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Feeling of procedural injustice as a determinant of aggressive behaviour

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Among affective factors leading to aggressive behaviour, anger (Granic & Butler, 1998) and feeling of injustice seem to be closely linked and to play an important role (Baron, Neumann & Geddes, 1999 ; Miller, 2001). However, most of studies revealing connections between different kinds of injustice (distributive, procedural, interactional) and aggression were realized in organizational context. Moreover, these correlational findings could not explain causal relation between these variables.

A field study investigated the relationship between State-Trait Anger, feelings of injustice and aggressive behaviours in a sample of 156 school students (M=12,52 years). Factorial analysis of results revealed two main factors: interactional injustice (23.80%) and procedural injustice (9.50%). All of studied factors were positively correlated, nevertheless, a multiple regression analysis yielded that procedural injustice ($p < .001$) and Trait-anger ($p < .001$) most predicted aggression.

Forty-five undergraduate students (M=19,8 years) participated in a laboratory experiment. Participants were competing with a fictitious opponent on an alleged recruitment test. They were instructed that they had the capabilities to send a brief white noise to the opponent's headphones (hostile aggression) or to temporarily block his progress on his task (instrumental aggression). In order to manipulate the feeling of injustice, a procedural change was induced during the task, so this new procedure missed consistency. Results revealed a significant effect of the feeling of injustice on aggressive behaviour ($F(1,38) = 4.12 ; p < .05$). However, no difference was observed between hostile and instrumental aggression. Yet, feeling of injustice had a significant effect on indirect aggression toward the opponent ($F(1,38) = 9.10 ; p < .01$).

Another experiment, conducted on 34 undergraduate students, between the ages of 18 and 22 years, confirmed the influence of the feeling of procedural injustice on aggression, only toward the source of injustice ($F(1,32) = 6.78 ; p < .01$). Yet, no effect was observed on anger.

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