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## Linking person-job fit to job stress: The mediating effect of perceived person-organization fit

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### Abstract

Job performance of employees and stress at work are very common problems in today's business world. Many people change their jobs due to high job stress which affects their personal well-being. High stress can be result of incompatibility between the person performing the job and the job's requirements. This can exacerbate feelings of stress on the job and in an employee's personal life. Whilst employees can be reasonably expected to adjust to changes in jobs over time, poor job or employee job fit can result in increased stress and inefficiency in organizations. To combat this we surmise that through careful attention to person-organization fit during the interview or assessment phase, organizations can select employees who are adaptable to change and who can work efficiently to avoid the negative effects of high stress caused by person job incompatibility. In this study we aimed to examine in detail the effects of person-job fit and the importance of person-organization fit in order to allow organizations to prevent the high cost of employees poorly suited to their jobs. The research indicates that organizations whose employees are suited to their jobs operate with greater efficiency and adapt to change more smoothly than those whose employees do not fit their jobs. The study also aims to investigate if perceived person-organization fit mediates the relationship between person-job fit and job stress. The results of the study demonstrate that paying careful attention to person-job fit and adjusting employees to the organization are essential factors for decreasing job stress.

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## 1. Introduction

Person-job fit, job stress and person-organization fit play a crucial role in people's business lives. The better a person "fits" with his job, the less adjusting and performance problems occur (Roberts & Robins, 2004; Farooqui & Nagendra, 2014).

Person-job fit refers to the level of compatibility that an individual has with his/her job (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Hecht & Allen, 2005). Work engagement has been shown to be positively associated with individual and organizational performance (Christian, Garza & Slaughter, 2011; Lu, Wang, Lu, Du & Bakker, 2014). Employee and job fit have been examined by many scholars and practitioners (Lu et al, 2014; Albrecht, 2010; Bakker & Leiter, 2010; Rich, LePine & Crawford, 2010).

"Job stress refers to a situation wherein job related factors interact with a worker to change his or her psychological and/or physiological condition (mind or body) such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning" (Beehr & Newman, 1978; Yozgat, Yurtkoru & Bilginoglu, 2013). In cases where the employee's suitability is not compatible with the job, this stress is elevated and compounded causing psychological and physiological damage and rendering the employee less capable of performing the expected tasks.

Person-Organization fit refers to employees' needs which are reflected in their preference for a particular culture and an organization's ability to supply conditions through its policies and practices that satisfy these needs (Meyer, Hecht, Gill & Toplonysky, 2010; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005).

*Research Question:* Is there any relationship between job-stress and person-job fit and what is the mediating role of the perceived organization-person fit on this relation?

To answer this question, we analyzed the relevant literature, developed a model and used statistical techniques to test the relationships among the variables of person-job fit, job stress and the mediating effect of organization-person fit on these facts.

## 2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

### 2.1. Person-Job Fit

Person-Job fit is described as a match between the personal knowledge, skills and abilities of the employee and requirements of the job or, the needs / desires of a person which the job is able to supply (Brkich, Jeffs & Careless, 2002). Person Job fit has two dimensions: "Person-Job Fit and Person-Job Unfit" (Brkich et al. 2002).

Person-job fit explains the congruence between employee needs, desires and preferences and rewards of the job and the congruence between job demands and employee knowledge, skills and abilities (Brkich et al. 2002; Chien, Yen, Tsai, 2014; Edwards 1991)

Person- Job Unfit describes the employee who is unable to perform the job without being a hazard to self or others. In situations where there is a mismatch between these qualities the concept of "person-job unfit" arises which in turn causes increased stress levels (Brkich et al. 2002; Buchanan & Norko, 2011).

### 2.2. Job Stress

Work stress is always a serious issue in the modern business world. "Job stress refers to a situation wherein job related factors interact with a worker to change his or her psychological and/or physiological condition (mind or body) such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning" (Beehr et al, 1978; Yozgat et al., 2013). According to Theorell et al. (1998) job stress has three dimensions: "social support, control and workload (Theorell, Perski, Akerstedt, Sigala, Ahlberg-Hulten, Svensson & Eneroth, 1988)" As workload increases and the nature of assignments changes, employees must adapt to the new demands, often by working longer hours. As leisure time declines, individuals

begin to lose the time for social support among their friends and families. It is well known that this social sphere is an essential outlet for work stress and balances stress at work with support, personal validation and self-esteem. As workload increases and the opportunities for this support decline, employees can begin to feel a lack of self-esteem and perspective. This in turn can lead to individuals feeling a loss of control particularly in high stress environments where the opportunity to change the circumstances causing the stress are limited. When humans feel a loss of control this causes physiological changes which can exacerbate feelings of stress. (Theorell et al., 1988; Porthoghese, Galletta, Coppola, Finco & Campagna, 2014; Bolino, Turnley, Gilstarp & Suazo, 2010). By paying careful attention to person job fit, organizations can ensure that individuals are able to adapt efficiently and by ensuring person-organization fit, organizations can provide opportunities within their culture to balance out any negative effects in times of high stress.

The increasing problem of stress at work causes some health and economic loss (Dunham, 2001; Landbergis 2003; Arshadi and Damiri 2013). As previously mentioned, in this world of ever increasing change employees are constantly adjusting to new demands and innovations within their jobs. As on-the-job stress increases, employees can begin to feel a loss of control over their jobs and their ability to meet new demands. In this environment, burnout is becoming an ever increasing problem for organizations. “The term burnout has been used to denote a condition of emotional and mental exhaustion at work” (Iacovides, Fountoulakis, Kaprinis & Kaprinis, 2003). Employee commitment is an extremely important characteristic of work in today’s world. It is very common for people, particularly high level professionals, “to identify with their work and organization to the point of personalizing every success or failure” (Iacovides et al., 2003). On the job stress is perhaps more difficult to deal with simply because changes which would reduce the employee’s stress are usually beyond their reach (Chamberlain and Zika, 1990; Pearlin and Schooler 1978). Whilst “job stress alone does not cause burnout... those facing highly stressful work environments, may manifest higher levels of anxiety, anger, behaviour disorders and depressive symptomatology” (Iacovides et al., 2003).

### *2.3. Person-Organization Fit*

It has long been known that procuring the correct person for the job is essential for organizations to build a competitive advantage (Barney, 1986; Yu & Cable, 2012). However despite previous studies espousing person-organization fit there remains a “general lack of understanding about why person-organization fit affects organizational attraction” (Yu, 2014).

Wanous (1977) points out that when people are searching for jobs within organizations one of the most important factors considered is what the people will gain from joining a particular organization. Often what is not stated in the organization’s promotional material is inferred by job researchers based on their past experience in other organizations (Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart, 1991; Sekiguchi, Huber, 2011). This demonstrates the importance of establishing perceived person-organization fit during the interview process in order to ensure that individual perceptions of an organization match actual aspects of the organization.

It is very important for organizations to thoroughly assess an individual applicant’s requirements and the actual outcomes of the job (Edwards, 1991). Previous research has indicated that personal-organization fit is influenced by a range of employee attitudes including “satisfaction, commitment, retention, citizenship behaviours and performance” (Seguchi et al., 2011; Artur, Bell, Villado & Doverspike, 2006; Edwards, 1991; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

### *Development of Hypotheses and Research Model*

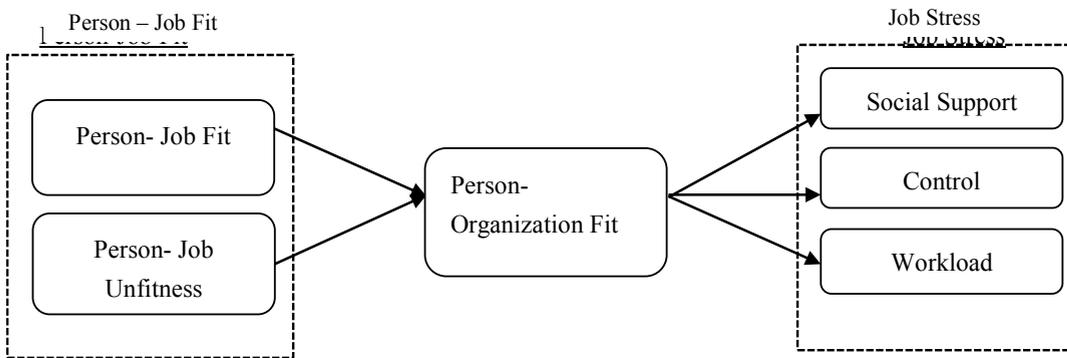
In the light of the related literature the main hypothesis to be tested can be formulated on two different levels:

H1: There is a significant relationship between person-job fit and job-stress.

H2: The perceived organization-person fit has a mediating role on the relation between person-job fit and job stress.

Due to the main hypotheses of the study, the research model is designed as follows (figure 1).

Figure 1. Research Model



### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1. Data Collection and Demographic Distribution of the Sample

Data of the research has been collected from companies of various size and from various sectors. A total of 135 valid questionnaires have been completed. The demographic profile of the participants was determined by frequency analysis. Respondents gender is almost equal (53.3 % female) and 29.6 % of them married. Additionally, participants were mainly composed of younger employees (only 8.1 % of them 41 and above ages). The educational level is also high, 88.9 % of participants have minimum bachelor degrees. 28.2 % from participants working in high level managerial positions, and rest of them are middle managers and supervisors. In addition, the organizational and sectoral tenure of the participants was asked. Participants were mostly working within the range 1-5 years (58.5 %). In the same sector, the working range is similar (51.9 % of them working 1-5 year range).

#### 3.2. Measures

The demographic properties, which were asked of the participants, were prepared by the researchers. The other parts of the questionnaires were developed using scales adopted from prior studies. All constructs are measured using five-point Likert scales (from strongly disagree =1 to strongly agree =5). Person- job fit is measured by the scale of Brkich, Jeffs and Carless (2002). The scale is composed of 9 items and the two dimensions are named as person-job fit and person-job unfitness. Person- organization fit is measured by the 4 items, one dimension scale of Netemeyer et al (1997) and job stress is measured by Theorell et al.'s (1988) 17 items, 3 dimensions stress scale, dimensions are social support, control and workload.

### 4. Data Analysis and Hypotheses Test Results

We used SPSS software 18.0 for the evaluation of our data. Factor analysis is used for the validity and the cronbach alpha scale is used to estimate the reliability of the scales. Correlation and regression analysis are conducted to analyze the hypotheses of the study.

#### 4.1 Factor Analysis:

Confirmatory factor analysis was done for all variables. Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation has been performed. Results for all the variables are shown in the Table 1. Total variance explained: 68.365; KMO= .823, df= 300 p=.000 results indicate that our dimensions are parallel to literature and our sample is suitable for the hypothesis analysis.

Table 1: Factor Loadings of the Variables

items	Factor-1 Social Support	Factor-2 Control	Factor-3 Person- Organization Fit	Factor-4 Person-Job Unfitness	Factor-5 Workload	Factor-6 Person-Job Fit
S10	,760					
S11	,747					
S12	,723					
S14	,705					
S13	,668					
S9	,490					
S5		,756				
S8		,754				
S7		,751				
S6		,673				
S4		,631				
PO3			,865			
PO4			,834			
POr2			,824			
PO1			,705			
PJ1				,806		
PJ2				,726		
PJ3				,697		
PJ4				,633		
S2					,878	
S1					,836	
S3					,734	
PJU3						,788
PJU2						,658
PJ1						,598

S=organizational stress; PO= person- organization fit; PJ= person- job fit; PJU= person- job unfitness

#### 4.2. Correlation Analysis:

We calculated mean and standard deviations for each variable and a correlation analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between dependent and independent variables. According to correlation analysis, all variables are correlated with each other except for person-organization fit and workload. In order to investigate the reliability scores for factors the cronbach alpha scale is used. As seen on the Table 2, all scores are above .70.

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation and Correlation Coefficients

	S.D.	MEAN	1	2	3	4	5	6
Social support	,77036	3,6877	(.834)	,480**	,445**	-,393**	,246**	,451**
Control	,85437	3,4563		(.836)	,297**	-,346**	,413**	,523**
Person-organization fit	,95976	3,2556			(.877)	-,426**	,048	,471**
Person-job unfitness	,99386	2,3778				(.793)	-,067	-,518**
Workload	,99373	3,6370					(.830)	,220*
Person- job fit	,91281	3,5753						(.772)

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### 4.3. Regression Analysis

At this point, because person-organization fit and workload dimensions have no significant correlations, hierarchical regression does not relate to mediating relationships. According to the hierarchical regression findings; person- job fit and person- job unfitness has an impact on person-organization fit and person- job fit has a significant effect on all stress dimensions (social support- control- workload) however person- job unfitness has no significant effect on control and workload dimensions. Person-organization fit has a significant effect on the other two stress dimensions (social support-control). Then analysis continues for determining the mediation effect. Person-organization fit has a partial mediating effect in the relationship between person- job fit and social support dimensions of job stress. Person-organization fit also has a partial mediation effect on person- job unfitness and social support dimensions. Additionally on the person- job unfitness and control dimensions relationship, person-organization fit also has a partial mediating effect. All regression analysis results are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Analysis Results

X1 → M X2 → M	F=24.003 R <sup>2</sup> =.267 P=.000	DW=1.860 VIF=1.366	X1=.342** X2=-.249*
X1 → Y1 X2 → Y1	F=20.622 R <sup>2</sup> =.238 P=.000	DW=2.016 VIF=1.366	X1=.338** X2=-.218*
X1 → Y2 X2 → Y2	F=25.863 R <sup>2</sup> =.282 P=.000	DW=2.136 VIF=1.366	X1=.471** X2=-.102
X1 → Y3 X2 → Y3	F=3.581 R <sup>2</sup> =.051 P=.031	DW=1.963 VIF=1.366	X1=.253* X2=-.065
M → Y1	F=32.879 R <sup>2</sup> =.198 P=.000	DW=1.984 VIF=1.000	M=.445**
M → Y2	F=12.87 R <sup>2</sup> =.088 P=.000	DW=2.178 VIF=1.000	M=.297**
X1*M → Y1	F=24.788 R <sup>2</sup> =.273 P=.000	DW=1.945 VIF=1.284	X1=.310** M=.299*
X1*M → Y2	F=25.319 R <sup>2</sup> =.277 P=.000	DW=2.149 VIF=1.284	X1=.493** M=.065
X2*M → Y1	F=21.858 R <sup>2</sup> =.249 P=.000	DW=1.989 VIF=1.221	X2=-.249* M=.339**
X2*M → Y2	F=11.369 R <sup>2</sup> =.147 P=.000	DW=2.173 VIF=1.221	X2=-.268* M=.183*

X1= person-job fit; X2=person-job unfitness; M= person-organization fit; Y1= social support; Y2=control; Y3=workload; DW= Durbin Watson. Last column contains standardized beta coefficients (\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05).

According to analysis results, the hypotheses of the study can be interpreted as follows:

H1a: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job fit and social support’; H1b: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job fit and control’; H1c: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job fit and workload’ is fully supported.

H1d: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job unfitnes and social support’ is also supported. However H1e: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job unfitnes and control’ and ‘H1f: ‘There is a significant relationship between person-job unfitnes and workload’ sub hypotheses are rejected. H1 hypothesis is partially accepted because only the social support dimension has a statistically significant relationship with the person-job unfitnes dimension.

When looking at the mediating relationships, H2a: ‘The perceived organization-person fit has a mediating role on the relation between person-job fit and social support’ is accepted. Additionally H2b: ‘The perceived organization-person fit has a mediating role on the relation between person-job unfitnes and social support’ and additionally H2c: ‘The perceived organization-person fit has a mediating role on the relation between person-job unfitnes and control’ are also supported. But H2d: ‘The perceived organization-person fit has a mediating role on the relation between person-job fit and control’ is rejected and H2 is partially accepted. Mediating hypotheses were not performed for workload dimensions because of the insignificant results for person-organization fit relationships. As a result of the regression findings of the study, all the main hypotheses of the study (H1 and H2) are supported.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, findings show that person-organization fit and workload have no effect on each other. However, person-job fit and job stress have statistically significant relationships. In particular, person-job fit dimension has a direct effect on all job stress dimensions while person-job unfitnes has an impact only on social support. When looking at the mediating relationships, for all person-job fit dimensions, person-organization fit mediates the relationship with social support and also mediates the control and person- job unfitnes relationship.

The findings indicate that showing regard to person- job fit is a substantial factor for decreasing job stress and the adjustment of employees to an organization is an important issue for eliminating stress. HR departments should take into consideration person-organization and also person-job fit in their selection and recruitment decisions. This study’s findings empirically supported that for today’s business world, the mentioned relationships are important factors for increasing desired outcomes such as performance and decreasing undesired ones such as turnover and dissatisfaction. This study concentrates on the person and organization fit for job stress. Lastly it is important to specify for future studies that the relationships with different organizational outputs such as satisfaction, well-being and also performance should be tested with regard to person- job and person- organization fit.

Previous studies have indicated that compliance problems in organizations cause stress and conflict. Further, conflict has a negative effect on person-organization fit resulting in low compatibility levels within organizations (e.g., Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Yang & Yu; 2014). Our study indicates that organizations which attend to person-job fit and thorough adjustment programs of employees will experience increased performance levels and low staff dissatisfaction and turnover. Future studies may focus on the role of organizations to provide flexible working conditions according to the changing needs of their employees. Similar research can also be organized with larger samples in different sectors of the workforce, in order to establish possible links between sectors and industries.

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