

The Relationship between Person-Job Fit, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention: A Proposed Framework

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Abstract: Past studies have identified the existence of a positive relationship between individual employees and their respective jobs as well as current organizations which resulted in more favorable attitudes and behaviors of employees. Although various types of research have been conducted on the person-job fit (P-J fit), few researches that discussed the relationship between P-J fit and turnover intention particularly in identifying the mechanisms that may help to explain these relationships. Thus, this study focuses on outlying the propositions on the potential role of employee engagement as a mediator between P-J fit and one aspect of organizational outcomes (turnover intention). Social Exchange Theory and Job Characteristic theory are adopted in explaining the relationships among the variables. Lastly, suggestions for future studies are proposed.

Keywords: *Person-job fit, person-organization fit, employee engagement, turnover intention.*

1. Introduction

There is huge interest in investigating the interaction between the workers and the work environment as the environment might potentially influence the employees' attitudes and behaviors. Researchers have defined person-environment fit (P-E fit) as the degree to which a human being and the characteristics of the environment match (Dawis, 1992; Kristof-Brown, Sharjeel, Sharjeel, Muhammad Imran, Mehwish and Fevzi, 2021, Zimmerman and Johnson, 2005). This theory examines the compatibility of one individual employee with the various systems of the work environment (Kristof-Brown, Jansen and Colbert, 2002). The theory identified distinct building blocks within the construct of P-E fit that are person-vocation fit (P-V fit), person-organization fit (P-O fit), person-job fit (P-J fit), person-individual fit (P-I fit) as well as person-team fit (P-T fit) (Caplan, 1987; O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991; Kristof-Brown, 1996; Cable and Judge, 1996). However, according to Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005), there are already a lot of researchers who have reviewed this type of fit but there is a need for future studies conducting research on the multidimensional construct of P-E fit which comprises of P-V fit, P-O fit, P-J fit, P-T fit as well as P-I fit as these dimensions fit different phase of employment (pre-recruitment, recruitment, selection, socialization as well as tenure).

According to Common, the way an individual employee reacts to the work environment has been predicted to fit the various organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, staff turnover, tenure, organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, absenteeism as well and employee performance (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson, 2005). Saks (2006) has highlighted in his research findings that the relationship between the antecedents of job characteristics, perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, rewards and recognition, distributive justice and procedural justice; and the consequences of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intention to quit as well as organizational citizenship behavior; seems to be mediated by employee engagement. Although various studies focused on examining the direct relationships between various P-E fit variables and various organizational outcome variables, fewer studies have been focused on understanding the mechanism that explains these relationships. Thus, this paper was aimed at understanding the mediating role of employee engagement in the relationship between P-J fit and turnover intention.

2. Literature Review

Turnover Intention: Employee turnover often results from employees' ongoing search for better and more satisfying job opportunities. There are two types of turnover as highlighted by Price (1977). Those are voluntary turnover which refers to the situation where the employee, on their own accord, decides to terminate their organizational membership (Boswell, Boudreau and Tichy, 2008); and involuntary turnover which refers to the employee termination that is under the organization's control (Cao, Chen and Song, 2013). However, the most accurate construct in predicting the employees' actual turnover is the turnover intention which refers to the voluntary willingness of the current employees to permanently withdraw from a particular organization (Breuklen, Vlist and Steensma, 2004). Past studies have shown various antecedents of turnover intention. A recent Meta-analytic study involving studies which are published between 1998 and 2018 shows job satisfaction, organizational commitment and empowerment as the main predictors of turnover intention (Ozkan, Elci, Karabay, Kitapci & Garip, 2020).

Person-Job-Fit: Although being classified as different dimensions P-J fit is closely related to P-V fit. However, P-J fit has been narrowly defined to the extent that only focuses on the job and task performed at work with the characteristics of an individual (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson, 2005). Besides, the jobs that were assigned to the employees should be fitted with their personalities, skills and talents as they will be more focused and motivated (Martin, 2005). There are two basic conceptualizations of P-J fit as conceptualized by Edwards (1991) – the demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit. Demands-abilities fit explains the situation in which the employees' skills, knowledge and abilities match with the requirements of the jobs performed. Meanwhile, needs-supplies fit explains the situation in which the needs, preferences or desires of an individual employee are matched with the various jobs performed. Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) have highlighted in their research that these P-E fit dimensions are salient in the different phases of an individual employee's employment. P-J fit is relevant at the phase of job searching and will be important at the phase of job selection as well as during the process of socialization. However, all five dimensions of P-E fit including P-J fit seem to be relevant during the long-term tenure that will affect the individual level outcomes of withdrawal as well as intention to quit, satisfaction and commitment.

Employee Engagement: According to Harter and Adkins (2015), engaged employees are referred to as those who are enthusiastic and involved deeply in their workplace. Bates (2004) and Richman (2006) highlighted that employees today seem to be disengaged deeply as engagement has been on the decline stage. Employee engagement and turnover intention have critical impacts and implications for human resource management practices, which might affect the productivity as well as the overall performance of the organizations. Bakker, Albrecht and Leiter (2011) explained that engagement can be conceptualized with commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, job satisfaction and employee turnover intentions. Unal and Turgut (2015) have analyzed employee engagement under two dimensions organizational engagement and work engagement. In comparison to previous studies (e.g., Halbesleben, 2010) that discussed work engagement in relation to individual resources and jobs assigned. However, employee engagement is widely related to organizational engagement and has more accepted conceptual measures and definitions as compared to work engagement (Unal and Turgut, 2015).

Social Exchange Theory: As suggested by Saks (2006), organizational engagement antecedents can be recognized by the theory of Social Exchange (SET). SET theory basically can explain the interrelationship between P-J fit, employee engagement and employees' turnover intention. In explaining the SET, Blau (1964) believes that obligations will be generated once there are interdependent interactions between different parties in an organization. When economic and socio-emotional resources are received by the employees from their superiors, they will respond with a positive attitude to repay the organization which can be measured through their level of engagement. In response to the resources given to them, they will bring cognitive, physical and emotional resources to their respective organization. By linking the SET with the P-J fit, it can be conceptualized that when employees have a positive match with the job and task assigned, the obligation to reciprocate will be created. In which, they will reciprocate in terms of giving their utmost level of engagement (Saks, 2006). Consequently, past studies (e.g., Saks, 2006; Juhdi, Pa'wan and Hansaram, 2013) have supported this reciprocity concept that resulted in favorable behavioral and organizational outcomes, such as low employee turnover.

Job Characteristic Theory: Job Characteristics Theory (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) briefly explains the relationship between the characteristics of jobs and the responses of the individual in doing their job. Hackman and Oldham (1976) have highlighted five main dimensions of job (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and job feedback) that propose three psychological states (experience meaningfulness of work, experience of personal responsibility and knowledge of the work's actual results) leading to beneficial personal and the respective work outcomes. Which, the absence of any one of these three psychological states will weaken several outcome variables such as internal motivation, growth and job satisfaction, quality work performance, absenteeism, work effectiveness and turnover? The essential proposition in this theory is that if the job is low motivating potential, subsequently, the outcomes will be low, and the employees will have unfavorable feelings about doing their job. This can be related to the model proposed in this study, in which, if the employees are not compatible with the job assigned to them, their engagement towards the organization and work will subsequently be low thus leading to the unfavorable organizational outcomes of high turnover among the employees.

3. Proposition Development

Previous studies in the Asian context have reported that there is a negative significant relationship between person-job fit and turnover intention of employees working in Beijing, China (Guan et al., 2010). Apart from that, research conducted by Biswas and Bhatnagar (2013) found the mediating role of employee engagement in the P-J fit, P-O fit and employee engagement relationships which shows that the antecedents of P-J fit and P-O fit can predict employee engagement. In the context of an Asian study, Guan et al. (2010) who have conducted research among the employees of various organizations in Beijing, China have highlighted the finding that there is a significant negative relationship between P-J fit and turnover intention.

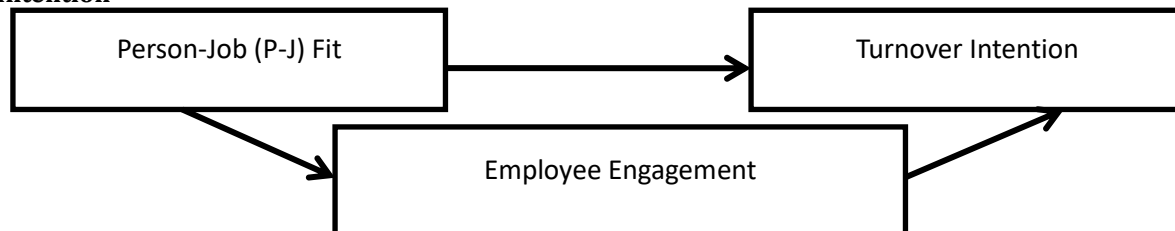
Besides, the theories of P-E fit, SET (Blau, 1964) and Job Characteristics (Hackman and Oldham, 1976) also give literature support on the subsequent relationships among P-J fit, employee engagement and turnover intention. On the other hand, Saks (2006) found the mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between the antecedents of job characteristics and the consequences of intention to quit. In addition, Juhdi, Pa'wan and Hansaram (2013), confirmed the role of employee engagement as an important mediating variable in their study. Based on the above literature review and the theoretical discussion, we proposed the following.

Proposition A: P-J fit is negatively related to employee turnover intention.

Proposition B: Employee engagement mediates the relationship between P-J fit and employee turnover intention.

Figure 1 shows the proposed relationship between the constructs that have been explored. It is a proposed model that illustrates the influences of P-J fit on employees' turnover intention. The mediating role of employee engagement on the P-J fit and turnover intention relationship is also conveyed.

Figure 1: Proposed Relationship between Person-Job Fit, Employee Engagement and Turnover Intention



4. Discussion and Conclusion

P-E fit is one of the critical and central topics to be discussed in managerial psychology (Seong and Kristof-Brown, 2012). Researchers (e.g., Kristof-Brown, 1996; Edwards, 1991; Spokane, Meir and Catalano, 2000;

Verquer, Beehr and Wagner, 2003) have examined how P-E fit theory relates to various outcomes of job satisfaction, occupational choice, organizational commitment, job performance, employee wellbeing and turnover intention. When employees perceive the P-J fit in an organization, their attitudes, emotions and behaviors will positively react.

As can be understood through the SET, the reciprocal relationship between the organization and employee will enhance the level of employee engagement which can predict the various organizational outcomes such as turnover intention. Additionally, Job Characteristic theory also supported the importance of these relationships among the variables investigated in this study. Taking all together, the variable of P-J fit is expected to predict employee engagement and employee engagement has been recognized as one of the strong predictors of organizational outcomes such as turnover intention. Thus, the proposed relationship is that engagement mediates the relationship between P-J fit and turnover intention.

Since the mediating relationship of employee engagement between P-J fit and turnover intention has been less discussed, this study fills the research gap. In which, P-J fit, employee engagement and turnover intention have been discussed in a single framework. To confirm the proposed mediation model in this study, empirical studies are strongly recommended. Besides, as there is little literature discussed on the relationship between the other dimensions of P-E fit (e.g., person-vocation, person-individual, person-team) with regard to employee engagement and turnover intention, there is a need for more research on these relationships.

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