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PREVIEW

Effects of Different Types of Performance Appraisal
Information on Self-Efficacy and Job Preference

by

Randy L. Fulton

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Interdepartmental Area of
Psychological and Cultural Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Roger H. Bruning

Lincoln, Nebraska

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DISSERTATION TITLE

Effects of Different Types of Performance Appraisal

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BY

Randy Lee Fulton

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

APPROVED

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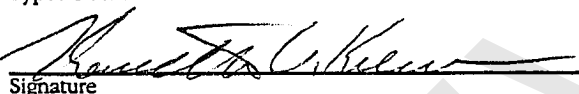


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Effects of Different Types of Performance Appraisal
Information on Self-Efficacy and Job Preference

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University of Nebraska, 1995

Advisor: Roger H. Bruning

This study explored changes in individuals' confidence for job performance as a function of performance evaluation methods. It was proposed that individuals would change their confidence judgments after they learned about the methods used to collect information regarding teacher performance at two schools.

Participants were college students taking coursework leading toward education-related employment. These participants reviewed evaluation guidelines of two hypothetical schools under the assumption that they were considering employment in one school or the other. The schools differed in that one focused performance evaluation on directly observable teacher behaviors whereas the other focused evaluation on the end-products remaining following teachers' efforts.

Baseline teacher-efficacy was assessed after the participants read a generic teacher job description. Then participants' teacher-efficacy was reassessed following their exposure to each of the performance evaluation guidelines used by the different schools.

Results showed increases in participants' teacher-efficacy in the low-efficacy group, but not in the high-efficacy group. Participants with low teacher-efficacy showed increases in efficacy following review of guidelines for either evaluation method. Participants with high teacher-efficacy showed no change from baseline efficacy levels. Contrary to two hypotheses of the study, reduction in teacher-efficacy did not occur when participants with low teacher-efficacy reviewed the end-product-based method or when participants with high teacher-efficacy reviewed the direct-observation-based method. Neither low nor high teacher-efficacy participants showed a preference for employment in a school using a particular evaluation method.

Sensitivity of low-efficacy individuals to evaluation information suggests that interventions and training should be tailored to an individual's initial efficacy level. Furthermore, interventions that are successful with low-efficacy individuals may not be effective when used with high-efficacy individuals. It is suggested that researchers need to use baseline efficacy measures to define their sample populations and the sample population's confidence in dealing with tasks used in their research manipulations.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This study explores changes in applicants' confidence that they can do a job following their review of different performance evaluation methods. In social cognitive psychological literature, self-efficacy is the term defining this confidence that a job can be successfully performed (Bandura, 1977; 1986). Based on personal judgments, people engage in activities that they believe they can perform and avoid those for which they judge themselves incapable (Bandura, 1977). People with high efficacy who judge themselves to be capable prefer difficult, but attainable goal situations, whereas people with low efficacy avoid difficult situations (Bandura & Wood, 1989). These efficacy estimates, which vary from situation to situation, form primarily through cumulative experience of performing in a variety of situations (Bandura, 1986; Shaw, Dzewaltowski, & McElroy, 1992).

Although exploration of self-efficacy formation in mental health and task performance research is common, self-efficacy in organizational settings is largely unexplored (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). This lack of exploration seems especially evident as it relates to people's baseline efficacy when they are considering entry into an organization. In a situation where they are considering organizational entry, individuals make initial situation-specific self-efficacy

judgments regarding their capability to perform up to the organization's expectations.

In this study, it is proposed that learning how information will be collected to evaluate their performance (i.e., the evaluation method) would change individuals' self-efficacy judgments. To explore the effect of acquiring this knowledge without additional task performance feedback, the study focused on changes in job applicants' efficacy judgments following their review of performance expectations and evaluation methods before accepting a hypothetical job. If these potential employees know the evaluation method in use, will it affect their self-efficacy judgments for doing the job and their decision to take one job over another?

The employment context within which this study examined this question was the acceptance of a hypothetical teaching position following a review of two potential evaluation methods that discriminate one job from the other. The participants in this study were 118 college students taking coursework leading toward certification as a teacher or other education-related employment. In one hypothetical job setting, the proposed method of performance evaluation focused on first hand or direct-observation of the teacher's classroom activity. For example, the evaluator using direct observation might watch a class to see examples of how the teacher guides students to get the best grade possible.

In the alternate setting, the prospective teachers learned that methods of evaluation would review evidence of good teaching or the end-products of their effort (e.g., student grades, parent surveys, school records). The assumption is that getting a good evaluation with this method is more difficult and challenging due to the use of second hand reports (e.g., surveys) and the absence of immediate feedback during the evaluation caused by the delays between the teacher's performances and evaluation of the end-products.

The hypotheses of the study examine whether knowledge of two different evaluation methods affects estimates of efficacy and preferences for one evaluation method over the other. The specific prediction was that high-efficacy individuals prefer end-product-based methods because these methods allow opportunities and autonomy to use many teaching strategies. These high-efficacy participants also were expected to increase their efficacy estimates after comparing their skills to the specific evaluation items used in the end-product evaluation method. Review of the items forming the direct-observation method was expected to result in no efficacy judgment changes.

Low-efficacy individuals, in contrast, were predicted to prefer direct observation and to increase their efficacy estimates after reviewing the direct-observation methods. Reviewing end-product-based methods was expected to lower

the efficacy estimates of low-efficacy individuals due to the potential complexity of the task, personal distrust in the situation, the method's distal focus, and the limited potential to control the evaluator's perceptions.

PREVIEW

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy idea has only recently become a focus in organizational research (Bobko & Colella, 1994; Gist & Mitchell, 1992; Gist, 1987; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Central to this focus is a growing recognition of self-efficacy as a precursor to future performance. That is, employees who believe that they can perform an activity, do perform (Sadri & Robertson, 1993; Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991) and are persistent in their performance efforts (e.g., Bandura, 1986). When seeking and accepting employment, applicants compare their knowledge, skills, and experience to the role expectations of the prospective employer and form their initial beliefs regarding their performance potential.

The literature reviewed for this dissertation considers the nature of self-efficacy and self-efficacy research related to an organizational environment. Forming and changing self-efficacy estimates are particularly important to the research questions posed. Due to the situational specificity of self-efficacy judgments and the population sample used, literature unique to teachers' self-efficacy judgments is reviewed separately. Similarly, some discussion of performance evaluation is necessary.

Self-Efficacy Defined

Self-efficacy is a recent concept within social

cognitive learning theory (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy refers to individuals' confidence they can successfully perform in a task situation. Results of performance in the task situation form self-efficacy judgments. That is, through interactions of an individual's behavior, the environmental context, and individual cognitive judgments, individuals form a personal record of how well they have performed and are likely to perform in similar situations (Bandura, 1977). Much of the research in self-efficacy focuses on mental health situations (i.e., phobia treatment) and academic achievement (Bandura, 1986; Schunk, 1991).

As a construct referring to an individual's belief that he or she can meet situational demands by mobilizing personal motivation, knowledge, and skills or abilities (Wood and Bandura, 1989), self-efficacy is a precursor to a person's approach or avoidance behavior (Bandura, 1986). Individuals with high self-efficacy seek out activities for which they possess high self-efficacy; in fact, these individuals prefer more difficult performance challenges than do those with low self-efficacy (Mone & Baker, 1992). Also, individuals with high self-efficacy use more efficient coping styles and less emotion when approaching problem situations (Rippetoe & Rogers, 1987). They tend to interpret goal-induced physiological arousal as an indication of personal motivation (Gellatly & Meyer, 1992). High-efficacy individuals also trust others (Bandura, 1986).

If high self-efficacy persons approach activities, prefer challenges, cope effectively, trust others, display less emotion, and interpret physical arousal as positive motivational information, what are the characteristics of low-efficacy persons? In contrast to high-efficacy individuals, persons experiencing low self-efficacy avoid task performance they believe beyond their capabilities (Bandura, 1986). They also perceive emotional arousal associated with task performance as anxiety and because of this may shift their attentional resources away from effort in the task situation toward non-task activities such as, worrying (Gellatly & Meyer, 1992). Similarly, emotional responses, like giving up in frustration, are noted when low-efficacy individuals face situational threats (Rippetoe & Rogers, 1987). Low-efficacy persons also tend to distrust others (Bandura, 1986). Table 1 compares high and low-efficacy individuals on these characteristics and others discussed later in this literature review.

Development of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy estimates vary in magnitude, strength, and generalizability across situations because these estimates are specific estimates of performance capabilities in particular contexts (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, self-efficacy increases as individuals experience success in

Table 1

A cumulative list of characteristics attributable
to high and low self-efficacy persons.

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Efficacy Level</u>	
	<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>
Self-confidence	Yes	No
Belief in capabilities	High	Low
Need to control	Low	High
Perseverance	High	Low
Goal preference	Difficult	Easy
Orientation to challenge	Approach	Avoidance
Willingness to challenge	High	Low
Strategy use	High	Low
Coping skills	High	Low
Trusts situational contexts	Yes	No
Interpretation of emotional arousal	Motivation	Anxiety
Perception of potential in a situation	Opportunity	Threat
Response when negative information is learned	Effective	Ineffective
Belief about personal teaching effectiveness	High	Low
Belief about effectiveness of educational systems	Low	High

performing specific tasks or activities (Bandura, 1977; 1986; Shaw et al., 1992). Changes in the perception of success or failure result in altered self-efficacy judgments relevant to the situation that typically does not generalize to dissimilar situations. Persuading yourself that you are efficacious relies on integration of several kinds of performance information (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1982) has proposed that four types of performance feedback cues influence self-efficacy's development: enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and individuals' perceptions of their physiological state. As these types of feedback are explained, examples of the feedback related to educational settings are provided.

Feedback through repeated performance accomplishment is the most effective way to build self-efficacy (Wood & Bandura, 1989). This enactive mastery builds efficacy judgments as obstacles are overcome successfully with perseverant effort. Neither success with ease nor with extreme effort builds perceptions of efficacious ability to manage setbacks and failures (Bandura, 1986). For example, as teachers successfully accomplish their lesson plan goals despite class disruptions, their efficacy as planners increases. Yet, if these teachers consistently exceed the expectations laid out in their plans, the ease with which they exceed their expectations does not change their efficacy perceptions.

Vicarious experience, or feedback obtained by observing models succeed at activities, conveys strategies that the observer can successfully employ to manage a situation (Wood & Bandura, 1989). These observations allow observers to compare their skills with other performers and to decide the potential for their success if they attempt the task. Just as observing a successful model can build efficacy beliefs, observing failure can lower efficacy beliefs. A good example of vicarious feedback in the educational setting is a teacher stopping outside another classroom to watch another teacher's activity. While observing, the teacher can learn new ways to present material and compare his or her skills to the teacher being observed.

Feedback through verbal or social persuasion, for example encouragement from a student's parents, is the third way that efficacy is built (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Persuasion encourages greater effort or shapes efficacious performance by encouraging successive approximations of the desired performance. Individuals' confidence grows as they receive feedback that performance of increasingly complex activities is successful.

The fourth and least effective type of feedback cue that can build self-efficacy is an individual's interpretation of emotional arousal (Wood & Bandura, 1989). That is, reducing stress levels, enhancing physical stamina, or interpreting physiological information as evidence of success or failure