The Mediating Role of Feedback Acceptance in the Relationship Between Feedback and Attitudinal and Performance Outcomes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to increase our understanding of applicant perceptions of feedback by drawing upon feedback process models. In Study 1, participants ($N = 125$) completed a personality questionnaire as a first stage of a selection simulation. Results showed that the effect of feedback on attitudes towards the organization was mediated by feedback acceptance. In Study 2, participants ($N = 252$) completed 2 parallel versions of an in-basket exercise and received informative feedback between the two versions. Results showed that the effect of feedback on subsequent test performance was partially mediated by feedback acceptance. Together, these results highlight the important role of feedback acceptance in selection and suggest new strategies to enhance applicant perceptions in selection.
Feedback acceptance

The Mediating Role of Feedback Acceptance in the Relationship Between Feedback and Attitudinal and Performance Outcomes

Over the last decades, there has been an increased interest in assessing applicant perceptions of tests and selection procedures. The basic premise of research on applicant perceptions of selection procedures has been that these perceptions affect how the applicants view the organization, their decision to join the organization, and subsequent behaviors (for reviews, see Chan & Schmitt, 2004; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Ryan & Ployhart 2000). Thus, understanding when and why applicants have more or less favorable perceptions of a selection process might increase the ability to influence those perceptions and related applicant attitudes, perceptions, and behavior.

Gilliland’s (1993) framework of fairness in selection has emerged as one of the most influential models for explaining applicant perceptions of selection procedures. Gilliland’s model which is grounded in organizational justice theory (e.g., Greenberg, 1990) has received substantial support, with selection fairness relating to such outcomes as job acceptance intentions and organizational attractiveness (e.g., Bauer, Maertz, Dolen, & Campion, 1998; Bauer et al., 2001; Gilliland, 1994, 1995; Hausknecht et al., 2004; Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994; Ployhart & Ryan, 1998). Although this model has been very useful, recent calls have been made for expanding the theoretical scope of applicant perceptions research to advance our understanding of the underlying processes of interest (e.g., Chapman & Webster, 2006; Hausknecht et al., 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Examples have been the use of privacy theory to shed more light on the privacy rule in Gilliland’s model (Harris, Van Hoye, & Lievens, 2003) or the use of attributional principles from social psychological research to explain why and how people form fairness perceptions (Ployhart & Harold, 2004).

In the present study, we use a similar strategy. We draw upon a well-established feedback process model (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979) to increase our understanding of the effects of applicant perceptions of one of the components of Gilliland’s model (i.e., feedback) on attitudes and behavior. Feedback is commonly defined as “actions taken by (an) external
agent(s) to provide information regarding some aspect(s) of one's task performance” (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996, p. 254). From this definition, it becomes apparent that selection situations are in essence feedback processes as applicants typically receive information (e.g., outcome and/or informative feedback) about their performance on one or more tasks (e.g., personality tests, interviews, assessment center exercises) from an external agent (the organization).

Given these parallels, it is remarkable that no applicant reactions research has drawn upon feedback process models (e.g., Farr, 1993; Ilgen et al., 1979; Kinicki, Prussia, Wu, & McKee-Ryan, 2004) to study the effects of feedback in selection situations on applicant attitudes and behavior.

On the basis of these models, the current study argues that feedback acceptance (i.e., individuals’ perceptions about the accuracy of the informative feedback received) plays a key role in determining applicant attitudes and behavior in selection situations. Two studies are presented. In Study 1, we investigate the role of feedback acceptance in explaining the effect of outcome feedback on attitudes toward an organization. In light of repeated calls for applicant perceptions research to go beyond attitudes and intentions and examine behavioral outcomes (e.g., actual withdrawal from the selection process, test performance, etc.) (e.g., Hausknecht et al., 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Sackett & Lievens, 2008), Study 2 examines the role of feedback acceptance in explaining the effect of informative feedback on actual test performance. Taken together, these two studies might reveal whether the role of applicants’ feedback acceptance in selection procedures works similar to the mechanisms proposed by feedback process models. In turn, this might extend our understanding of underlying processes in applicants’ perceptions of selection procedures.

The Role of Feedback in Applicant Perceptions Theory and Research

Gilliland’s (1993) theoretical model of fairness in selection played a key role in guiding applicant reactions research. This model proposed that perceptions of procedural justice (process fairness) of selection procedures derive from formal characteristics of the procedures (e.g., job relatedness, opportunity to perform, reconsideration opportunity, and consistency of administration), explanation for procedures (e.g., feedback, selection
information, and honesty), and interpersonal treatment of applicants (e.g., interpersonal effectiveness of administrator, two-way communication and propriety of questions).

Perceptions of distributive justice (outcome fairness) derive from equity, equality and perceived need for outcomes. In the hiring context, the outcome is the selection or rejection of the applicant. Typically, the use of the equity rule is considered fair in selection contexts: The most qualified applicant should get the job. According to the model, these perceptions of process and outcome fairness in turn affect reactions and behavior during and after hiring. Gilliland (1993) suggested that satisfying distributive and procedural rules leads to positive fairness perceptions, whereas violating them leads to negative fairness perceptions. As described above, these fairness perceptions, in turn, relate to pre-hire and post-hire consequences, such as applicant intentions, job acceptance, applicant self-efficacy, and sometimes litigation (Ployhart & Ryan, 1998).

The model of Gilliland has inspired an extensive stream of research that focused on the relationship between fairness of selection procedures from the applicant’s perspective and a range of outcomes. In general, empirical evidence supported propositions of Gilliland’s model demonstrating that selection fairness relates to “soft” outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, and test taking motivation). Effects of selection fairness on hard outcomes (e.g., job acceptance decisions, reapplication, legal challenges, job performance) have received less research attention and results of these studies have been equivocal (for reviews, see Hausknecht et al., 2004; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000; Truxillo, Steiner & Gilliland, 2004).

As noted, in Gilliland’s original model (1993, p. 705), “the provision of timely and informative feedback” to applicants is cited as an important factor in fairness perceptions. So, two components are distinguished: the timeliness of feedback and the informative nature of feedback. Timeliness of feedback referred to whether applicants received feedback about their performance in an acceptable time period. Informative feedback referred to the type and degree of feedback and whether feedback provided information on how to remedy deficiencies.
A first group of studies, addressing this justice rule, has focused on the timeliness of the feedback provided (e.g., Truxillo, Bauer, Campion, & Paronto, 2002). In a scale developed for assessing applicants’ perceptions of procedural justice rules (Bauer et al., 2001), three items were developed to measure the feedback component of Gilliland’s theoretical model (1993). Close scrutiny reveals that these items especially target the timeliness of feedback (e.g., "I had a clear understanding of when I would get my test results", "I knew when I would receive feedback about my test results", and "I was satisfied with the amount of time it took to get feedback on my test results"). Thus, recent studies using this procedural justice scale neither take the informativeness of the feedback provided fully into account nor do they address perceptions of feedback accuracy (e.g., Bernerth, Feild, Giles, & Cole, 2006; Maertz, Bauer, Mosley, Posthuma, & Campion, 2004).

A second group of studies has examined the effects of providing applicants with informative feedback. In a study examining the effects of different forms of explanations (Ployhart, Ryan, & Bennet, 1999) on applicant perceptions, some applicants were offered personal information ("Your test scores were higher [lower] than those of the selected applicants"). In general, results showed that providing personal information enhanced fairness and organizational perceptions but harmed self-perceptions. A similar study by Schinkel, van Dierendonck, and Anderson (2004) examined the effect of providing applicants with bogus performance feedback after rejection decisions. Participants in the feedback condition were told that their performance on the tests fell below the required standard. Similar to the previous study, informative feedback impacted negatively on core self-evaluations and negative well-being. In a study examining the effects of different types of explanations in rejection letters, Gilliland et al. (2001) provided applicants with information detailing qualifications of the individual who received the actual job. Results demonstrated strong support for the effectiveness of this type of explanations at reducing perceptions of unfairness and increasing recommendation intentions. However, in these three studies, the informational value of the feedback was still very limited. Participants did not receive any information about their actual results of the tests that they had completed, but merely heard
whether they scored better/worse than other applicants, which is hardly more informative than hearing whether one failed or passed the test. In a fourth study (Van Vianen, Taris, Scholten, & Schinkel, 2004), applicants received actual informative feedback in a feedback interview. This was summarized in an overall assessment score ranging from 1 to 7. Results showed that these scores were highly predictive of overall job attractiveness.

In sum, although two components of feedback were explicitly included as a procedural rule in the Gilliland model (1993), research has not paid much attention to the "informative feedback" component and has not examined whether applicants feel that the feedback provided portrays an accurate picture of their performance and abilities.

Conceptually, this is an important limitation because feedback process models suggest that individuals' acceptance of feedback is a key component to understand how feedback has beneficial or negative effects on attitudes and performance. Therefore, the remainder discusses these feedback process models. We propose that feedback acceptance mediates the relationship between informative feedback and attitudes towards the organization (Study 1) and test performance (Study 2).

The Role of Feedback Acceptance in Feedback Process Models

Ilgen et al.'s (1979) feedback process model was one of the first theoretical models delineating the specific stages occurring during the feedback process. As a result, it has been used very frequently as theoretical underpinnings of feedback research in organizations. The original model posits that it is of key importance to gain a better understanding of the intermediate psychological process that are taking place between an individual's reception of a feedback message and his/her subsequent response to the feedback. In particular, Ilgen et al. (1979) proposed that the effect of a particular feedback message on the feedback recipient's response is mediated by the recipient's perceptions of feedback accuracy. Only when employees consider the feedback to depict an accurate portrayal of themselves, they are willing to respond to the feedback message. Thus, Ilgen et al. proposed that particularly favorable feedback messages would lead to higher acceptance of feedback, which, in turn, would affect goal-setting and behavior. Other feedback models
have made contrasting predictions regarding the role of feedback sign. For instance, Podsakoff and Farh (1989) found that negative feedback leads to more performance improvement than positive feedback. A meta-analysis of feedback studies (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) addressed this issue but failed to come up with a definitive answer. Feedback sign did not moderate the relationship between feedback and performance.

Recent studies have continued to focus on the mechanisms through which feedback sign affects performance by studying recipients’ reactions to feedback (e.g., Atwater & Brett, 2005; Ilgen & Davis, 2000; Kinicki et al., 2004). Overall, these studies have provided support for the two main relationships underlying the hypothesized relationship in Ilgen et al. (1979). First, recipients were more accepting of favorable (positive) feedback than unfavorable (negative) feedback (Anseel & Lievens, 2006; Bannister, 1986; Brett & Atwater, 2001; Facteau, Facteau, Schoel, Russel, & Poteet, 1998; Nease, Mudgett, & Quinones, 1999; Stone & Stone, 1985; Tonidandel, Quinones, & Adams, 2002). This finding can be understood in light of the tendency of people to have positive self-views and to see oneself in the best possible light to maintain one’s self-esteem (for a review of empirical findings illustrating this self-enhancement tendency, see Sedikides & Gregg, 2003). Consequently, we argue that favorable feedback in a selection situation will be perceived as more accurate by applicants, leading to higher acceptance of feedback. Therefore, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1: More favorable feedback will be perceived as more accurate (i.e., higher feedback acceptance).*

Second, favorable feedback perceptions such as feedback acceptance related to goal-setting and improved job performance after feedback (e.g., Brett & Atwater, 2005; Kinicki et al., 2004; Kuvaas, 2006; O’Reilly & Anderson, 1980). The positive effects of feedback acceptance on performance can be understood on the basis of Korman’s self-consistency theory. Korman (1970, p. 32) proposed that “individuals will be motivated to perform on a task or a job in a manner which is consistent with the self-image with which they approach the task or job situation”. Accordingly, we expect applicants to respond to informative feedback in a way that is consistent with their acceptance of feedback.
Informative feedback that is perceived as an accurate assessment of one's performance or abilities (i.e., accepted) is more likely to engender a positive response to the feedback message, whereas the opposite tendency occurs when individuals believe feedback is an inaccurate portrayal of their performance. In support of this line of reasoning, studies in the feedback domain (e.g., Anseel & Lievens, 2006; Brett & Atwater, 2001) showed that perceptions of feedback accuracy (i.e. acceptance) were positively related to employees’ intentions to use feedback for improving job performance. Thus, we hypothesize that perceptions of feedback accuracy might play the same role in fostering test performance.

It should be noted that the feedback literature has mostly focused on the effects of feedback on goals and performance and less on attitudes towards the organization (e.g., Atwater & Brett, 2005; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Kinicki et al., 2004). However, we believe that the same mechanism may apply when relating feedback to job and organizational attitudes. Self-consistency theory, and its successor, self-verification theory suggest that people go out of their way to obtain consistency between their own self-views and how they are viewed by their environment. Individuals shape self-confirmatory social environments through social interaction so that they are perceived by their environment in similar ways as they see themselves. This consistency between self-views and others’ perceptions is highly instrumental in acquiring a sense of stability, predictability, and coherence in social life (Swann, Rentfrow, & Guinn, 2002). Close inspection of the feedback literature revealed that a few studies have indeed found support for higher employee acceptance of feedback leading to more favorable attitudes towards the job and the organization (e.g., higher organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction) (Baron, 1993; Jawahar, 2006; Kinicki et al., 2004; Kuvaas, 2006; Leung, Su, & Morris, 2001). Therefore, we expect that applicants will have more favorable perceptions towards organizations that have provided in their opinion accurate feedback about their self-views.

Hypothesis 2a: The more feedback is perceived as accurate (i.e. higher feedback acceptance), the more applicants will develop favorable attitudes towards an organization.
Hypothesis 2b: The more feedback is perceived as accurate (i.e. higher feedback acceptance), the more applicants will work towards improving their test performance.

Finally, feedback process models (e.g., Ilgen et al., 1979; Kinicki et al., 2004) proposed that the effect of feedback on employees' responses would be mediated by feedback acceptance. In other words, it is posited that the direct effect of feedback favorability on attitudinal and behavioral outcomes would disappear when taking recipients' perceptions of feedback accuracy into account. To our knowledge, one study in the feedback domain has found empirical support for this mediated relationship. In a longitudinal study, Kinicki et al. (2004) showed that feedback acceptance in performance appraisal mediated the effects of feedback favorability on intrinsic motivation, desire to respond to feedback, and performance improvement (indicated by job performance ratings 11 months later). We expect that feedback acceptance will mediate the effect of feedback favorability on attitudes and performance in a selection context.

Hypothesis 3a: The effect of favorable outcome feedback on attitudes towards the organization will be mediated by applicants’ feedback acceptance.

Hypothesis 3b: The effect of informative feedback on subsequent test performance will be mediated by applicants’ feedback acceptance.

Study 1

The problem of negative applicant perceptions leading to unfavorable attitudes towards organizations and possible negative behavioral responses might be particularly salient when using personality tests for selection purposes. The use of personality tests for selection purposes in organizations is currently an area of considerable interest (Holtz, Ployhart, & Dominguez, 2005; Hough & Oswald, 2000). Much of this renewed appeal stems from meta-analyses showing moderate criterion-related validities for traits based on the Five Factor Model (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hough, 1998; Mount & Barrick, 1995) and research showing that personality tests often produce smaller subgroup differences than cognitive ability tests (e.g., Hough, 1998; Schmitt, Clause, & Pulakos, 1996). However, recent meta-analytical findings show that applicant perceptions of personality tests are more unfavorable
than applicant perceptions of other selection instruments such as interviews, work samples, or cognitive ability tests (Hausknecht et al., 2004).

Thus, organizations may rely on personality tests as an inexpensive and valid selection system with low adverse impact but unfortunately this approach might be less attractive to applicants. Given the multidimensional nature of personality inventories and their associated informative feedback, a better understanding of the role of feedback acceptance seems warranted when using personality tests in selection. Therefore, in the first study, we provided students with feedback about five personality dimensions after they took part in a selection simulation.

Method

Participants

Master students (N = 125) from different backgrounds (e.g., engineering, economics, agricultural and plant sciences, communication, educational sciences) from a Belgian university voluntarily participated in the study as part of a training session in career skills. 64.0% were female. The average age of the participants was 23.0 years (SD = 2.48). 75.0% of the participants already had previous experience with selection procedures through applying for a (student) job. On average, they had about 14 months work experience in these (student) jobs.

Procedure

Time 1. The experiment was run in small groups. Participants were randomly assigned to the two conditions (pass vs. reject). Each participant was seated individually at a computer. First, participants were informed they would be participating in a selection process similar to what they would go through when applying for a job. Participants were asked to take the role of job applicants and were asked to read the description of the position for which they would be applying in the simulation. The scenario described an entry-level position in a company that was designed to be attractive to participants (taken from Bauer, Truxillo, Paronto, Weekley, & Campion, 2004). Participants were told that the company was looking for applicants that matched a specific personality profile. This scenario was illustrated
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with a number of pictures to enhance realism. After reading the scenario, participants completed a personality inventory on their computer, under the pretext that a first screening in the selection process would be based on their personality profiles. The Big-Five personality traits were assessed using Goldberg’s (1999) 50-item International Personality Item Pool. The scale is composed of ten statements related to standing on each of the Big Five traits Conscientiousness, Openness to experience, Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Agreeableness. Respondents are asked to indicate how accurately each statement described them, using a Likert-type scale with 1 = very inaccurate and 5 = very accurate. Next, participants reported their perceptions of the likelihood of receiving a job offer from the company and about their performance on the personality test (i.e., a measure of hiring expectancy). Participants also provided their email address so that they could be mailed the final outcome decision (pass vs. reject) of the selection process. Finally, participants were told that this outcome decision would be mailed to them via email within two weeks.

Time 2. Two weeks later participants received an email with a final decision message. In the “Reject” condition the participants were told that they would not be invited for the next stage of the procedure (a selection interview) because their personality profile did not match the specific personality profile the company was looking for. Participants in the "Pass" condition received a message that their personality profile exactly matched the profile that the company was looking for. They were also informed that they would be invited for the next stage of the procedure (a selection interview). Furthermore, in both conditions participants received a feedback report with their personality test scores and associated informative feedback. For each of the five personality dimensions, these participants received a score "low", "moderate", or "high", based on their score relative to a relevant norm group and a short description of the typical behaviors exhibited by individuals who score high or low on each of the dimensions. Finally, participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire measuring how accurately the feedback described their personality (i.e. feedback acceptance measure). They also completed a questionnaire containing the measures of
attitudes towards the organization and demographical questions, and finally they received a debriefing by the computer.

**Measures**

**Hiring expectancy (T1).** Controlling for hiring expectancies is important as individuals tend to elevate choices that are more likely to occur by inflating the positive aspects of that option and playing down the negative aspects, making them see the entire selection process in a more favorable light (Chapman & Webster, 2006). Hiring expectancy was measured with 4 items taken from Chapman, Uggerslev, and Webster (2003). All items used a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). An example item was “I am certain I will be offered a job with this organization.” Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .79$.

**Feedback Acceptance (T2).** Feedback acceptance was measured with five items developed by Tonidandel et al. (2002). Responses to each item were made on 7-point Likert-type scales with response options ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Example items for this scale were "The feedback I received was an accurate evaluation of my personality” and “I do not agree with the feedback provided” (R). Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .88$.

**Attitudes towards the organization (T2).** We examined two variables targeting attitudes towards the organization. Organizational attractiveness was measured with three items developed by Lievens and Highhouse (2003). Respondents rated these items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. An example item was “This company is attractive for me as a place for employment”. Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .77$. Willingness to recommend the organization (recommendation intentions) was measured with two items taken from Holz, Ployhart, and Dominguez (2004), namely "Based on my experiences with this test, I would encourage others to apply for employment in this organization", and "I would recommend this company to others looking for this type of job." Respondents rated these items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*. Internal consistency for this measure was $\alpha = .90$. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine whether our dependent variables were
empirically distinct. Goodness-of-fit indices showed that a two-factor CFA model produced an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2 (8) = 16.68, p < .00, \text{CFI} = .98$. Inspection of the factor loadings showed that each variable had a highly significant loading on the factor it was purported to measure, indicating satisfactory convergent validity. In addition, the discriminant validity of the measures was also good. This is evidenced by the fact that a one-factor model ($\chi^2 (9) = 30.26, p < .00, \text{CFI} = .95$) produced a significant worse fit to the data than the two-factor model ($\chi^2 (1) = 13.46, p < .00, \Delta \text{CFI} = .03$). This provides evidence that although the two constructs measured were conceptually related they are empirically distinct from each other.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and alpha reliability estimates for all study variables are presented in Table 1. Hiring expectancies were positively related to organizational attractiveness, recommendation intentions, and feedback acceptance ($p < .01$). Thus, a positive hiring expectancy, measured two weeks before outcome feedback was provided, spread a favorable halo over all other reactions and attitudes in the selection process. This confirms the importance of including hiring expectancy as a control variable in subsequent analyses.

We tested Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2a, and Hypothesis 3a using Baron and Kenny’s (1986) multi-step regression procedure. A 3-step analysis was conducted by (a) regressing the mediator (feedback acceptance) on the independent variable (outcome feedback), (b) regressing the dependent variables (attitudes toward the organization) on the independent variable (outcome feedback), and (c) regressing the dependent variables (attitudes toward the organization) on both the independent (outcome feedback) and mediator (feedback acceptance) variables. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), for “full” mediation to occur the independent variable must affect the mediator, the independent variable must be shown to affect the dependent variables, the mediator must affect the dependent variables, and the independent variable must no longer be significant when the mediator is included in the regression.
In Table 2, the mediational analyses are reported for the two dependent variables, organizational attractiveness and recommendation intentions. The independent variable (outcome feedback) significantly predicted the mediator (feedback acceptance). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Applicants receiving positive outcome feedback for the first selection stage reported higher levels of feedback acceptance ($b = 1.15, p < .01$). Outcome feedback also affected the attitudes towards the organization. The finding that a favorable outcome decision is a key determinant of organizational attraction ($b = .82, p < .01$) and recommendation intentions ($b = .81, p < .01$) is in line with previous research that demonstrated the importance of outcome decisions on applicant perceptions (e.g., Ryan & Ryan, 2000).

Hypothesis 2a was also supported. The mediator (feedback acceptance) predicted organizational attraction ($b = .43, p < .01$) and recommendation intention ($b = .62, p < .01$), even when controlling for hiring expectancy and outcome feedback. Thus, applicants feeling that the feedback received portrayed an accurate picture of their personality reported more favorable attitudes towards the organization.

More importantly, as can be seen in Step 3 of Table 2, the significant positive effect of the independent variable (outcome feedback) disappeared when the mediator (feedback acceptance) was taken into account. Thus, Hypothesis 3a was also supported: The impact of outcome feedback on attitudes towards the organization was fully mediated by acceptance of personality feedback. To further test these mediated path, a direct test of the full mediational path (Outcome feedback -> Feedback acceptance -> Attitudes toward the organization) was conducted. This Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) is a conservative test examining the significance of the product terms of the paths from the independent variable to the mediator as well as the path from the mediator to the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Results of the Sobel test showed that the indirect paths from outcome feedback to organizational attractiveness ($z = 4.79, p < .001$) and recommendation mediation ($z = 4.22, p < .001$) were significantly different from zero, so
mediation can be concluded for both dependent variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986), supporting the main hypothesis of this study.

Study 2

Study 1 highlighted the mediating role of feedback acceptance in the relationship between receiving informative feedback on a personality test and attitudes towards the hiring organization. However, this study was not without limitations. Given that both feedback acceptance and attitudes were measured using self-report measures, common source bias may to some extent be responsible for the correlations observed. In addition, the role-play character and the lack of information about the organization received by the participants (apart from the feedback information provided) may have intensified the effects of feedback acceptance on organizational attitudes. Therefore, we set up a second study where common method variance and lack of realism may be less of a problem.

Besides these methodological improvements, Study 2 also extended our findings in two other ways. As a first extension, we examine the mediating role of feedback acceptance in a different context and with a different test. Specifically, Study 2 tests the role of feedback acceptance in a training context wherein participants completed an in-basket exercise to receive an evaluation of their managerial competencies. This was done because applicant perceptions of selection procedures might vary strongly, with meta-analytic estimates showing less favorable perceptions towards personality tests than towards other selection procedures (Hausknecht et al., 2004). In addition, one could argue that feedback to personality tests is somewhat atypical as personality feedback provides a picture of more stable and dispositional characteristics that might be perceived as less controllable by applicants (except by faking). Thus, it is important to test whether Study 1 findings generalize to other selection procedures.

As a second extension, Study 2 focuses on actual test performance instead of on attitudinal measures (self-reported attraction to the organization). Accordingly, Study 2 adheres to recent calls to go beyond self-reported and perception outcomes (Chan & Schmitt, 2004; Hausknecht et al., 2004; Sackett & Lievens, 2008). To this end, participants
taking part in a social skills training program, completed two alternate versions of a
computerized in-basket exercise. After completing the first in-basket version and before
starting the second version, participants received informative feedback about their
performance and reported their perceptions of feedback accuracy. This design allowed us to
test the effect of feedback acceptance on subsequent test performance. Previous applicant
reactions studies have used similar parallel test designs as a strategy to examine the effects
of applicant reactions on subsequent test performance (e.g., Chan, Schmitt, DeShon,
Clause, & Delbridge, 1997).

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were a group of final-year master students that had voluntarily enrolled
in a series of training sessions on social skills and group dynamics organized by a Belgian
university. Students (N = 252) from different majors (e.g., engineering, agricultural and plant
sciences, communication studies, educational sciences) enrolled in the course. Participants
had an average age of 22.3 years (SD = 2.2); 65% were female, 35% male.

The course was advertised to students as a series of training sessions preparing
students for their entrance on the job market. Main study topics included communication,
teamwork, leadership, feedback, and conflict management approaches. Residential training
sessions were conducted in groups of 45 individuals and started with a screening session.
This screening aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of students’ standing on
training-related competencies. In this screening, candidates completed questionnaires, a
computerized in-basket exercise, and interviews. This screening was important for the
students because they knew that their results would be used as input for classifying them in
groups in the actual training session and for providing them with personal feedback during
the sessions. Students were also instructed to try to make a good impression and treat the
screening session as a practice opportunity for actual selection testing in which they might
participate in the future when they apply for a job after graduation. Results of a post-session
questionnaire (available from the authors) confirmed that candidates took this session seriously.

Measures

In-basket exercise. We used a computerized in-basket exercise simulating daily work activities that was adapted from Tett, Steele, and Beauregard (2003, see also Anseel & Lievens, 2006; Lievens & Anseel, 2007). This in-basket exercise consists of 10 memos and letters addressed to a General Manager of a hypothetical paint manufacturing plant. The exercise simulates, as closely as possible, the key features of an actual email software program (e.g., the opportunity to read and respond to emails in any order, ongoing access to organizational charts, appointment calendars, and background information). The emails cover a broad range of problems, including union difficulties, logistic issues, machine breakdown, dealings with city officials, and employee absenteeism. Participants received a careful and thorough set of instructions on the nature of the task and how to complete it.

For each email message, participants were provided with four response options to the message, and were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each option on a 1 (very ineffective) to 5 (very effective) scale. These responses were then scored on four managerial skills (problem awareness, coordinating, information management, and decisiveness) and a total score for each version of the in-basket was computed, representing overall managerial competence.

After completing the first version of the in-basket, participants received genuine informative feedback about their managerial skills as assessed on the first trial. Given that their effectiveness ratings were automatically scored and that they received instant feedback, there was no delay or waiting period between the end of the first trial and the reception of feedback. A short report was presented, including their scores on the four managerial skills and a brief explanatory text. These texts outlined in general terms the behavior of individuals who tend to score very high on these managerial skills. An example of the feedback report is included in Appendix A. A questionnaire measuring feedback acceptance for each skill was attached to the feedback report.
As it was our aim to examine whether performance on the web-based in-basket improved in relation to feedback acceptance, participants also completed an alternate version of the in-basket exercise that could be used to assess performance at Time 2 (Lievens & Anseel, 2007). This alternate version was developed on the basis of a cloning procedure. Various tests of the equivalency of these two alternate versions in other samples showed there were no significant differences between the overall in-basket scores across the alternate forms (Cohen’s $d = .03$). A sample item with its four response options from the original in-basket and the corresponding item with its four response options from the alternate form are presented in Appendix B.

**Feedback acceptance.** Feedback acceptance was measured with two items adapted from Tonidandel et al. (2002). The items used 7-point Likert-type response scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The items for this scale were: "The feedback I received was an accurate evaluation of my performance" and "I do not agree with the feedback provided" (R). The items were averaged over competencies to obtain a reliable measure of feedback acceptance. Internal consistency for this scale was .77.

**Results and Discussion**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the scales used in Study 2 are presented in Table 3. To test our hypotheses, we conducted the same mediational analysis as in Study 1. Participants’ score on in-basket Trial 1 (e.g., the feedback score) was significantly related to feedback acceptance ($b = 1.01$, $p < .01$), thus supporting Hypothesis 1. Participants reported higher feedback accuracy for favorable feedback ratings. Hypothesis 2b was also supported: Feedback acceptance predicted in-basket performance on Trial 2 even when controlling for participants’ scores on Version 1 ($b = .27$, $p < .01$). Thus, participants reporting higher accuracy of feedback scored better on subsequent test performance, illustrating that applicant reactions might indeed be related to behavior.

Finally, to examine whether feedback acceptance mediated the relationship between feedback and performance (Hypothesis 3b) we conducted a multiple regression analysis with in-basket Trial 2 performance scores as a dependent variable and feedback scores and
feedback acceptance as predictors. Both feedback scores and feedback acceptance were significant predictors of in-basket Trial 2 performance as the independent variable (feedback scores) remained significant in Step 2 of the hierarchical regression (see Table 4). Hence, hypothesis 3b was only partially supported. The impact of feedback on performance was partially mediated by participants’ feedback acceptance. Actually, the finding that feedback scores remained significant is not entirely unexpected. The feedback scores participants received were their actual performance scores on Trial 1. Performance scores on Trial 1 and Trial 2 were highly correlated ($r = .47$, $p < .01$). So, performance on Trial 1 was a logical predictor of performance on Trial 2. In sum, Study 2 also highlighted the important role of feedback acceptance in determining test performance. Participants receiving favorable feedback reported higher feedback acceptance, which in turn led to higher test performance on an alternate test.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to increase our understanding of applicant perceptions of informative feedback by drawing upon a well-established feedback process model. This model has proposed that feedback affects individual attitudes and behavioral outcomes through its effect on individuals’ perceptions of feedback accuracy. Two studies were conducted in different contexts (selection and training) and with different dependent variables (attitudinal versus performance). Generally, results of two studies are pointing in the same direction as they supported our hypotheses.

Study 1 showed that the effects of outcome feedback on attitudes towards the organization were mediated by participants’ perceptions of feedback accuracy. Study 2 showed that the effect of informative feedback on subsequent alternate test performance was partially mediated by participants’ perceptions of feedback accuracy. It seems that feedback provided during selection procedures might have beneficial effects on attitudes towards the organization and performance provided that applicants perceive the informative feedback to be accurate. These results parallel findings in other feedback situations such as performance appraisal (Kinicki et al., 2004), and multi-source feedback (Atwater & Brett,
Together, these findings show that feedback process models might be fruitfully used to increase our understanding of people’s perceptions towards feedback in selection situations.

From a theoretical perspective, these results suggest that research on applicant perceptions of feedback might benefit from taking insights from feedback research into account. Our results show that more attention should be paid to informative feedback in selection procedures. Applicants often receive more detailed feedback about their performance on selection tests than a straightforward outcome decision, for instance, after assessment centers (Lievens & Klimoski, 2001; Thornton & Rupp, 2005). However, very little research has actually looked at the effects of providing informative feedback on perceptions and behavior. Feedback research suggests several interesting lines of research. For example, future research should examine how informative feedback might best be framed and provided in selection procedures to attain the best short-term reactions. Along these lines, recent feedback research demonstrated that employees who received numeric/normative feedback reacted more favorably than those who received text feedback (Atwater & Brett, 2006). However, providing informative feedback might also have some long-term effects that should be taken into account. In fact, recent research also showed that increasing feedback specificity, although beneficial for immediate performance, can undermine certain aspects of the learning needed for subsequent performance (Goodman & Wood, 2004). Furthermore, in contrast to applicant perceptions research, feedback research has heavily focused on the motivational processing underlying receipt of informative feedback. For instance, depending on their dominant goal orientation (e.g., Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003), employees may be looking for and may be more accepting of different types of feedback. Similarly, according to the situational cues that are present in a feedback context different motives might be activated leading to different feedback reactions (Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007). Given that selection procedures are also feedback processes, we believe that similar motivational processes might be activated in applicant reactions and future research should take a closer look at the motives that are activated in applicants during the selection process.
From a practical perspective, the finding that the relationship between feedback, on the one hand, and organizational perceptions and test performance, on the other hand, is mediated by feedback acceptance opens up new opportunities for mitigating the negative effects of unfavorable selection decisions in practice. It might be that simply providing detailed informative feedback to applicants is not enough. Our findings seem to indicate that feedback should be provided in such a way that applicants are more inclined to accept the feedback message, especially after unfavorable outcome and informative feedback. If organizations would succeed in developing strategies for enhancing feedback acceptance among applicants, the relationship between negative outcome decisions and organizational perceptions might be disconnected leading to more positive applicant perceptions after negative decisions. Therefore, future research should examine how organizations might enhance feedback acceptance, especially after unfavorable feedback messages. A potential fruitful avenue for future studies would be applying insights from feedback research in organizational and social psychology to selection research. The problem of enhancing feedback acceptance of feedback recipients has received quite some attention in feedback research (e.g., Brett & Atwater, 2001; Ilgen & Davis, 2000). One promising variable for designing specific acceptance strategies seems to be instigating a deeper elaboration of feedback. Social psychological research shows that self-enhancement tendencies prevail when people lack the time and cognitive resources to analyze the obtained feedback. However, when people are motivated or requested to actively process and elaborate feedback, self-enhancement strivings go down, possibly leading to higher levels of feedback acceptance (Hixon & Swann, 1993; Paulhus, Graf, & Van Selst, 1989; Swann, Hixton, Stein-Seroussi, & Gilbert, 1990). Therefore, it might be a good idea for organizations to ensure that applicants take time to deeply analyze and process the feedback provided during selection.

A number of limitations should be noted. First, our studies included master students taking part in a simulated selection process and a training situation, which may limit the generalizability of the findings obtained. Whereas our participants appeared highly motivated to perform well, they were not applying for an actual job. Recent meta-analytical evidence
suggests that the findings obtained in hypothetical contexts generalize relatively well to authentic organization contexts, although the average correlations between justice variables (e.g., perceived fairness) and outcome variables that are related to future behavior (e.g., recommendation intentions) are found to be stronger in hypothetical contexts (Hausknecht et al., 2004; but see also Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). We also disposed of an indication of possible demand characteristics. When asked about their general comments after the session in both studies, none of the participants wrote down a comment that was in any way related to the purpose of the studies. All comments were directed at obtaining more information about selection instruments and general suggestions for improving the session, indicating that people had no direct suspicions about the objective of the studies. In short, the current study contributes to previous research by showing that feedback acceptance can influence both attitudes towards the organization and test performance, but their generalizability to actual applicant populations cannot be uncritically assumed. Knowing this relationship is possible, as shown in the current study, allows for further exploration of these mediated processes and effects in natural settings.

Second, we only assessed applicants’ short term perceptions and behaviors. Recently, scholars have suggested that it is important for future applicant reactions research to focus on negative and positive psychological effects (e.g., psychological well-being, general mental health) of selection methods in the long term (Anderson, 2004; Anderson & Goltsi, 2006). In addition, we did not address possible changes in self-perceptions (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem) during the selection process. Previous studies found that providing (negative) feedback might also have a series of unanticipated side effects not examined or documented in this study. For instance, previous research showed that performance feedback might actually harm applicants’ self-perceptions (Schinkel et al., 2004). We believe it is important for future research to study feedback acceptance in close relationship with possible changes in self-perceptions in the long term.

Third, no other procedural justice perceptions were measured in this study, making it difficult to evaluate the influence of feedback perceptions beyond more traditional justice
measures. The main aim of this study was to examine whether feedback acceptance has the potential to play a key role in determining applicant reactions. The converging evidence of our two studies suggests it does. The next step is to integrate these insights of feedback research into existing conceptual frameworks of applicant reactions (e.g., Gilliland, 1993 Hausknecht et al., 2004). Future research should examine how feedback acceptance interacts with other procedural justices factors in determining applicant reactions and performance. Recent feedback research suggests that feedback acceptance might fit nicely with a justice model of applicant perceptions. A number of feedback studies have shown that procedural justice and fairness perceptions were related to feedback acceptance after performance appraisal (Elicker, Levy, & Hall, 2006; Leung et al., 2001; Roberson & Stewart, 2006). However, future research is needed in this area to reveal whether justice perceptions are antecedents (e.g., Elicker et al., 2006) or outcomes (e.g., Roberson & Stewart, 2006) of feedback acceptance.

Conclusion

These studies add to previous applicant perceptions research by drawing on insights from feedback process models, suggesting that feedback acceptance plays a key role in explaining the effects of feedback in selection on subsequent attitudes toward the organization and test performance. Given the central role of feedback in selection situations, these studies indicate that a closer look at feedback acceptance and feedback processes occurring during selection is warranted. In the long term, a better insight in selection situations as feedback processes might lead to new strategies for organizations to enhance applicant perceptions in selection.
References


Goldberg, L.R. (1999). A broad-bandwidth, public-domain, personality inventory measuring the lower-level facets of several five-factor models. In I. Mervielde, I. Deary, F. De
Fruyt, & F. Ostendorf (Eds.), *Personality psychology in Europe* (Vol. 7, pp. 7-28).


Appendix A

Example of Feedback Report for Dimension “Coordinating”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> This competency indicates that you organize the activities of subordinates and allocates the necessary resources for these activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expert:</strong> People who score high on this competency typically give specific assignments to their subordinates. They schedule appointments and meetings to promote the productive use of time. They emphasize efficiency by establishing efficient work routines and by integrating multiple tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Your score:</strong> 15 / 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Example of Original Web-Based In-Basket Item

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>From: Eric Danforth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 06/17/05</td>
<td>Eric Danforth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subject:** Upcoming Conference

Patrick,

Last week Mr. Green arranged a meeting for July 2 regarding a new line of wind-resistant paints for use in the aviation industry. I realize my input would be valuable at this stage, but I've been planning since last fall to attend a conference in Boise, Idaho July 1-3 on new paint manufacturing processes. Is there any way the meeting could be postponed until after the 7th?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.</th>
<th>B.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's rather difficult to postpone this meeting as Mr. Green is coming to our plant to attend this meeting. Is it possible to cancel your trip to Boise? Let's take some time to consider, I'll ask Mr. Green and let you know what he thinks.</td>
<td>Indeed, it is probably more important for our company that you will attend the conference in Boise. If I understand correctly, the conference deals with the same innovativeness topic as our meeting. So, we will benefit from hearing the results of the conference and postpone our meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.</th>
<th>D.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not think the Boise-conference is that important. It's mostly advertising for larger companies. I wouldn't worry too much about attending the conference. I think it's better to proceed with our meeting as planned.</td>
<td>I can see that you have been planning this conference for some time now and that it takes priority. I will postpone the meeting to July 14th. Mr. Green is aware of our priorities and won't make a problem of this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Patrick,

You’ll probably know we have arranged a meeting with all production supervisors for July 15th. We agreed to discuss in this meeting how we might improve customized production of industrial coatings. However, at the same day, there’s an exhibition in Chicago on coating applications in the building industry, which I like to attend. I wondered if it would be possible to schedule our meeting at another day?

A. It’s kind of hard to reschedule this meeting as all production supervisors have already confirmed their presence. Have you already made appointments with sales people at that exhibition? I’ll first check with all other supervisors and then get back to you. So, we’ll have to wait and see.

B. Customized production of industrial coatings should become one of our core activities in the next years. This exhibition sounds like a good opportunity to follow-up recent trends. I think it’s best if we schedule our meeting after the exhibition. You’ll input at our meeting is bound to be important.

C. I don’t think much of these exhibitions. In my experience, you’ll mostly find publicity stands at this exhibition. You’ll probably won’t learn anything you don’t already know. So, I think it’s better that our meeting takes place as originally scheduled.

D. I understand that this exhibition might be of particular interest to you and therefore, you’d like to be present. I’ll reschedule the meeting to next week (26th). The production supervisors will recognize the importance of this exhibition and will agree to reschedule.
It should be noted that a large group of studies have conceptualized feedback as outcome feedback (passing or failing the employment test). These studies have provided strong evidence for the effect of outcome feedback on applicant perceptions (for a review, see Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Although the final outcome decision may be the most important type of information applicants are looking for, it provides applicants only with dichotomized information (pass vs. reject) about their performance on the selection procedures. Perceptions of fairness of outcome feedback (i.e. distributive justice) that were often measured in previous studies are different from perceptions of feedback accuracy (i.e. feedback acceptance). For instance, it might be that candidates feel that an in-basket exercise as part of a selection procedure portrayed an accurate picture of their competencies, but that they find it unfair not to have passed the test and not have gotten the job. In contrast, it might be that candidates think it is fair that they passed the test and got the job, but feel that the informative feedback did not accurately reflect their competencies.
Table 1
*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients of Study 1.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
<th>5.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Outcome feedback</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Hiring expectancy</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>(.79)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attractiveness</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>(.77)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recommendation intention</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>(.90)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Feedback acceptance</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.60**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 125. * p < .05, ** p < .01.*
### Table 2

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Feedback Acceptance as Mediator of Outcome Feedback Effect on Attitudes towards the Organization in Study 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Organizational Attraction</th>
<th>Recommendation Intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
<td>SE (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect of Outcome Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>.09**</td>
<td>.08**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring Expectancy</td>
<td>.31   .10</td>
<td>.26**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Feedback</td>
<td>.21** .14**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass vs. Reject</td>
<td>.82  .17</td>
<td>.38**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediation by Feedback Acceptance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>.38** .29**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback Acceptance</td>
<td>.43  .07</td>
<td>.48**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome Feedback</td>
<td>.40** .02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass vs. Reject</td>
<td>.32  .18</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note N = 125. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$. 

Feedback acceptance 38
Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficients of Study 2.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mean Score T1 (feedback)</td>
<td>13.16</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mean Score T2</td>
<td>14.49</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feedback Acceptance</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.15*</td>
<td>.24**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 252. *p < .05, **p < .01. T1 = in-basket exercise Trial 1, T2 = in-basket exercise Trial 2*
Table 4

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Feedback Acceptance as Mediator of Informative Feedback Effect on Test Performance Trial 2 in Study 2.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Informative Feedback</th>
<th>Feedback score</th>
<th>Mediator</th>
<th>Feedback Acceptance</th>
<th>Test Performance Trial 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$B$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.61 .07 .47**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Mediator</td>
<td>.06**</td>
<td>.27 .09 .18**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Informative Feedback</td>
<td>.26** .20**</td>
<td>.58 .07 .45**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Feedback score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 252. *p < .05, **p < .01. Trial 1 performance scores are equal to the feedback scores individuals received. Thus, by including feedback scores as a predictor, we also controlled for prior performance.*