

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Candidates' reactions to job application rejections at different phases of the recruitment process: The impact of employability and communication delays on perceived fairness and recruitment selection outcomes

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## Abstract

This study investigates the impact of communication delays and recruitment selection stages on candidates' perceptions of fairness and recruitment selection outcomes and explores the moderating role of employability. Employing a mixed-method approach across two independent studies involving 264 and 259 mid-level position candidates, two variables – communication timeliness and recruitment stages – are manipulated, while employability is investigated as a moderating variable. Our results indicate that timely communication of rejection, especially during the initial selection stages, significantly enhances candidates' satisfaction, fairness perceptions, intentions to reapply, and intentions to recommend the organisation to others. Employability moderates the relationship between perceived fairness and recruitment outcomes, strongly influencing the likelihood of peer referrals and reapplication intentions. These findings underscore the importance of strategic communication management in recruitment selection processes to enhance employer branding and the job candidate experience.

**Keywords:** recruiting and training; communication; human resource management; HRM strategies

## Introduction

Personnel selection processes are designed to facilitate the hiring of high-quality candidates and to ensure a positive applicant experience (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000) while minimising negative psychological impact on those who receive a rejection decision (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011). Many researchers highlight that it is vital for organisations to be aware of the negative consequences that inadequately managed selection and communication processes can have on a company's reputation (Miles & McCamey, 2018), and they recommend referencing candidates' perspectives, figuratively walking in their shoes and thus understanding how the values that candidates expect and seek evolve, along with the service standards regarding clarity, respect, and collaboration. Effective management of the communication process during job candidate selection is fundamental for decreasing the costs associated with a decline in the organisation's reputation and peer referrals among candidates, as well as the associated costs of directly improving people management processes (DeCenzo, Robbins & Verhulst, 2016). Monitoring and understanding candidates' reactions to recruitment selection outcomes has

become an increasingly common practice and is essential for its direct benefits, such as reduced legal expenses, improved indicators of intent to reapply, and fewer boycotts (Miles & McCamey, 2018).

This research advances our understanding of the recruitment selection process by systematically examining the impact of communication delay and procedural recruitment selection stages on candidates' perceptions of fairness and ensuing selection outcomes (i.e., applicants' feelings of satisfaction with the process, of reapplying, and of recommending the company to peers). Furthermore, this study addresses a significant research gap by empirically testing the interrelation between procedural fairness and employability, which has been theoretically postulated but rarely explored in real-world recruitment settings. The research draws on Gilliland's fairness model (Anderson, Salgado & Hülshager, 2010; Gilliland, 1993) to investigate the causal link between procedural fairness and selection outcomes. To achieve this, a mixed-method approach was employed, combining a study with a semi-experimental design – in which communication delays and the recruitment selection stages were systematically manipulated – with an observational study conducted in a real-world recruitment context. Our findings supply practical insights that will help organisations refine communication timelines and tailor their recruitment selection processes to improve candidate satisfaction, reapplication rates, and the organisation's employer brand.

### *Importance of candidates' perspectives, fairness, and outcomes*

The concept of candidates' perspectives, which encompasses attitudes, affective responses, and cognitive evaluations regarding the hiring process (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000), has garnered significant attention in the field of personnel selection research on a global scale. The most influential theoretical framework in the literature on candidates' perspectives and reactions was developed based on the research contributions of Gilliland's (1993) organisational justice and fairness model. Based on this approach, candidates' reactions to employment selection systems are influenced by their perceptions of fairness throughout the entire recruitment selection process, and they are rooted in notions of procedural and distributive justice, which ultimately shape their perceptions of system-based fairness and impact individual and organisational outcomes (Hülshager & Anderson, 2009; Truxillo, Bauer, McCarthy, Anderson & Ahmed, 2018).

As highlighted by McCarthy *et al.* (2017), perceived fairness can influence attitudes towards elements such as job and organisational attractiveness (e.g., Van Vianen, Taris, Scholten & Schinkel, 2004), satisfaction with the recruitment selection process (e.g., Hausknecht, Day & Thomas, 2004), candidate intentions regarding job acceptance and job pursuit (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin & Jones, 2005), peer referral intentions (e.g., Feeney, McCarthy, Daljeet & Goffin, 2023), and behaviours such as job offer acceptance and performance (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004) – even after 18 months (Konradt, Warszta & Ellwart, 2013).

The critical nature of manageable actions and states that impact candidates' perspectives is evidenced by the crucial nexus between candidates' fairness perceptions, recruitment selection process communications, corporate reputation, and employer branding, which is robustly supported by research findings in the literature (Miles & McCamey, 2018).

The empirical evidence indicates that the relationships between candidates' perceptions of fairness and selection outcomes are impacted by different individual, organisational, and contextual factors (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). Taking into consideration the complexities of real-world recruitment selection environments and aligning with the theoretical foundations of selection fairness theory (Gilliland, 1993), this research is designed to explore the fundamental elements influencing candidate reactions and outcomes. More specifically, this study involves an examination of selected procedures and characteristics of an organisations' communications – including factors such as communication delays and recruitment selection stages, as well as individual characteristics – that can shape how applicants perceive and react to a recruitment selection process.

### *Organisational communication characteristics and procedures that influence candidate experience: rejection letter and rejection procedure*

Framing the relationship between job applicants and an organisation within the fairness approach (Gilliland, 1993) and the pragmatics of organisational communication (Waung & Brice, 2000), it is possible to affirm that feedback during the recruitment selection process strongly influences candidates' perceptions of fairness. Feedback can be defined as a provided response to an action or situation, and during the recruitment selection process, it plays a role in minimising the psychological impact that an unfavourable selection decision may have on a job candidate (Schinkel, Van Dierendonck & Anderson, 2004).

Rejection communication greatly impacts the candidate's experience and can mitigate the perceived interpersonal rejection associated with conveying non-hire decisions (Thominet, 2020). Furthermore, rejection communication shapes the intentions and behaviours of candidates towards the organisation (Waung & Brice, 2007) and significantly impacts organisational outcomes and organisation's image (Schinkel et al., 2004).

In the literature, different aspects of rejection communication that can influence candidates' perspectives have been identified. Some studies have focused chiefly on the content of rejection letters examining elements such as the clarity of the content (Schinkel et al., 2004), formal versus informal formula, customised versus generalised formula (Cortini, Galanti & Barattucci, 2019), detailed reasons for rejection (Aamodt, 2016; Gilliland et al., 2001; Jansen & Janssen, 2010a), positively versus negatively framed explanations or wording (Bian, Lin, Gao, Li & Yang, 2020; Feinberg, Meoli-Stanton & Gable, 1996), polite mitigating sentences (Barešová, 2008), indirect versus direct structure of the letter (Jansen & Janssen, 2010b), and absence of a designated contact person in the text (Schinkel et al., 2004). Other studies focused on the impact of highly procedural communication characteristics on candidates' perspectives, such as failure to send rejection letters (Schinkel et al., 2004), certain aspects of the customisation of the communications (e.g., personally addressed notifications; Aamodt, 2016), the time interval between application and decision (Speer, King & Grossenbacher, 2016; Waung & Brice, 2000), and communication delays (Cortini et al., 2019; Gilliland, 1995).

Communication delay primarily refers to the time lag between stages in the recruitment selection process, especially between the employer initiating communication with a candidate and the candidates receiving and responding to the communication (Carless & Hetherington, 2011).

A previous study has confirmed the moderating role of certain characteristics of the rejection letter; among various factors, the timing of sending the communication letter has an apparent impact on fairness perceptions and recruitment outcomes (Cortini et al., 2019). When the latency time of a rejection letter fell within the 2 weeks from the applicant's sending of their application, candidates reported higher fairness perceptions and outcome values compared to those who received their rejection letter after longer durations. However, the delays in this study were excessively disparate (ranging between 2 weeks and 2 months from submission of their curriculum vitae). Therefore, in this research, we chose to re-examine the effect of communication delays that fell within more realistic parameters: a response time falling within 1 week was considered acceptable, and 2 weeks was considered an excessive response time. Drawing on the literature (Gilliland, 1995), it is reasonable to expect that candidates who receive rejection communications within acceptable response times should report higher fairness and outcomes values than candidates with excessive response times.

Based on the aforementioned rationale, we hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Communication delays in rejection communications (acceptable vs. excessive) impact the candidate's perceptions of (Hypothesis 1a) fairness, (Hypothesis 1b) satisfaction with the process, (Hypothesis 1c) intention to recommend, and (Hypothesis 1d) intention to reapply.

Some relevant studies posit that perceptions of fairness may change between different stages in the recruitment selection process, both because they represent different mental phases for the candidates

(Konradt, Oldeweme, Krys & Otte, 2020) and because the candidates accumulate information and experiences regarding the company and its recruitment selection process that, in turn, possibly modulate candidates' fairness perceptions (Chan & Schmitt, 2004; Ployhart & Harold, 2004); however, there is limited evidence on the direction of this change (Uggerslev, Fassina & Kraichy, 2012). Two previous studies performed in real-world recruitment selection contexts report a – not entirely linear – tendency for the perceived levels of fairness to worsen as the recruiting process progresses (Butucescu & Iliescu, 2018; Konradt *et al.*, 2020). Another previous study (Cortini *et al.*, 2019) explores the impact of rejection letter characteristics and examines several variables across different stages of the recruitment selection process. Regrettably, due to limitations – in the form of the research design and the sample size – they were unable to ascertain the actual differences in impact between these stages. However, based on the findings of other studies in the literature (Aamodt, 2016; Uggerslev *et al.*, 2012), it seems reasonable to expect that as the recruitment process progresses through its selection stages, the motivation of the candidates increases, as does their emotional attachment and attention to communications, which would make the communication of a rejection increasingly painful to process and, consequently, negatively impact candidates' fairness perceptions. Therefore, candidates who receive rejection communications in the early stages of the recruitment process (e.g., the resume screening stage) should report higher fairness and outcomes values than candidates who receive such communication in later stages of the recruitment selection process (e.g., the interview stage).

Consequently, it seems logical to hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Candidate's perceptions of (Hypothesis 2a) fairness, (Hypothesis 2b) satisfaction with the process, (Hypothesis 2c) intention to recommend, and (Hypothesis 2d) intention to reapply worsen with progressive recruitment selection stages.

### *Individual characteristics influencing candidates' experiences: the role of employability*

In the literature, the importance of paying significant attention to candidates' personal characteristics (i.e., individual differences) as determinants of candidates' reactions has been extensively highlighted in critical reviews (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000) and proposed as a focal point for future research (Chan & Schmitt, 2004). However, a recent review by McCarthy *et al.* (2017) found that among the individual differences that can moderate the relationship between perspectives and outcomes, only personality (Merkulova *et al.*, 2014), ethnicity, gender (Truxillo & Bauer, 2011), and emotional intelligence (Whitman *et al.*, 2014) are significant.

Furthermore, candidates tend to rely on their individual characteristics and previous experiences to evaluate the recruitment selection procedures (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000); thus, experiencing rejection can cause candidates to doubt their self-worth and professional capabilities (Thominet, 2020). In this context, self-perceived employability can be defined as an individual asset or personal resource linked to perceptions of the possibility of securing and maintaining a job and achieving career goals (Forrier, De Cuyper & Akkermans, 2018; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Employability appears to be a critical factor in the shaping of individuals' career expectations and their ability to achieve long-term career goals such as securing employment (Nghia, Singh, Pham & Medica, 2020). Employability has been linked to various work-related attitudes and behaviours, including job search and re-employment (McArdle, Waters, Briscoe & Hall, 2007), the quality of employer–employee relationships (Martini, Riva & Marafioti, 2023), turnover intentions (Yu *et al.*, 2021), and organisational satisfaction (Lodi, Zammitti, Magnano, Patrizi & Santisi, 2020).

Employability has been shown to play a moderating role between job insecurity and satisfaction (Kalyal, Berntson, Baraldi, Näswall & Sverke, 2010; Yeves, Bargsted, Cortes, Merino & Cavada, 2019), while factors as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and hiring expectation have been proposed as moderators of the antecedent–perceptions relationship (Choong, Ng & Lau, 2025; De Cremer, Knippenberg & van Dijke, 2004; Gilliland, 1993), thus suggesting that employability – a resource shaping individuals' expectations and perceived control over hiring outcomes – may similarly moderate the relationship

between fairness perceptions and satisfaction with the selection process by shaping individuals' interpretations of selection-related experiences. Therefore, it appears that fairness may be perceived as a minor critical factor by candidates with a high level of employability because they already have a strong position in the job market and considerable confidence in their ability to find employment opportunities elsewhere. In contrast, for candidates who perceive themselves as having low employability, fairness may have a more significant impact on their broad perspectives on the recruitment selection process and, consequently, their reactions to rejection.

Based on the aforementioned postulations in the literature on the role that employability has been shown to play in organisational perceptions and its significant relationships with work outcomes, such as job search and re-employment (McArdle et al., 2007), organisational satisfaction (Lodi et al., 2020), and work withdrawal behaviours (Shamsudin, Bani-Melhem, Abukhait, Pillai & Quratulain, 2023), it seems fitting to hypothesise as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Employability moderates the relationship between perceived fairness and outcomes (i.e., satisfaction with the recruitment selection process, intention to reapply, and peer referral), such that high levels of employability weaken the association between fairness perceptions and satisfaction, intention to reapply and peer referrals.

## Research overview

This study has three main objectives. First, we intend to confirm the relationships between fairness perceptions of a recruitment selection process and outcomes such as satisfaction, peer referrals and the intention to reapply, as expressed by the selection fairness theory. Second, we intend to explore the possible effects that some characteristics of the selection and communication process (e.g., communication delays and recruitment selection stages) may have on fairness perceptions and outcomes. Finally, we intend to test the possible moderating role of employability in the relationship between perceived fairness and outcomes.

To achieve these objectives, we planned and conducted two studies with two different research designs (experimental and observational), each with study samples comprising workers. In addition to certain socio-demographic variables, the two studies considered the following parameters: fairness perceptions, communication delays and selection stage (as determinants), employability (as a moderator), and outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, peer referral, and intention to reapply). This double research design was adopted to confirm previous results achieved with a large heterogeneous sample (Cortini et al., 2019) and to obtain additional valid evidence of the relationships between the variables.

## Procedure

For the study 1, based on the findings of a previous study (Aamodt, 2016), an operational characteristic of the feedback process was manipulated – specifically, the communication delay of the rejection letter (short latency vs. long latency). The candidates were divided into two groups, with one group receiving a response from the recruitment selection process in 1 or 2 weeks after submitting their resumes – and receiving a formal letter of application – or after being interviewed at the further stage.

Candidates rejected in Stages 1 and 2 were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions, resulting in a  $2 \times 2$  between-participants quasi-experimental design with one fully manipulated factor (sending time of rejection letters: short sending time of 7 days vs. normal sending time of 14 days) and one within-participants factor (i.e., the recruitment selection stage). The candidates were informed of their rejection via email. At the same time, they received the rejection email, the participants also received a request to fill out a short anonymous questionnaire on the recruitment selection process – to be completed within 7 days.

For the Study 2, the candidates were asked to recall whether they had received the notification letter after 1 or 2 weeks after submitting their resumes. To enhance ecological validity, Study 2 is designed to replicate the findings of Study 1 in a real-world recruitment context and to strengthen the generalisability of employability's moderating effects.

Upon responding to the request to participate in the anonymous survey, the participants were presented with an online questionnaire, ostensibly surveying their opinions regarding aspects of the recruitment selection process. In line with the ethical standards enshrined in the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki, the study participants were informed about relevant aspects of the study (e.g., the research methods and the institutional affiliations of the researcher) before taking part in the experiment; they were informed of their right to refuse to participate and to withdraw their consent to participate at any time during the study without reprisal. They then confirmed that they understood the instructions clearly, provided their informed consent and began filling out the questionnaire.

### Measures

*Procedural fairness* was evaluated using five items of the Italian version of procedural justice scale (Bauer, Truxillo, McCarthy & Erdogan, 2024; Cortini *et al.*, 2019), on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For example, one of the items is the following statement: *I believe that the evaluation was objective and impartial* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  and McDonald's  $\omega = .94$ ).

*Employability* was measured using the Italian version (Lodi *et al.*, 2020) of the Self-Perceived Employability Scale (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007), which comprises 11 items with a 5-point Likert-type scale response options ranging from *no probability of getting a job* to *100% probability/certain of getting a job*. For example, one of the items is as follows: *I could easily get a similar job to mine in almost any organisation* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$  and McDonald's  $\omega = .91$ ).

*Satisfaction with the recruitment selection process* was evaluated using three items derived from the Italian version of procedural justice scale (Bauer *et al.*, 2024; Cortini *et al.*, 2019), with response options ranging from 1 (totally dissatisfied) to 4 (totally satisfied). For example, one of the three items is as follows: *How satisfied are you with the recruitment selection process?* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  and McDonald's  $\omega = .95$ ).

*Peer referral* was assessed using three items derived from the adapted Italian version of the Organizational Recommendation Scale (Cortini *et al.*, 2019; Waung & Brice, 2000), with response options ranging from 0 (*I would certainly not recommend this company*) to 3 (*I would certainly recommend this company*). For example, one of the items is the following question: *Would you recommend a position vacancy at this company to a friend?* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$  and McDonald's  $\omega = .94$ ).

*Intention to reapply* was measured using an Italian adaptation (Cortini *et al.*, 2019) of the Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman and Stoffey (1993) three-item scale derived from the literature (Waung & Brice, 2000), with response options ranging from 0 (*I will certainly not reapply*) to 4 (*I will certainly reapply*). One of the items is as follows: *Would you apply to this company again?* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$  and McDonald's  $\omega = .95$ ).

Different scale endpoints and formats (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003) were used to reduce method biases. In addition, the items in the questionnaire were randomly ordered, and the scales were visually separated from each other.

## Study 1

### Methods

#### Participants

A total of 507 study participants applied to a job opening and underwent an actual recruitment selection process between September 3, 2021 (the end of the publication of the job advertisement) and February 20, 2022 (the end of the recruitment selection process). The job advertisement appeared

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for all measured variables

	Items	S-W	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employability	11	.96***	3.1	1.03	–				
2. Fairness	5	.98***	3.3	.95	.35**	–			
3. Satisfaction	3	.91***	2.8	1.11	.29**	.75***	–		
4. Recommend	3	.91***	2.8	1.19	.29*	.73***	.63***	–	
5. Reapply	3	.91***	3.2	1.23	.23*	.71***	.63***	.57***	–
6. Age	1	.94***	37.0	8.2	.01	–.04	–.13	–.15*	–.11

Note: S-W = Shapiro-Wilk; SD = standard deviation.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

on the leading Italian career portals for 4 weeks. The job profile was a purchasing manager (full-time) in an Italian company operating in the metalworking sector, along with a long-term contract in a region in central Italy (Abruzzo). The recruitment selection process comprised a curriculum vitae (CV) screening (Stage 1) and individual phone interviews (Stage 2). A third step involved interviews at the company and was reserved for only 12 candidates. The entire recruitment exercise was conducted by the human resources office staff of a company with over 100 employees.

The final study sample used in our analysis comprised 264 individuals who were actively job hunting and consented to participate in the research (response rate: 52%). In total, 186 candidates were rejected in Stage 1 (resume screening), and 78 were rejected in Stage 2 (phone interview). The sample was composed primarily of men ( $n = 182$ , 69.9%) and of individuals with a degree ( $n = 55$ , 20.8%), higher education diploma ( $n = 150$ , 56.8%), or middle school diploma ( $n = 52$ , 19.7%). The average age was 37.04 years ( $SD = 8.2$ ), and the average job tenure was 10.2 years ( $SD = 11.4$ ).

## Results

To test the construct validity and reliability of the measurement model, a confirmatory factor analysis (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) was performed using AMOS 29.0. From a one-factor model to a model nested with five factors (fairness, satisfaction, peer referral, intention to reapply, and employability), three different nested models were compared based on goodness-of-fit indices. From Model 1 (one factor) to Model 3 (five factors), the results show improvements in all indices – Model 1 (one factor): chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) = 794.26 (degrees of freedom [ $df$ ] = 260), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.151, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.789, standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.186. Model 2 (three factors):  $\chi^2 = 580.04$  ( $df = 263$ ), RMSEA = 0.098, CFI = 0.909, SRMR = 0.095. Model 3 (five factors),  $\chi^2 = 494.77$  ( $df = 265$ ), RMSEA = 0.094, CFI = 0.945, SRMR = 0.086. The final five-factor model yielded acceptable goodness-of-fit indexes, indicative of a generally reliable measurement model, with items referring to their proper factor.

The experimental groups did not differ in age, gender or education – time of rejection letters,  $t(262) = -1.86$ ,  $p < .063$ ; 1 week,  $N = 132$ , mean age = 36.93 (8.06); 2 weeks,  $N = 132$ , mean age = 38.82 (8.13); selection stage,  $t(263) = -1.42$ ; n.s.; Stage 1, mean age = 37.24 (8.07); Stage 2, mean age = 38.80 (8.21). In Table 1, we present the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the variables considered in this study. Correlation and regression analyses were used to test the proposed relationship between fairness perceptions and outcomes. Hayes' process (Hayes, 2013) was used in Model 1 for each outcome to test the possible moderating role of employability. To test whether the recruitment selection stages and the delays in communicating the rejection decision were effective as factors, a multivariate  $2 \times 2$  analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed, with the delay of the notification letter (7 days vs. 14 days) and the recruitment selection stage (CV screening vs. phone interview) as between-subjects factors. All analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences version 29.

For the regression analysis, the sensitivity of the sample was assessed prior to hypothesis testing using G\*Power software (version 3.1.9.7). With one predictor, a sample size of 264 and the alpha and beta error probabilities both set at .05, the data collected enable the detection of effects as small as 0.01. To test for common method variance issues, an exploratory factor analysis was performed. All variables were loaded onto a single factor (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) and constrained such that there was no rotation (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003); a common latent factor explained less than 50% of the variance (41%).

Regression analyses were performed with fairness perceptions as a predictor of the outcomes. The participants' perspectives on the fairness of the recruitment selection process are predictive of the following: satisfaction ( $R^2 = .59$ ,  $F(1, 262) = 332.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .75$ ,  $t = 18.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), organisational recommendation ( $R^2 = .53$ ,  $F(1, 262) = 296.70$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .73$ ,  $t = 17.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and intention to reapply ( $R^2 = .50$ ,  $F(1, 262) = 262.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .71$ ,  $t = 16.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

A multivariate  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA was used to test for the manipulation effect (Hypotheses 1 and 2), with the communication delay of the rejection notification email (7 days group,  $N = 132$ ; 14 days group,  $N = 132$ ) and the recruitment selection stages (CV screening,  $N = 186$ ; phone interview,  $N = 78$ ) serving as the between-subjects factors. Again, the sensitivity of the sample was evaluated before testing the hypotheses. Under the assumed ANOVA model, with alpha and beta error probabilities set at .05 and the two groups comprising 264 participants each, the data collected support a robust interpretation of moderately small effects ( $f = .26$ ). The significance level of the ANOVA was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction.

The ANOVA results are summarised in Table 2. The actual results show the main effect of the latency time manipulation on the following: fairness perceptions ( $d = 1.01$ , large effect), satisfaction ( $d = .78$ , medium-to-large effect), organisational recommendation ( $d = .66$ , medium effect), and intention to reapply ( $d = .84$ , large effect). The shorter the latency in sending the rejection letter, the more positive the perspectives on the recruitment selection process – fairness: 1-week latency = 3.58 (.0), 2-week latency = 2.80 (.84); satisfaction: 1-week latency = 3.07 (1.1), 2-week latency = 2.3 (.85); recommendation: 1-week latency = 3.11 (1.2), 2-week latency = 2.4 (.95); willingness to reapply: 1-week latency = 3.56 (1.1), 2-week latency = 2.67 (.101).

The ANOVA results revealed the main effect of the recruitment selection stage (resume screening vs. phone interview) on the following: fairness perceptions ( $d = .78$ , medium effect), satisfaction ( $d = .53$ , medium effect), organisational recommendation ( $d = .59$ , medium effect), and intention to reapply ( $d = .59$ , medium effect). Candidate fairness perception levels and selection outcome values are lower in more advanced recruitment selection stages – fairness: Stage 1 = 3.46 (.97), Stage 2 = 2.80 (.69); satisfaction, Stage 1 = 2.91 (1.1), Stage 2 = 2.37 (.91); recommendation, Stage 1 = 3.01 (1.1), Stage 2 = 2.38 (1.02); intention to reapply (Stage 1 = 3.39 (1.22), Stage 2 = 2.74 (.94).

The interplay between the two factors (communication delay  $\times$  recruitment selection stage) was barely significant for only fairness ( $F = 4.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and intention to reapply ( $F = 4.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ), such that with shorter communication times, the drop in fairness and intention to reapply between Stage 1 and Stage 2 was greater.

To test the possible moderating role of employability in the relationship between fairness perceptions and outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, intention to reapply and organisational recommendation), a PROCESS Model 1 (Hayes, 2013) was calculated for each outcome to examine the relationship between the predictor and the criterion at low ( $M - 1SD$ ), medium and high ( $M + 1SD$ ) levels of the supposed moderator; number of bootstrap samples = 5,000 and confidence intervals = .90.

*Satisfaction.* The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = .59$ ,  $F(3, 260) = 112.37$ ,  $p = .000$ . However, the interplay of fairness perceptions and employability did not significantly increase the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(1, 260) = 3.28$ ,  $p = .09$ .

*Recommendation.* The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = .54$ ,  $F(3, 260) = 102.75$ ,  $p = .000$ , and the interplay of fairness perceptions and employability significantly increased the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .023$ ,  $F(1, 260) = 8.21$ ,  $p = .009$ . The relationship between fairness perceptions and was significant for low ( $b = .74$ , CI [.59, .90]), medium ( $b = .87$ , CI [.76, .98]), and high ( $b = .99$ ,

**Table 2.** ANOVA results for Study 1

Variable	$F_{(df)}$	$p$	$d$
<b>Fairness</b>			
Communication delay	51.57 (1, 262)	.001**	1.01
Recruitment selection stage	30.09 (1, 262)	.001**	.78
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	4.92 (1, 262)	.05*	.29
<b>Satisfaction</b>			
Communication delay	32.7 (1, 262)	.001**	.78
Recruitment selection stage	4.53 (1, 262)	.001**	.53
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Communication delay	25.07 (1, 262)	.001**	.66
Recruitment selection stage	14.8 (1, 262)	.001**	.59
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Intention to reapply</b>			
Communication delay	41.47 (1, 263)	.001**	.84
Recruitment selection stage	17.1 (1, 263)	.001**	.59
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	4.40	.05*	.27

Note:  $df$  = degree of freedom,  $d$  = effect size.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

CI [.85, 1.13]) levels of perceived employability. This result seems to indicate that, for our study sample, the higher a participant perceived their employability to be, the stronger the positive relation between their fairness perceptions and their intention to engage in organisational recommendation.

*Willingness to reapply.* The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = .51$ ,  $F(3, 260) = 99.15$ ,  $p = .000$ , and the interplay of fairness perceptions and employability significantly increased the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .022$ ,  $F(1, 260) = 8.19$ ,  $p = .010$ . Furthermore, the relationship between fairness perceptions and recommendation was significant for low ( $b = .54$ , CI [.38, .71]), medium ( $b = .62$ , CI [.42, .8]) and high ( $b = .81$ , CI [.69, .99]) levels of perceived employability. The higher a candidate perceived their employability to be, the stronger the positive relation between their fairness perceptions and their intention to reapply. In general, employability seems to modulate the relationship between perceived fairness and outcomes, partially confirming Hypothesis 3 (Table 3 and Fig. 1).

## Study 2

### Methods

#### Participants

Between January and April 2022, 432 individuals who were actively job hunting applied to three different job openings with overlapping clerical profiles at companies operating in the transport and logistics sector. Candidates were filtered out from the recruitment selection process at different stages (Stage 1 – resume screening; Stage 2 – telephone interviews), receiving a notification letter in which they were invited to participate further in a short survey assessing the management of the recruitment selection process. The participants had up to 7 days to complete the questionnaire.

Overall, 259 people voluntarily completed the online questionnaire exhaustively (response rate: 59.9%) via the Google Forms platform. The final sample was composed primarily of males ( $n = 166$ , 64.1%) and graduates ( $n = 70$ , 27.1%) or individuals with a high school diploma ( $n = 111$ , 42.8%) or middle school diploma ( $n = 78$ , 30.1%). The average age was 35.8 years (SD = 10.72), and the

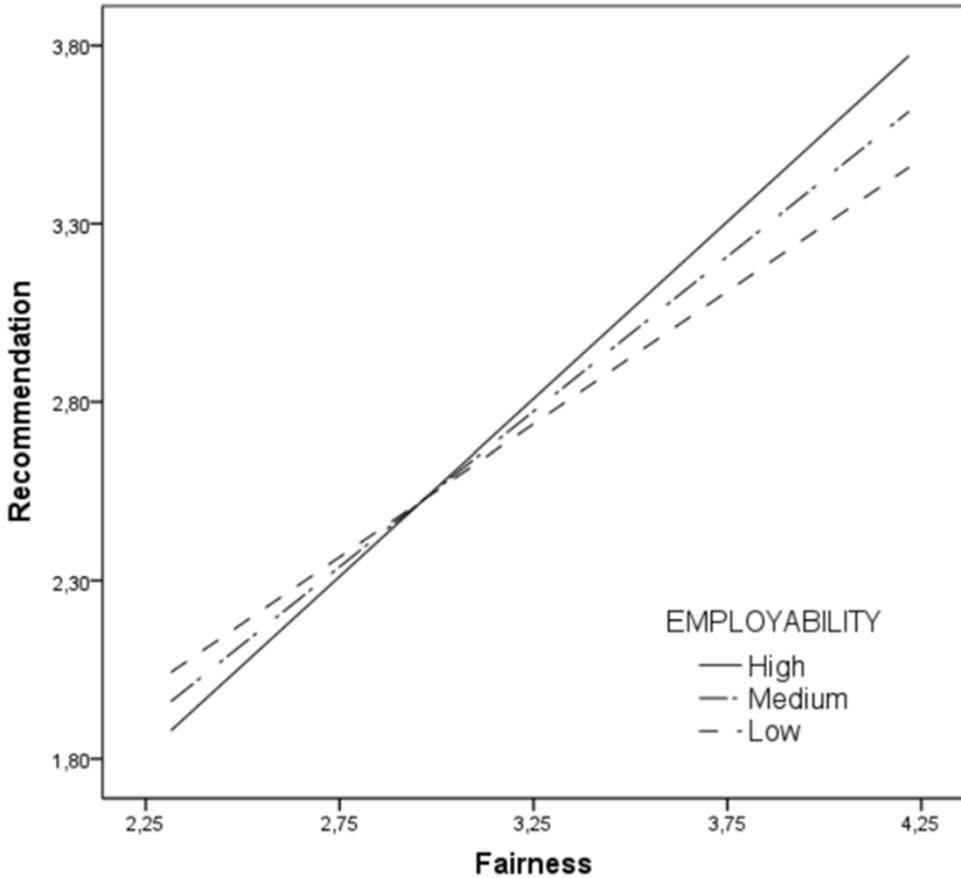


Figure 1.

seniority was 14.75 years (SD = 11.8). A total of 180 candidates were rejected in Stage 1, and 79 were rejected in Stage 2.

**Results**

For the regression analysis, the sensitivity of the sample was assessed prior to hypothesis testing using G\*Power software (version 3.1.9.7). With one predictor, a sample size of 259 and alpha and beta error probabilities both set at .05, the data collected enable the detection of effects as small as 0.01. To test for common method bias, an exploratory factor analysis was performed with all variables loaded onto a single factor (Podsakoff et al., 2012) and constrained such that there was no rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results revealed a common latent factor that explains less than 50% of the variance (38%).

Same as in Study 1, a confirmatory factor analysis employing structural equation modelling was performed to test the validity of the measurement models: from a nested one-factor model to a nested model with five factors.

In this case, the results also show improvements in all indices, from Model 1 (one factor) to Model 3 (five factors) – Model 1 (one factor):  $\chi^2 = 908.32$  ( $df = 255$ ), RMSEA = 0.179, CFI = 0.806, SRMR = 0.191; Model 2 (three factors):  $\chi^2 = 522.73$  ( $df = 257$ ), RMSEA = 0.095, CFI = 0.920, SRMR = 0.094; Model 3 (five factors):  $\chi^2 = 504.90$  ( $df = 260$ ), RMSEA = 0.093, CFI = 0.955, SRMR = 0.091. The final five-factor model yielded acceptable goodness-of-fit indexes, indicative of a reliable measurement model, with items referring to their proper factor.

**Table 3.** Significance test of the moderating effect of employability on the relationship between perceived fairness and outcomes

	Employability	
	$\Delta R^2$	Hypothesis
Fairness > Satisfaction	.011	Not supported
Fairness > Recommendation	.023*	Supported
Fairness > Reapply	.022*	Supported

Note:  $\Delta R^2$  = Change in  $R^2$ .  
\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 4.** Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations for all measured variables

	Items	S-W	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Employability	11	.95***	3.3	.72	–				
2. Fairness	5	.97***	2.9	.83	.31**	–			
3. Satisfaction	3	.93***	2.1	1.20	.37**	.65***	–		
4. Recommend	3	.93***	2.1	1.14	.24*	.50***	.61***	–	
5. Reapply	3	.92***	3.5	.98	.38**	.60***	.64***	.47***	–
6. Age	1	.91***	35.8	10.72	.05	–.10	–.12	–.17*	–.15*

Note: S-W = Shapiro–Wilk; SD = standard deviation.  
\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

The descriptive statistics for the Study 2 results are presented in Table 4. Notwithstanding a slight reduction in the values, the correlations confirm the results obtained in Study 1.

Regression analyses were performed with fairness perceptions as a predictor of the outcomes. In this sub-study, the sample sensitivity – calculated using the same assumptions as in Study 1, but with an adjusted sample size – enables the interpretation of a similarly small effect of .02. Candidates' perceptions regarding the fairness of the recruitment selection process predict satisfaction ( $R^2 = .41$ ,  $F(1, 257) = 184.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .65$ ,  $t = 13.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ), organisational recommendation ( $R^2 = 0.22$ ,  $F(1, 257) = 68.45$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .47$ ,  $t = 8.27$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and intention to reapply ( $R^2 = .35$ ,  $F(1, 257) = 141.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .60$ ,  $t = 11.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Same as in Study 1, a multivariate  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA was employed to test for manipulation effect (Hypotheses 1 and 2), with the communication delay of the notification letter (7 days group,  $N = 129$ ; 14 days group,  $N = 130$ ) and recruitment selection stage (CV screening,  $N = 180$ ; phone interview,  $N = 79$ ) serving as between-subjects factors. Similarly, the sensitivity of the sample was evaluated before hypothesis testing. Under the assumed ANOVA model, with alpha and beta error probabilities set at .05, the data collected support a robust interpretation of moderately small effects ( $f = .26$ ). The significance level of the ANOVA was adjusted using the Bonferroni correction.

The ANOVA results for Study 2 are presented in Table 5 and show the main effect of the latency time manipulation on the following: fairness perceptions ( $d = .58$ , medium effect), satisfaction ( $d = .41$ , small effect), organisational recommendation ( $d = 0.40$ , small effect), and intention to reapply ( $d = 0.71$ , medium effect). Furthermore, congruent with the results in Study 1, the shorter the latency in sending the rejection letter, the more positive the perspectives on the recruitment selection process – fairness: 1-week latency = 3.39 (.79), 2-week latency = 2.74 (.76); satisfaction: 1-week latency = 2.93 (.15), 2-week latency = 2.06 (.11); recommendation 1-week latency = 3.0 (.18), 2-week latency = 2.3 (.2); willingness to reapply: 1-week latency = 3.4 (.09), 2-week latency = 2.28 (.11).

The ANOVA results revealed a main effect of the recruitment selection stage (CV screening,  $N = 180$ ; phone interview,  $N = 79$ ) on the following: fairness perceptions ( $d = .41$ , small effect), satisfaction ( $d = .78$ , medium effect), organisational recommendation ( $d = 0.69$ , medium effect),

**Table 5.** ANOVA results for Study 2

Variable	$F_{(df)}$	$p$	$d$
<b>Fairness</b>			
Communication delay	41.5 (1, 258)	.001**	.58
Recruitment selection stage	22.3 (1, 258)	.001**	.41
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	3.88 (1, 258)	.05*	.24
<b>Satisfaction</b>			
Communication delay	23.8 (1, 258)	.001**	.41
Recruitment selection stage	41.8 (1, 258)	.001**	.78
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Organizational recommendation</b>			
Communication delay	19.7 (1, 258)	.001**	.40
Recruitment selection stage	10.03 (1, 258)	.001**	.69
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
<b>Intention to reapply</b>			
Communication delay	30.2 (1, 258)	.001**	.71
Recruitment selection stage	27.4 (1, 258)	.001**	.60
Communication delay × recruitment selection stage	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Note:  $df$  = degree of freedom,  $d$  = effect size.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$ .

and intention to reapply ( $d = .60$ , medium effect). The shorter the latency in sending the rejection letter, the more positive the perspectives on the recruitment selection process – fairness: 1-week latency = 3.39 (.7), 2-week latency = 2.74 (.8); satisfaction: 1-week latency = 2.93 (.8), 2-week latency = 2.2 (.8); recommendation 1-week latency = 3.0 (.7), 2-week latency = 2.3 (.9); willingness to reapply: 1 week latency = 3.4 (.74), 2-week latency = 2.6 (.81).

The interplay between the two factors (communication delay × recruitment selection stage) was significant only for fairness ( $F = 3.88$ ,  $p < .05$ ), such that with shorter communication delays, the drop in perceived fairness between Stage 1 and Stage 2 was greater.

Same as in Study 1, to test the possible moderating role of employability in the relationship between fairness perceptions and outcomes (i.e., satisfaction, intention to reapply and organisational recommendation), a PROCESS Model 1 was calculated for each outcome using the macro developed by Hayes (2013). The relationship between the predictor and the criterion was examined at low ( $M - 1SD$ ), medium and high ( $M + 1SD$ ) levels of the supposed moderator.

**Satisfaction.** The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = 0.45$ ,  $F(3, 255) = 71.53$ , and  $p < .001$ . However, the interplay between fairness perceptions and employability did not significantly increase the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .004$ ,  $F(1, 255) = 1.07$ , and  $p = .231$ .

**Recommendation.** The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = .29$ ,  $F(3, 255) = 53.91$ , and  $p < .001$ . Furthermore, the interplay between fairness perceptions and employability significantly increased the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .013$ ,  $F(1, 255) = 3.4$ , and  $p = .041$ . The relationship between fairness perceptions and recommendation was significant for low ( $b = .55$ , CI [.36, .82]), medium ( $b = .62$ , CI [.41, .90]), and high ( $b = .76$ , CI [.42, .84]) levels of perceived employability.

**Willingness to reapply.** The overall equation was significant, with  $R^2 = .40$ ,  $F(3, 255) = 68.89$ , and  $p < .000$ . The interplay between fairness perceptions and employability significantly increased the explained variance:  $\Delta R^2 = .021$ ,  $F(1, 255) = 8.19$ , and  $p = .02$ . The relationship between fairness perceptions and willingness to reapply was significant for low ( $b = .5$ , CI [.21, .68]), medium ( $b = .62$ , CI [.36, .81]), and high ( $b = .81$ , CI [.69, .99]) levels of perceived employability (Table 6).

**Table 6.** Significance test of the moderating effect of employability on the relationship between fairness perceptions and outcomes

	Employability	
	$\Delta R^2$	Hypothesis
Fairness > Satisfaction	.004	Not supported
Fairness > Recommendation	.013*	Supported
Fairness > Reapply	.021**	Supported

Note:  $\Delta R^2$  = Change in  $R^2$ .

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Discussion

This research examines how controllable aspects of the recruitment selection process – specifically, communication delay and recruitment selection stages – impact candidates' perspectives on the fairness of the recruitment selection process and a range of outcomes, including satisfaction, their peer referral intentions, and their intentions to reapply. In addition, this study investigates how employability interplays with fairness perceptions in influencing the outcomes of the recruitment selection process. A series of hypotheses grounded in the selection fairness approach (Gilliland, 1993) was proposed to guide this investigation.

The findings of this study provide significant theoretical insights by advancing our understanding of how perceived procedural fairness interplays with candidates' perceived employability in recruitment. First, unlike previous research studies that have predominantly examined fairness in isolation (Truxillo, Bodner, Bertolino, Bauer & Yonce, 2009), our findings underscore the pivotal role of communication timing and recruitment selection stages in shaping candidates' perceptions of fairness. Second, using a mixed-methods approach – that is, by combining semi-experimental and observational techniques – we demonstrate that these procedural elements, in conjunction with perceived employability (Forrier et al., 2018), critically influence key outcomes such as satisfaction, intentions to engage in peer referral and the likelihood of reapplication. Third, this study advances certain theoretical models by showing that fairness perceptions are not static but evolve throughout the recruitment selection process under the influence of both the procedural stages and individual employability factors. This insight delves beyond the predominantly static fairness models (Gilliland, 1993) to provide a considerably broad understanding of how perceived procedural justice evolves over time. Finally, by bridging gaps in the literature on fairness, candidates' perspectives and employability, this study lays the groundwork for future research to explore additional moderating factors and long-term candidate behaviour.

In general, the findings from Study 1 and Study 2 provide support for our main hypotheses. First, the findings confirm a positive correlation between perceptions of procedural fairness regarding the recruitment selection process and key outcomes such as high levels of satisfaction, increased likelihood of recommending the organisation to peers, and a strong intention to reapply. This substantiates the literature (Hausknecht et al., 2004; Konradt et al., 2013; McCarthy et al., 2017; Truxillo et al., 2018) grounded in selection fairness theory and underscores the pivotal role of fairness perceptions in shaping various aspects of the candidate experience and ensuing organisational outcomes. This effect may be explained by the fundamental psychological need for justice and predictability in evaluative contexts, particularly those involving high personal stakes such as job selection. When candidates perceive the process as procedurally fair, they are more likely to feel respected, valued, and in control, which in turn fosters positive affective responses and strengthens their psychological contract with the organisation – even in the absence of a job offer.

In alignment with previous results reported in the literature (Aamodt, 2016), delays in communicating rejections impact candidates' perceptions considerably, such that all recruitment selection

outcomes (i.e., applicants' feelings of satisfaction with the recruitment selection process, of reapplying, and of recommending the company to peers) worsen as response latency increases. Taking the findings of current and past research into account, it becomes evident that prompt responses to candidates' job applications have become crucial for companies. Such expedited communication meets candidates' expectations and may enhance overall perceptions of the company's efficiency and respect for candidates. Furthermore, a *swift reply* strategy could lead to non-obvious benefits, such as improving the company's brand image in the eyes of potential employees and reducing the likelihood of negative word of mouth, thereby indirectly supporting recruitment efforts in a highly competitive talent market.

One of the most interesting results in our study concerns the impact of the recruitment selection stage. In both Study 1 and Study 2, there is a lowering of candidates' perceptions of fairness as the recruitment selection process progresses; thus, the stage at which a rejection is communicated clearly impacts the outcome, an effect that could be attributed to, for instance, the escalation of candidates' expectations, which might in turn amplify the ensuing disappointment. This finding is consistent with previous findings (Van Vianen *et al.*, 2004) and warrants further investigation and confirmation. Furthermore, our study findings reveal that fairness perceptions shift throughout the recruitment selection process. As candidates advance through the recruitment selection process, their emotional investment deepens, making later-stage rejections more likely to elicit intense negative reactions. This evolution identifies fairness as a dynamic construct, challenging traditional views of procedural justice as static (Gilliland, 1993; Truxillo *et al.*, 2009). By demonstrating that perceptions of fairness change based on the stage of selection, this study provides a valuable contribution to the understanding of how fairness judgements develop and fluctuate over time.

Furthermore, our research findings partially validate Hypothesis 3 because employability is positively correlated with perceived fairness and recruitment outcomes, and functions as a moderator of the relationship between the perceived fairness of the recruitment selection process and its outcomes (inclination to recommend the company to peers, likelihood of reapplying to the company) – but not general satisfaction with the selection procedures (Hypothesis 3b). The findings of our studies indicate that variations in perceived employability levels do not substantially alter how fairness perceptions influence overall satisfaction. This suggests that satisfaction with the selection process may be more strongly driven by intrinsic justice appraisals – such as feeling respected and treated with dignity – than by self-relevant outcomes linked to one's labour market position. In contrast, employability likely shapes more instrumental or strategic evaluations, such as whether it is worth maintaining a relationship with the organisation for future opportunities.

Regarding the inclination to recommend the company to peers, our research findings reveal that the higher the perceived employability, the stronger the positive relationship between fairness perceptions and recommendation; on one hand, candidates with a low perception of their employability may be disinclined to actively recommend the company to their peers, even if they perceive a certain degree of fairness in the recruitment selection process; on the other hand, candidates who perceive themselves as highly employable are strongly influenced by their fairness perceptions regarding the recruitment selection process and exhibit a strong inclination to recommend the company. These results indicate a need for further exploration of the motivations that drive candidates with low levels of perceived employability to refrain from recommending companies that reject their job applications to their peers.

Regarding intentions to reapply, our study findings demonstrate that the greater the perception of employability, the stronger the positive relationship between fairness perceptions and the intention to reapply. One possible explanation is that individuals with higher perceived employability feel more agentic and future-oriented, interpreting fair treatment as a signal that the organisation aligns with their career goals and self-efficacy beliefs. Given that employability is a trainable asset (Martini *et al.*, 2023), this implies that if companies aim to increase the likelihood of individuals reapplying, they can commit to crafting communication in their recruitment selection processes that engender employability development (Bauer *et al.*, 2024).

### *Practical implications*

Improving communications with job candidates has a positive effect on practical aspects such as administrative workload, as well as on prospective aspects such as candidates' decisions to accept job offers (McCarthy et al., 2017) and the reputation of the company – as impacted by peer referrals and word of mouth among job applicants. Through the careful management of direct and indirect communications during the recruitment selection process, candidates will develop a positively attractive impression of the organisational context and will be strongly inclined to apply again, as well as recommend the company to other candidates (Folger, Brosi, Stumpf-Wollersheim & Welpe, 2022). The importance of cultivating a positive company image from the outset of the application process should not be underestimated. This effort should span the various stages of the recruitment selection process, including providing clear information about the selection process, detailing the assessments to be conducted and effectively communicating the selection outcome. Such an approach can significantly reduce instances in which positively selected candidates are lost to a rejected offer. In addition, it can enhance the socialisation process for new hires and positively influence overall employer branding (Hülshager & Anderson, 2009). Organisations should create a fair and respectful selection environment, taking into account the varying impact perceived fairness has on candidates with different levels of employability. Communication and feedback should also be adjusted accordingly to ensure a positive candidate selection experience. The results of this study also highlight that companies need to manage communication more carefully in the different stages of the recruitment selection process, considering that as the process moves from the initial screening to the interview stage, candidates' reactions to rejection understandably become increasingly negative. It can be hypothesised that it would be helpful to tailor communications in the more advanced stages of the recruitment selection process.

### *Limitations*

Our study has several limitations that can be resolved in future research. First, the cross-sectional approach we adopted may hinder the identification of dynamic changes in candidates' perspectives and reactions over an extended period. Future research with a longitudinal design involving a long-term follow-up or even a diary approach could provide insights into the duration of the impact of rejection communications on candidates' fairness perceptions and behaviour over time. Second, the use of a semi-experimental and correlational design in our research imposes constraints on our ability to draw definitive causal conclusions. Third, candidates could – and did – refuse to fill out the questionnaire following receipt of the rejection letter, and although this still yielded an acceptable response rate (52% for Study 1 and 60% for Study 2), it is necessary to mention the possibility of sample distortion and external validity issues (Holtom, Baruch, Aguinis & Ballinger, 2022).

The two studies provide data drawn from real selection contexts, and it is therefore important to consider contextual factors that may have influenced participants' perceptions and the relationships between variables, as these considerations offer important context for interpreting the study's limitations. First of all, it is necessary to take into account the specific labour market, characterised by an unemployment rate slightly higher than the national average (6.7%), a context with a high number of high school and college graduates, high internal competition, and not many job opportunities; these contextual factors could have accentuated the effects on the fairness and outcomes of both the selection step and the latency of the rejection letter. It is also important to consider that the targeted position required a high level of experience and responsibility, with more demanding role requirements. These heightened demands may help explain the absence of a moderating effect of employability, as under such conditions, perceived employability may be less effective in shaping the relationship between fairness and satisfaction outcomes.

Finally, although our study comprehensively addresses critical variables such as satisfaction, fairness perceptions, intentions to reapply, organisational recommendation, and self-perceived employability, there might be other relevant variables that could potentially influence candidates' perspectives and reactions.

## Conclusion

Ensuring a positive experience for job application candidates is crucial for contemporary organisations, as it translates to a strengthening of corporate reputation and improves not only recruitment but also business outcomes (Miles & McCamey, 2018). Our findings underscore the intricate interplay between fairness perceptions, perceived employability, and key outcomes in the context of the recruitment selection process, clarifying how these factors collectively shape candidates' reactions. Specifically, attending to effective communication during personnel selection procedures also mandates delivering rejection communications politely and promptly, preferably at the initial stages of the recruitment selection process whenever feasible (Woods, Ahmed, Nikolaou, Costa & Anderson, 2019).

**Author Contributions.** MB and TR worked on the original idea and carried out the detailed conceptualization and investigation of this research. MB, TR, and GS finalized the methodology. MB and TR carried out the data collection. MB, AR, and TR carried out data analysis and wrote the results section. MB, TR, AR, and JG carried out the write-up of this project, including the writing of the original draft. GS and JG carried out the visualization and the final revision of the paper.

**Conflicts of Interest.** The authors declare that there are no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

**Ethical Standards.** The paper reports research that has been conducted in accordance with APA ethical standards. We adhered strictly to the ethical principles outlined in the Helsinki criteria (2013) for the conduct of human research and to American Psychological Association ethical guidelines. We obtained approval from the relevant ethics committee prior to commencing the study (e-Campus University, protocol: 03/2020), ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards.

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