

# Person-Organization Fitment: A Conceptual Elaboration

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**Abstract:** *Person-organisation fit implies the congruence between the individual values and the organisational values. It occurs when the characteristics of the two entities become compatible to each other. It results in several outcomes such as higher fitment may lead to enhanced work-related attitude which in turn affects the organisation in wider context. Therefore, this paper aims to bring out a conceptual understanding of the term 'person-organisation fit', its relevance and interrelations between other constructs. After screening, around seventy-two referred journal articles from Scopus, Web of science and Google Scholar, except a few major historical research papers, contemporary and recent research articles have been studied for compilation of this article. This paper identifies and discusses major and emerging research themes and have suggested some future scope of exploration in the filed of person-organisation fitment.*

**Keywords:** *Person-organisation fit, outcomes, fitment.*

“The People Make the Place” (Schneider, 1987).

## Introduction

Research on person-environment fit (PE fit) has gained its utmost importance in fields like industrial psychology, organisational behaviour and human resource management. The basic idea behind the fit theory is that, some individuals possessing certain traits or attributes that suits well or are conducive to the work environment than that of others and the intensity of fit proves beneficial for both: the individual employee as well as the organisation. The appropriateness of fit between the organisation and its environment influences both: the person (P-side) and the environment (E-side). When the fitment is

adequate, the functioning and performance of individual within the organisation becomes conducive and similarly if the fitment becomes unsuitable it leads to maladjustment at individual level like workplace stress and dissatisfaction. It also begets consequences at the environmental level encouraging absenteeism and affecting performance.

According to the fit perspective, both people and organisational environment are embedded in the principles of reciprocal determination, which implies, “people are both producers and products

of social systems” (Bandura, 1997; Frese et al., 2007; Cooman, 2022). People act as interactive agents in the organisational environment in which they operate by co-creating it through their interpersonal relationships and in the similar manner their own attributes are also shaped by the social aspects in which they operate (Denissen et al., 2014).

French and colleagues (1974) were the first to coin the term ‘person-environment fit’ followed by Kurt Lewin (1951) stating that behaviour is a function of people and the environment in which they operate. As per Lewin, both the entities (people and the environment) bring their relevant attributes or traits into mix in the workplace. As per him, behaviour is denoted with a heuristic formula:

$$B=f(P,E)$$

Where B denotes behaviour of an individual is a function of person (P) and environment (E) representing an individual’s personal trait like his abilities, values and beliefs and the characteristics of organisational environment like its culture, values and work demands.

#### **Complementary and Supplementary fit:**

There are two forms of fit like complementary and supplementary, as far as fit theory is concerned. (1) The complementary fit occurs when an individual possesses the trait that are needed by the organisation and vice versa. It mainly emphasises on the occasions where “the weaknesses or needs of the environment are set aside by the strength of the individual and vice-versa” (Muchinsky and Monahan, 1987). Thus, complementary fit is said to exist when the individual offers what the organisation requires in terms of abilities, values and beliefs or it may also refer to an organisation rewarding the individual, as per the requirement (2) But when the individual as well as the environmental attributes are similar to each other (such as the individual values are compatible with that of the organisation’s) that is termed as supplementary fit. When an organisation hires an employee who

possesses certain skills that matches with the skills of the existing workforce then it is termed as supplementary fit. Researches reveal that complementary fit approach has been established through psychological need fulfilment (Edwards, 1991) whereas supplementary fit mostly stresses on the perspective of value congruence approach (Kristof, 1996). Kristof (1996) has summarised fit broadly into two categories: Needs-Supplies (NS) that happens when the organisation supplies resources support and individual needs fall on the same line and Demand-Abilities (DA) states the kind of knowledge, abilities and skills required by the organisation are possessed by the individual. Thus, in fit theory, the conceptualisation of supplementary and complementary fit occurs as per the compatibility of attributes of individual and organisation/environment (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005).

#### **Types of fit concepts:**

In the context of work environment, the term ‘fitment’ has a very wide connotation including a variety of fit concepts such as person-vocation fit, person-job fit, person-organisation fit, person-team fit and person-supervisor fit. Person-vocation fit is the compatibility between interest of individual to accept a particular vocation and has the matching characteristics. required to perform the vocation. Person-job fit is the alignment of the need and abilities of an individual with the demand and supplies of the job. Person-organisation fit is the congruence between the individual values with that of the organisational values. Person-team fit implies the fitment between the individual trait and attributes with that of the work group in which the person is a member. Person-supervisor fit states the compatibility between the attributes of the individual and behaviour and acceptance by the supervisor.

Among these above stated fitment concepts found in the work settings, person-vocation fit and person-job fit comes under complementary form of fitment as they emphasised on attributes stating needs and abilities which are complemented by the demand and supplies made

by the environment or vice versa. However, the rest of fitments such as person-organisation fitment, person-team fitment and person-supervisor fitment are considered under the category of supplementary fits considering congruence in attributes like goals, values and personalities.

#### **Person-Organisation fit and its measurement:**

This paper has been confined with the detailed aspect of person-organisation fit which has gained immense attention in research in the field of organisational psychology and human resource management. An attempt has been made to explain the concept of person-organisation fit; its impact in fostering individual outcomes as well as organisational outcomes established through various relevant research studies. It is said that person-organisation fit is established when the values of the individual employee is in congruence with the values of the organisation. Personal values have been defined as, “abstract beliefs about desirable, trans-situational goals which serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (Vecchione et al., 2016). Values that direct individuals’ attitude and behaviour are self-conceptualised and are relatively unchanging with respect to situations and time. Considering the organisational perspective, values are the basic foundation that shapes its culture (Schein 2004). Schneider and colleagues (1998) through the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework stated that an organisation is known by the kind of people working in it. ASA framework establishes that ‘people are attracted to, selected by, and stay in organisations in which their personal attributes match’ (Vianen, 2018). This

gradually results in homogenous representation of personalities in the workplace shaping the structures, processes and culture of the organisation, which basically constitute the work environment. However, research evidences cite that fit is relatively less significant relationship with turnover, job choice decisions and job offers (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). This implies that other factors such as financial benefits or certain

economic factors may affect the decisions as well.

Further, person-organisation fit has been conceptualised as actual fit and perceived fit (Kristof-Brown and Billsberry, 2013). Edwards (2008) explained actual fit as the ‘objective measurement of person-organisation variables so that person-organisation fit is calculated externally to the individual’. But perceived fit represents, ‘employees’ psychological construction, their own fitment with that of the organisation’. Edwards and colleagues (2006) have further reviewed the measurement of person-organisation fit into three essential forms: atomic, molar and molecular forms to evaluate the compatibility between individual and the organisations. Atomic measurement method uses statistical techniques to assess the fitment by segregating the characteristics of the individual and organisation into separate variables. More often polynomial regression and response surface analysis are used for the measurement of variables relating to both individual and organisations. Using atomic measurement method both actual and indirect conceptualisation of person-organisation fit is done taking data that are objective rather than subjective.

Second method is molar measurement method, that uses direct measures like surveys or self-reports to assess the employee’s fitment in an organisation. This method is used to evaluate the perceived fit. The last one is the molecular measurement method, which is used to assess the mis-fit or discrepancies that exist between the employee and the organisation. As like the molar measurement method the molecular measurement uses the direct measures to identify the differences or the person-organisation misfit. The three forms of measurement method bring into context the way person-organisation fit is conceptualised, where in atomic method uses objective data whereas the molar and molecular method uses subjective data for stating the perceptions regarding the fit or the misfit (Deng et al., 2015; Zubielevitch et al., 2021).

**Table: Person-organization fit Measurement Techniques:**

Types of measurement	Features	Examples
<b>Atomic</b>	The characteristics of the individual employee and the organisation are evaluated separately. The fit is then calculated using statistical methods e.g., polynomial regression	Here the employee rate his own values and also rate organisation's values separately using survey questionnaire method, e.g., for self- "I value innovation" and for the organisation – "The organisation values innovation". After survey, statistical methods are used for evaluating the compatibility. Researchers like Edwards (1994) has used this technique.
<b>Molar</b>	Here the individual employee gives an overall perception about fit between self and organisation.	Researchers like Cable and Judge (1996) and Kristof- Brown et al., (2005) have used molar measurement technique. It includes questions like "I feel that my values and personality are a good fit with my organisation".
<b>Molecular</b>	Here the individual assesses fit by focussing on specific aspect/dimensions of fitment/mis-fitment with that of the organisation.	Researchers like O'Reilly et al., (1991) used Organisational Culture Profile (OCP) to measure fitment on dimensions like innovation and teamwork. Chatman (1991) has also used specific dimensions. Cable and DeRue (2002) has measured fit on specific dimensions of values, personality and goals.

*Source: Author's compilation*

#### **Importance of Person-organisation fit:**

Person-organisation fit entails various individual and organisational outcomes ( Kristof 1996). Studies reveal higher level of Person-organisation fit that are generally related to higher levels of work-related attitudes and behaviour such as increased level of job satisfaction, enhanced organisational commitment, employee retention level, employee performance and organisational citizenship behaviours (Das 2022; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The organisational outcomes from the research studies of person-organisation fit are not much clear. Higher levels of person-organisation fit have resulted in increased level of homogeneity among employee (Schneider 1987; Schneider et al., 1998). As a result of employee homogeneity, organisations may not be suitable for change as process thereby fostering less creativity. Nevertheless, studies

have also revealed that higher levels of person-organisation fit when operationalised with person-group fit, lowers conflict and encourages creativity (O'Reilly et al., 1998). Hence, the several research studies of person-organisation fit reveals conducive result regarding the psychology of individual employee (Vogel et al., 2016; Lamiani et al., 2018; Follmer et al., 2018) but the effect of higher levels of person-organisation fit on organisation are still debatable.

#### **Person-organisation fit and its outcomes:**

A plethora of studies have been undertaken to establish the interrelations of person-organisation fit and other constructs. Person-organisation fit research has explored its route across various work-related attitudes like organisational

commitment (Karabay, 2020; Park and Lee 2020; Alqahtani, 2024) job satisfaction (Kerse, 2021; Ruzungunde et al., 2024; Kansal and Sengupta 2023; Yang et al., 2023), organisational citizenship behaviour (Chen, 2024; Yang et al., 2024; Jufrizen et al., 2024), employee engagement (Lv and Xu, 2018). In a bibliometric study of person-organisation fit published in *Management Review Quartely*, Subramanian et al., (2022) has vividly mapped the person-organisation fit research stating that the research interest in person-organisation fit began in 1982 by Matteson and Ivancevich (1982) using the term 'individual and organisational fit'. Subramaniam et al., (2022) stated that between the year 2000 to 2010, there was a five-fold times increase in the number of papers published relating

to person-organisation fit. Further, it has been an emerging topic of research in the domains of management and behavioural science.

Several research studies have explained the relationship of person-organisation fit and employee engagement. Memon et al. (2019) established person-organisation fit as a predictor of employee engagement which thereby reduces employee intention to leave. Studies have revealed that person-organisation fit establishes a direct effect of employee engagement over promotive voice behaviour. Sekhar et al., (2018) mentions that flexible HRM affects the relationship between person-organisation fit and employee engagement level thereby impacting their job performance.

Certain studies have even explored person-organisation fit as a mediating and moderating component between constructs. Chawla (2020) and (Rawshdeh et al., 2019) have found Person-organisation fit to partially mediate the positive relationship between socially responsible HRM practices and employee engagement and employer branding and employee engagement. Pham et al., (2024) have established a moderating effect of person-organisation fit on the relationship between ethical leadership and innovative work behaviours. Studies also have brought the mediation relationship of both

person-organisation fit and organisational identification over employer branding and employee retention (Rai and Nandy, 2021). Rodrigues et al., (2020) attempted a study on Job crafting, Person-organisation fit, person-job fit and psychological well-being.

Recent research of Person-organisation fit has tried to establish relationship with organisational ethical climate (Al Halbusi et al., 2020), ethical leadership (Dimitriou and Schwepker, 2019), Spirituality level of both employees and the organisation (Koburtay and Haloub, 2022), Socially responsible HRM practices (Zhao et al., 2021) and enhancing organisational justice (Ai Halbusi et al., 2020). However, it is quite evident that person-organisation fit positively affects employee ethical behaviour as there is congruence in the value system but more to be explored in this area, taking into consideration person-organisation fit and employee ethical behaviour.

## Discussion

The research of person-organisation fit has made visible contribution to the body of knowledge in terms of individual outcomes like employee engagement, job satisfaction and employee intention to leave. Scarce research is visible in the organisational outcome context like organisational culture, organisational performance and others. Research studies have warned

about nature of homogeneity through the prevalence of person-organisation fit which may lead to "dry rot" (Schneider, 1987). Several research studies have revealed that higher level of person-organisation fit may result in biasness and unfairness in organisations (Amis et al, 2020; Powell, 1998). This paves path to the future research studies on person-organisation fit conducted empirically including dependent variables from the organisational level.

Also, the concept of fitment has been studied parallelly and there is a body of research on mis-fit. Research in future to explore the co-existence of fit and mis-fit. Let's say there can be persons

who are perfectly fit and few who are fit to the job but not to the organisation, hence such contradictions and implications can be explored in future research works in person- organisation fit. Fitment to the organisation can be established through recruitment, screening and socialisation. But this is done at the initial process of hiring the newly recruit to the organisation where person-job is primarily examined but gradually for higher positions in career ladder the fitment of person and organisation is of paramount importance where employee engagement and satisfaction matters. Hence certain studies concerning fitment of person and organisation has to be conducted on longitudinal basis to determine the impact of HRM interventions over time.

## Conclusion

Person-organisation fit is a vital concept in human resource management studies as it influences employee work-related attitudes and behaviour. Organisation implementing a number of interventions and strategies to achieve a match between employee values, beliefs, norms similar to its own structure, culture and values. Higher is the alignment, research studies reveal, positive is the employee's satisfaction level, commitment level and engagement level as a result of which organisational culture and performance are influenced. This has also been contradicted by few of research studies stating that homogeneity at times restricts innovative behaviour of the employees. Further studies have examined that the role of responsible leadership and ethical leadership need to be taken into consideration. In the dynamic business environment with the accelerated pace of technological advancement, person-organisation fit research and organisation at practising approaches to enhance it, holds greater importance for getting cutting-edge competitive advantage.

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