also more satisfied with the selection process, the job and the organisation. Consequently, test fairness is in the interest of both employer and employee, because both benefit from a fair and meaningful selection process in which the best employment decision is made (Jacobson, 1996).

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Studies concerning fairness in selection analysed applicants' fairness perceptions by means of organisational justice theory (e.g., Gilliland, 1993; Greenberg, 1987; Ployhart & Ryan, 1998; Singer, 1990; Singer, 1993; Steiner & Gililand, 1996). Two main categories of organisational justice theory can be distinguished, namely procedural and distributive justice rules (Gilliland, 1993). Procedural justice concerns the fairness of selection processes, whereas distributive justice pertains to the perceived fairness of selection decisions or outcomes thereof (Folger & Greenberg, 1985). Bies (1987) added a third category, namely interactional fairness. In a selection context, this is defined as the perceived fairness of interpersonal treatment of employees during a selection process. Interactional fairness also refers to the quality of information given to applicants (Gilliland, 1993). The focus is on both what is communicated during (and after) the decision-making process, as well as how it is communicated (Singer, 1993).

Gilliland (1993) proposed a model to explain applicants' reactions to selection procedures by examining ten procedural justice rules (including interactional justice by means of the explanation justice rule) and three distributive justice rules. The justice rules in the procedural category are job-relatedness (predictive and face validity), opportunity to perform, consistent administration, explanation and propriety of questions. The identified distributive justice rules are equity and special needs (Gilliland, 1993). Gilliland (1993) identified three categories of selection outcomes that are influenced by justice rules, namely reactions during hiring, reactions after hiring and self-perceptions. He maintained that applicants' fairness perceptions are influential perceptions that may have an impact on a variety of variables, namely test motivation, legal battles (also see Grogan, 1996), work performance, citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction, self-esteem and self-efficacy of employees, and their future job-search intentions. Landy, Shankster and Kohler (1994) agreed that applicant perceptions of selection techniques are stable, but may influence other domains of applicant behaviour, such as test performance. Smither et al. (1993) added that applicant perceptions might indirectly have an effect on the validity and utility of a selection technique. Truxillo and Bauer (1999) confirmed that procedural and distributive perceptions might influence applicants' employment decisions, job satisfaction, self-esteem, as well as the organisational climate. In response to the above-mentioned findings, Steiner and Gilliland (1996) conducted a cross-cultural comparative study concerning the identification of applicants' fairness perceptions of selection techniques, as well as determining why they perceived those selection techniques as being fair/unfair.

Steiner and Gilliland (1996) hypothesised that although fairness perceptions of selection techniques may be similar across cultures, the reasons underlying these perceptions may differ across nationalities/cultures. To test this hypothesis they developed a questionnaire in which participants were instructed to indicate the extent to which they perceived selection techniques as being fair, and also why they indicated these perceptions. The choices available to the participants were based on organisational justice rules. Steiner and Gilliland (1996) compared the fairness perceptions of a French sample with that of an American sample. Their results revealed that the selection techniques that were perceived as being fair by the American sample were generally also perceived as being fair by the French sample. However, statistically significant differences were obtained between the two samples in terms of the underlying reasons for those perceptions (Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). Consequently, it has to be noted that fairness perceptions of selection techniques are generalisable to various nationalities, but that the factors that determine the use of selection techniques can differ according to nationality/culture. The relevance to compare international groups in terms of perceived fairness of selection techniques and the underlying justice rules is therefore obvious, especially since more than 3500 international organisations function worldwide (Harris & Moran, 1991).

In the present investigation a South African sample that consists of Black and White participants will be compared with the above-mentioned French and American samples used in the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study. The aim is to determine how and why employees' fairness perceptions of selection techniques differ. These nationalities were chosen, because they represent three continents, namely Africa, America and Europe.

METHOD

Participants

Samples drawn from three nationalities, namely France, the United States and South Africa, were used. The data that Steiner and Gilliland collected concerning the fairness perceptions of French and American participants were compared with the data collected in South Africa. In the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study, 117 French and 142 American psychology students with mean ages of 20,37 and 20,39 years respectively, participated. In the South African sample 104 black students and 75 white students participated. Their mean ages were 32,45 (SD = 7,30) and 26,09 (SD = 6,63) respectively. Steiner and Gilliland (1996) reported that 57% of the French and 49% of the American students had held a full-time occupation, whereas 68% of French and 99% of American participants indicated that they had done some part-time work. All participants in the South African samples reported having full-time work experience. The benefit of high levels of exposure to selection techniques resulting from work experience lies in the informed responses that participants are able to give, drawing from their own employment experiences.

Measuring instrument

Steiner and Gilliland (1996) developed a questionnaire based on organisational justice theory to test the fairness perceptions of ten selection techniques and various organisational justice rules. The questionnaire was expanded for data collection in the South African context using 11 items assessing organisational justice rules as against the seven in the Steiner and Gilliland study.

Participants in both investigations were asked to imagine that they were applying for a job and then to consider how they would react if an employer used each of the ten selection techniques to evaluate them as an applicant for that specific job. In the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study completion of the questionnaire was linked to any job that a participant could apply for in the near future. It was reported that 97% of the French and 33% of the American participants indicated that they intended to specialise in psychology or a related field. In the South African study a more specific context was created. Participants were asked to imagine that they were applying for a job as personnel manager.

In both investigations a definition of every selection technique preceded the items in the questionnaire. The following ten selection techniques were included: Interviews, curriculum vitae/résumés, work-sample tests, biographical information blanks, written ability tests, personal references, personality tests, honesty tests, personal contacts and graphology. Varying frames of reference could in this way be controlled as an extraneous variable. Also, in both versions of the questionnaire the first item was a question to determine whether participants had been exposed to that particular selection technique in a selection situation.

The subsequent items in the questionnaire assessed process fairness/total fairness perception of the different selection techniques. In the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study two items constituted process fairness, namely "How would you rate the effectiveness of this method for identifying qualified people for the job you indicated above?" and "If you did not get the job based on this selection method, what would you think of the fairness of this procedure?" Steiner and Gilliland referred to the total fairness perception as *process fairness*, but this term may be confusing, because process fairness implies procedural justice alone and it does not consider distributive

and interactional justice perceptions. Consequently, in the South African study, the three items that determined ratings of perceived effectiveness, fairness and validity were collectively labeled as the *total fairness perception.* Participants indicated their perceptions on seven-point Likert scales (1 indicating strong negative perceptions and 7 strong positive perceptions). Mean values were calculated to indicate the participants' total fairness perceptions. Steiner and Gilliland (1996) obtained a coefficient alpha of 0,73 for the two-item process fairness/total fairness perception measure across all participants and selection techniques. For every South African participant a total fairness perception, separate per technique, was calculated by adding the three scores (perceptions of effectiveness, fairness and validity of selection technique) and dividing it by three. The reliability coefficient of the total fairness perception was calculated separately for every selection technique. Coefficients alpha ranged between 0,88 and 0,94, thus indicating that it is justifiable to group these three items together as a total fairness perception. All cases where there was no variability in response per item over the various selection techniques, were excluded (reducing the samples to 76 South African Black and 66 South African White participants). American and French sample sizes were reduced to 134 and 102 respectively, because of missing data.

After completing the above-mentioned items, participants in the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study responded to seven items assessing reasons *why* they perceived a particular selection technique as unfair/fair. These seven items reflected organisational justice rules. Items included in the questionnaire pertaining to procedural justice were (a) 'the method is based on solid scientific research' (predictive validity), (b) 'the approach is a logical one for identifying qualified candidates for the job in question' (face validity), (c) 'the method will detect the individuals' important qualities differentiating them from others' (opportunity to perform), (d) 'the selection instrument is impersonal and cold' (explanation) and (e) 'the method invades personal privacy' (propriety of questions). For the purpose of statistical analysis the last two items were reflected. Two additional justice rules included in the study were (a) '-employers have the right to obtain information from applicants by using the method' (employers' right) and (b) 'the method is appropriate because it is widely used'. No items assessed distributive justice rules.

South African participants responded to 11 items based on organisational justice theory. The items and relevant justice rules were indicated and briefly defined by De Jong and Visser (2000a). It was also indicated whether the justice rule is an original item from the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study.

All participants indicated their perceptions concerning the organisational justice rules on seven-point Likert scales (1 indicating strong negative responses and 7 strong positive responses). These items pertaining to underlying reasons for fairness perceptions were repeated for every selection technique. In order to perform the *r*-to-*z* transformations required for the analyses presented in Table 3, the following procedure was carried out. For cases having perfect correlations between the total fairness perception and one or more justice rules, the Fisher *r*-to-*z* transformation will indicate a value of nil (see formula in Hays, 1988, p. 590). Therefore, such cases were excluded in the calculations. This resulted in 93 usable questionnaires for the South African Black group and 75 for the South African White group.

An alternative form of the questionnaire, presenting the selection techniques in reverse order, was developed. This was done to control for possible order-effects and/or influence of fatigue. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the forms of the questionnaire and asked to complete the questionnaire in their own time. Steiner and Gilliland (1996) translated their questionnaire into French and English, ensuring that the two forms were as equivalent as possible. The South African questionnaire was available in English, which is an official language and is used for business and educational purposes.

Completed questionnaires were collected at a class meeting. For the French and American samples data collected by Steiner and Gilliland (1996) was used. The authors granted permission to use data for comparison purposes.

RESULTS

The means and standard deviations of total fairness perception for the personnel selection techniques are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TOTAL FAIRNESS PERCEPTION FOR THE VARIOUS PERSONNEL SELECTION TECHNIQUES

Selection technique	South Africa Black $N = 76$ $M\,(SD)$	South Africa White $N = 66$ $M\,(SD)$	United States $N = 134$ $M\,(SD)$	France $N = 102$ $M\,(SD)$
Interviews	5,13 (1,27)	5,72 (1,16)	5,39 (1,26)	4,56 (1,19)
Curriculum vitae/résumés	5,07 (1,64)	5,18 (1,31)	5,37 (1,19)	4,54 (1,18)
Work-sample tests	4,82 (1,70)	5,22 (1,38)	5,26 (1,49)	5,26 (1,19)
Biographical information blanks	4,57 (1,65)	4,70 (1,27)	4,59 (1,31)	3,91 (1,31)
Written ability tests	4,53 (1,59)	5,17 (1,40)	4,50 (1,25)	4,21 (1,36)
Personal references	4,36 (1,51)	5,04 (1,44)	4,38 (1,30)	4,12 (1,10)
Personality tests	4,39 (1,71)	5,19 (1,14)	3,50 (1,30)	3,96 (1,35)
Honesty tests	3,83 (1,56)	4,10 (1,54)	3,41 (1,62)	2,54 (1,24)
Personal contacts	2,86 (1,74)	2,76 (1,38)	3,29 (1,64)	2,92 (1,67)
Graphology	2,71 (1,75)	2,69 (1,35)	1,95 (1,18)	3,23 (1,62)

Results of analysis of variance calculations with perceptions of every selection technique as dependent variable and nationality as independent variable are displayed in Table 2. For the French and American samples the original data could not be obtained, and the analyses had to be performed using the procedure as described by Kerlinger (1986, p. 224). In order to address the experimentwise error rate resulting from performing a large number of significance tests, a stringent significance level (p=0,01) was used. The total fairness perceptions of the four groups for interviews differed statistically significantly ($F(3,374) = 14.15$, $p < 0,01$). The ANOVA was followed by Tukey post hoc comparisons resulting in statistically significant differences between the means of total fairness perception for the American and French (5,39 and 4,56), as well as the South African White and French (5,72 and 4,56) groups.

TABLE 2
ANOVA SUMMARY TABLES FOR THE SELECTION TECHNIQUES WITH POPULATION GROUP AS INDEPENDENT VARIABLE AND TOTAL FAIRNESS PERCEPTION AS DEPENDENT VARIABLE

	Source	*ss*	*df*	*ms*	*F*
Interviews	Between groups	64,53	3	21,51	14,15*
	Error	568,57	374	1,52	
	Total	633,10	377		
Curriculum vitae/résumés	Between groups	41,40	3	13,80	7,93*
	Error	649,45	374	1,74	
	Total	690,85	377		
Work-sample tests	Between groups	11,38	3	3,79	1,80
	Error	787,27	374	2,11	
	zTotal	798,64	377		
Biographical information blanks	Between groups	37,29	3	12,43	6,47*
	Error	718,36	374	1,92	
	Total	755,65	377		
Written ability tests	Between groups	37,52	3	12,51	6,50*
	Error	719,53	374	1,92	
	Total	757,05	377		
Personal references	Between groups	35,04	3	11,68	6,62*
	Error	660,03	374	1,77	
	Total	730,10	377		
Personality tests	Between groups	135,04	3	45,02	23,37*
	Error	720,36	374	1,93	
	Total	855,40	377		
Honesty tests	Between groups	121,70	3	40,57	17,85*
	Error	849,98	374	2,27	
	Total	971,68	377		
Personal contacts	Between groups	17,17	3	5,72	2,14
	Error	1000,66	374	2,68	
	Total	1017,83	377		
Graphology	Between groups	98,36	3	32,79	15,19*
	Error	807,31	374	2,16	
	Total	905,67	377		

*$p < 0,01$

The total fairness perceptions of the four groups for curriculum vitae/résumés differed statistically significantly ($F(3,374) = 7,93$, $p < 0,01$). Tukey post hoc comparisons showed significant differences between the means of total fairness perception for the South African White (5,18) and French (4,54) groups, and the American (5,37) and French (4,54) groups. Total fairness perceptions for work-sample tests did not differ statistically significantly over the four nationalities ($F(3,374) = 1,80$, $p > 0,01$). The four groups' fairness perceptions regarding biographical information blanks did differ significantly ($F(3,374) = 6,47$, $p < 0,01$). Post hoc comparisons indicated significant differences between the South African White and French groups (4,70 and 3,91). The ANOVA for written ability tests also proved to be statistically significant ($F(3,374) = 6,50$, $p < 0,01$) as a result of the differences between the South African White (5,17) and French (4,21) groups. For personal references ($F(3,374) = 6,62$, $p < 0,01$) differences were found between the means of the South African White and French groups (5,04 and 4,12), as well as between the South African White and South African Black groups (5,04 and 4,36). For personality tests ($F(3,374) = 23,37$, $p < 0,01$) statistically significant differences were found between the means of the South African Black and American (4,39 and 3,50), the South African White and American (5,19 and 3,50), the South African White and French (5,19 and 3,96), as well as the South African White and Black (5,19 and 4,39) groups. For honesty tests ($F(3,374) = 17,85$, $p < 0,01$) differences were found between the South African White (4,10) and French (2,54) groups, the American (3,41) and French (2,54) groups, as well as the South African Black (3,83) and French (2,54) groups. Total fairness perceptions for personal contacts did not differ statistically significantly over the four nationalities ($F(3,374) = 2,14$, $p > 0,01$). Total fairness perceptions of graphology differed significantly ($F(3,374) = 15,19$, $p < 0,01$), with Tukey post hoc comparisons showing significant differences between the means of the South African White and American groups (2,69 and 1,95), South African Black and American groups (2,71 and 1,95), as well as between the French and American groups (3,23 and 1,95).

Further analyses were conducted to determine underlying reasons for the fairness perceptions of every selection technique. For every individual separately the correlation between an organisational justice rule and total fairness perception across the ten selection techniques per nationality were calculated. Following *r*-to-*z* transformations the means were calculated per nationality and transformed back to *r*. These correlations are presented in Table 3.

Table 3 also contains comparisons between the correlations of the South African Black and White, American and French groups for every justice rule (Hays, 1988, p.590). Significant differences were found between correlations of 'employers right to obtain information' with fairness perceptions for South African Black and American participants, as well as between American and French participants. In correlations of predictive validity with fairness perception, significant differences were found between the (a) South African Black and French participants, (b) American and French, as well as (c) South African White and French participants, with the French participants obtaining the lowest correlations. No significant differences were found between the White South African and American participants. It is noteworthy that correlations for both South African groups were in general more similar to the American than the French groups.

The purpose of Table 4 is to indicate specific differences and similarities between the four nationalities in terms of their evaluation of the seven corresponding organisational justice rules per selection technique. Statistically significant differences between means of the South African Black and White groups, as well as between the American and French groups are indicated with square brackets. ANOVAs could not be performed, because the standard deviations for the French and American samples were not available. The correlations in the last row of Table 4 are the correlations between the means of the South African Black and White groups and between the American and French groups. The correlations of the South African Black and White groups ranging between 0,87 and 0,95 indicate strong similarities between the two groups. Also, the correlations of the American and French groups indicate strong similarities (r ranging from 0,41 to 0,85).

DISCUSSION

An outstanding feature of the results of this study is that the obtained differences between the South African Black and White groups are not as large as those obtained in the Steiner and Gilliland (1996) study comparing the French and American groups. Furthermore, the fairness perceptions of the American participants are more similar to the two South African groups than the French group.

Total fairness perception concerning ten selection techniques

All four groups rated interviews as a highly favourable selection technique. These findings confirm the results obtained by Smither et al. (1993) where newly hired entry-level managers evaluated interviews to be significantly more job-related than personality tests and biographical blanks. They were therefore more willing to recommend employers using interviews as selection technique. Statistically significant differences between the American and French groups indicated that the Americans regarded interviews as fairer than the French participants. The South African White group also had more favourable perceptions regarding interviews than the French group. Similar results were obtained for curriculum vitae/résumés. The American and South African White groups held more positive perceptions regarding this selection technique than the French. However, no statistically significant differences were obtained between the fairness perceptions of the four groups concerning work-sample tests. Mean fairness perceptions for this selection technique ranged

TABLE 3

CORRELATIONS OF JUSTICE RULES WITH FAIRNESS PERCEPTION FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK AND WHITE, AMERICAN AND FRENCH GROUPS

Organisational justice rule	South African Black $N = 93$ r	South African White $N = 72$ r	United States $N = 134$ r	France $N = 102$ r	South African Black/South African White z(diff)	South African Black/ United States z(diff)	South African Black/ France z(diff)	South African White/ United States z(diff)	South African White/ France z(diff)	United States/ France z(diff)
Equity	0,69	0,69	n/a	n/a	0,00	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Special needs	0,51	0,47	n/a	n/a	0,38	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Job-relatedness	0,75	0,76	n/a	n/a	-0,14	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Predictive validity	0,62	0,61	0,64	0,37	10	-0,29	2,27*	-0,40	1,98*	2,78*
Face validity	0,72	0,80	0,81	0,70	-1,20	-1,61	0,27	-0,34	1,34	1,95
Opportunity to perform	0,67	0,73	0,66	0,58	-0,74	0,15	1,03	0,87	1,66	0,98
Consistency of administration	0,63	0,73	n/a	n/a	-1,17	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Explanation	0,55	0,53	0,45	0,34	0,18	0,88	1,79	0,61	1,47	1,05
Propriety of questions	0,42	0,41	0,36	0,28	0,08	0,51	1,10	0,34	0,89	0,68
Widely used	0,64	0,72	0,76	0,54	-0,93	-1,75	1,10	-0,67	1,91	3,00*
Employers' right	0,59	0,66	0,74	0,58	-0,72	-1,97*	0,14	-1,08	0,83	2,18*

*$p < 0,05$ (two-tailed) z(diff): Test for difference between correlations (Hays, 1988, p. 590)

TABLE 4
MEANS OF THE FOUR GROUPS FOR THE JUSTICE RULES ACROSS SELECTION TECHNIQUES

Selection technique	Population group	Predictive validity/ Scientific evidence *M (SD)*	Face validity *M (SD)*	Opportunity to perform *M (SD)*	Explanation/ Interpersonal warmth *M (SD)*	Propriety of questions/ Respectful of privacy *M (SD)*	Widely used *M (SD)*	Employers' right *M (SD)*
Interviews	Black South Africa	5,08 (1,69)	5,62 (1,43)	5,84 (1,35)	6,81 (1,11)	5,09 (1,66)	5,45 (1,42)	5,74 (1,44)
	White South Africa	4,33 (1,83)	5,61 (1,43)	5,93 (1,37)	6,24 (1,17)	4,78 (1,79)	5,36 (1,64)	5,63 (1,65)
	United States	4,10	5,70	6,00	5,90	5,50	5,70	6,00
	France	3,00	5,30	5,40	5,80	4,90	3,80	6,10
Curriculum vitae/ résumés	Black South Africa	4,82 (1,69)	5,21 (1,54)	5,35 (1,59)	4,49 (2,17)	4,98 (1,72)	5,26 (1,61)	5,55 (1,49)
	White South Africa	4,11 (1,79)	4,99 (1.58)	5,36 (1,67)	3,58 (2,07)	5,14 (1,67)	5,10 (1,66)	5,47 (1,45)
	United States	4,60	5,90	5,60	5,00	5,70	5,80	6,20
	France	3,00	5,00	4,70	4,30	5,70	4,00	6,30
Work-sample tests	Black South Africa	4,81 (1,76)	4,98 (1,67)	5,54 (1,50)	4,81 (1,78)	4,78 (1,58)	4,48 (1,61)	4,89 (1,85)
	White South Africa	4,42 (1,64)	5,25 (1,52)	5,67 (1,52)	4,60 (1,76)	5,43 (1,39)	4,06 (1,56)	5,24 (1,70)
	United States	4,30	5,70	5,90	5,60	5,80	4,60	5,70
	France	3,20	6,10	5,90	5,90	6,40	3,90	6,10
Biographical blank	Black South Africa	4,55 (1,75)	4,89 (1,84)	5,54 (1,31)	4,30 (2,00)	4,40 (1,69)	4,84 (1,68)	5,06 (1,69)
	White South Africa	4,24 (1,71)	4,38 (1,53)	5,14 (1,53)	3,63 (1,83)	3,64 (2,00)	4,00 (1,67)	4,44 (1,80)
	United States	4,00	4,60	5,30	4,30	4,90	4,30	5,40
	France	3,10	3,70	4,40	4,00	3,50	3,00	5,10
Written ability tests	Black South Africa	5,03 (1,82)	4,86 (1,66)	5,24 (1,60)	3,99 (2,17)	4,57 (1,82)	4,52 (1,76)	4,68 (1,84)
	White South Africa	5,74 (1,39)	5,10 (1,50)	5,71 (1,16)	3,47 (1,89)	4,49 (1,67)	4,85 (1,61)	5,18 (1,72)
	United States	4,40	4,80	5,00	4,10	5,20	4,10	5,30
	France	4,50	4,40	4,50	3,50	5,90	3,20	5,30
Personal references	Black South Africa	3,88 (2,03)	4,33 (1,93)	4,67 (1,85)	3,84 (2,08)	4,11 (1,80)	4,33 (1,83)	4,65 (1,86)
	White South Africa	3,08 (1,77)	4,85 (1,75)	5,18 (1,79)	3,42 (1,82)	3,81 (1,85)	4,75 (1,93)	4,85 (1,84)
	United States	3,30	4,90	5,10	4,90	4,80	4,50	5,60
	France	2,30	4,20	5,00	4,00	4,70	3,20	5,70
Personality tests	Black South Africa	4,89 (2,00)	4,80 (1,55)	4,91 (1,73)	3,89 (2,03)	4,42 (1,79)	4,31 (1,73)	4,73 (1,63)
	White South Africa	5,35 (1,59)	5,32 (1,31)	5,79 (1,15)	4,03 (1,66)	4,19 (1,77)	4,90 (1,67)	5,42 (1,31)
	United States	3,40	3,80	5,10	4,40	4,60	3,60	4,40
	France	3,80	4,20	5,20	4,70	3,60	3,10	4,90
Honesty tests	Black South Africa	3,82 (1,95)	4,05 (2,01)	4,28 (1,96)	3,97 (2,02)	3,96 (1,93)	3,59 (1,73)	4,05 (2,13)
	White South Africa	3,88 (1,78)	4,07 (1,92)	4,81 (1,80)	3,63 (1,90)	3,46 (1,84)	3,49 (1,48)	4,52 (1,93)
	United States	3,10	3,50	4,30	3,90	3,90	3,20	4,20
	France	2,20	2,30	3,50	3,90	3,40	2,00	3,60
Personal contacts	Black South Africa	2,68 (2,08)	2,80 (2,02)	3,24 (2,20)	3,38 (2,27)	3,46 (2,00)	2,78 (1,88)	3,23 (2,29)
	White South Africa	1,83 (1,37)	2,42 (1,74)	3,03 (1,99)	3,01 (1,83)	3,38 (1,79)	2,60 (1,76)	3,46 (1,98)
	United States	2,00	2,40	2,90	4,10	5,00	2,80	4,10
	France	1,30	1,50	1,60	4,40	5,50	1,90	2,60
Graphology	Black South Africa	3,24 (1,90)	3,04 (2,13)	3,37 (2,16)	3,22 (2,26)	3,83 (2,09)	2,95 (1,91)	3,34 (2,12)
	White South Africa	3,40 (1,98)	2,32 (1,63)	3,49 (1,96)	2,28 (1,49)	3,40 (1,98)	1,89 (1,23)	2,85 (1,72)
	United States	2,40	1,80	2,80	3,70	4,40	1,90	2,70
	France	4,20	3,10	3,90	4,20	4,20	2,50	4,30
Correlations (*p< 0,05)	Black South Africa / White South Africa	0,87*	0,95*	0,92*	0,95*	0,88*	0,89*	0,88*
	United States / France	0,41	0,84*	0,83*	0,80*	0,81*	0,85*	0,76*

between 4,82 and 5,26, indicating favourable responses. This reaction may be due to the job-related nature of work-sample tests. Love et al. (1994) described the process that they used to develop cross-culturally valid selection processes to ensure compatibility between employees from two diverse national origins. They suggested that work-sample tests should be a first choice when developing selection processes for international organisations, because the practical aspect of this selection technique, as well as the opportunity to demonstrate suitable skills, may prove effective in many cultures.

For biographical blanks statistically significant differences were found in the fairness perceptions of the South African White and French groups. The South African White group held more favourable perceptions than the French group. Reilly and Chao (1982) believe that biographical blanks have high utility, because data can easily be collected, it is inexpensive to use, and this selection technique has relatively high validity. Although all the groups rated this selection technique as favourable, the South African White and French groups placed biographical blanks in the seventh of ten positions, whereas the South African Black and American groups placed it in the fourth position of favourability. Similarly, the South African White group had more favourable perceptions of written ability tests than the French group. Furthermore, the South African White group perceived personal references as more favourable than both the South African Black and French groups.

Several statistically significant differences were found between the fairness perceptions of the groups for personality tests. Both the South African Black and White groups indicated more favourable perceptions than the American group. Furthermore, the South African White group regarded personality tests as more favourable than both the South African Black and French groups. These results capture the controversial nature of personality tests as selection techniques. Harland et al. (1995) concluded that it is difficult to overcome the existing negative perceptions toward the use of personality tests as selection techniques. They found that a selection process including an interview and a personality test received lower fairness ratings than a process consisting of only an interview. Even an explanation of the use of personality tests in a selection situation did not reduce the negative perception.

The following three selection techniques did not receive favourable ratings, namely honesty tests, personal contacts and graphology. The French group rated honesty tests most negatively, their perceptions differing significantly from the other groups. Also, the four groups did not rate personal contacts as a fair selection technique. Mean fairness perceptions ranged from 2,76 to 3,29. Finally, the Americans rated graphology significantly more negatively than the other groups, although all the groups rated this technique as being relatively unfair.

Reasons underlying the fairness perceptions

Both South African groups perceived face validity and job-relatedness as the most important justice rules determining the fairness perception of a selection technique. This is not a surprising result, since job-relatedness is advocated in South African labour law. Furthermore, face validity was rated as the most important justice rule according to French and American participants. These results confirm results obtained by Macan et al. (1994) indicating a strong positive reaction toward selection techniques that have high face validity. All four groups rated propriety of questions as the least important justice rule that determines the fairness perception of a selection technique. It is possible that employers take sufficient precautions to prevent illegal probing or inappropriate questions being asked during selection (Rynes, 1993), with the result that employees would not be exposed to this behaviour frequently, or have strong feelings toward this organisational justice rule.

The two South African groups attached relatively low significance to the distributive justice rule of special needs. This is an unexpected result, since South African labour law (i.e. the Employment Equity Act of 1998) stipulates promotion of members of disadvantaged population groups and people with disabilities through affirmative action procedures. Equal representation and opportunities for all South Africans are therefore top priorities in the selection domain. Another unexpected result obtained for the South African sample was relative low ratings of the explanation justice rule. One would expect this justice rule to be important, because it reflects interpersonal treatment of employees, including aspects such as interpersonal warmth, two-way communication and sharing of information. However, similar results were obtained in the American and French comparison, where these two groups also rated this procedural justice rule as relatively low (Steiner & Gilliland, 1996). The American group rated all justice rules, except two, as important in determining the fairness of a selection technique. The two exceptions were explanation and propriety of questions. Similarly, French participants rated all except three justice rules as important factors. They perceived propriety of questions, explanation and predictive validity as less important justice rules when assessing the fairness of selection techniques.

A statistically significant difference was obtained between the American and French groups for predictive validity, widely used techniques and employers' right to request certain information. In the comparison between South African Black and American groups a significant difference was obtained for employers' right to obtain certain information, whereas a significant difference was obtained for predictive validity for the comparisons between South African Black and French groups and South African White and French groups. In both instances South African groups were more positive regarding predictive validity as a guideline for fair selection techniques than the French group. This might be due to the fact that South African selection practitioners rely on scientific and legally defendable procedures in selection, as advised in labour law. It is further noteworthy that in all instances the two South African groups' perceptions were more similar to perceptions of the American group than perceptions of the French group. No statistically significant difference was obtained between the American and South African White groups. This highlights the previous statement regarding similarity between South African White and American perceptions due to possible similar cultural beliefs.

Analysing organisational justice rules, per nationality, across ten selection techniques

Table 5 indicates variability across nationality/culture of the organisational justice rule per selection technique. The correlation coefficients between the South African Black and White groups indicate close similarities between the two groups (r ranging from 0,87 to 0,95), and it is interesting to note that their correlations are more similar than the correlation coefficients for the American and French groups. Their correlations were somewhat lower, but also indicate overall similarities (r ranging from 0,76 to 0,85). This is an unexpected result, since it would seem logical that because the two South African cultures differ dramatically, their perception regarding the selection techniques and organisational justice rules would also differ. However, in terms of work environment, their cultures may differ only minimally.

The present investigation implies that personnel practitioners should examine the selection procedures that they use on a continuous basis in terms of perceived fairness, validity, reliability and utility in order to address selection issues raised in this discussion. Jacobson (1996) is of the opinion that employers have an obligation to themselves and the community to assess employees in a fair manner and select the most suitable applicant for a specific job. From an organisational viewpoint employers need capable work teams to ensure success and growth. Also, applicants benefit when they are placed in suitable jobs where they can be successful, productive and feel satisfied about their unique contributions (Jacobson, 1996). Lastly, she mentions that society will also benefit, because suitably qualified and capable employees will keep their jobs, be maximally productive and create economic wealth. It was the goal of this study to provide information regarding how to make the selection process attractive to job applicants in various cultures.

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