



Umbrella Summary

Employee Fit

A Summary of Workforce Research Evidence Relevant to the Child Welfare Field

What is employee fit?

Broadly defined, fit is said to be the “compatibility between individuals and organizations” (Kristof, 1996, p. 3). Early theories of fit proposed that alignment between individuals’ personalities and their environment would lead to greater personal success and happiness; for example, those with social personalities would find the greatest fulfillment in work roles involving helping people, such as a social worker or nurse (Holland, 1985). Since then, the idea of fit has been expanded to include not just alignment of personality, but also attitudes, values, preferences, needs, goals, knowledge, skills, and abilities (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Fit is conceptualized in a number of different ways. One manner in which researchers distinguish fit is whether the fit is supplementary or complementary. Supplementary fit occurs when there are similarities between an individual and their environment; in other words, the individual fits in with what is already there (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Conversely, complementary fit occurs when an individual fills a gap in the current work environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). For example, an employee may bring a new skill or ability to the workplace that other coworkers lack.

Fit is also often conceptualized at varying levels of analysis. It is typically broken down into the following types: person-environment fit, person-vocation fit, person-job fit, person-group fit, person-supervisor fit, and person-organization fit. Despite these many separate types of fit, research indicates that these fit constructs all tend to be moderately related to each other (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

- ▶ Person-environment (P-E) fit is the broadest level of fit and occurs when there is alignment between individuals and their work environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). P-E fit is often used as an umbrella term to encompass all other types of fit, as they all occur between an individual and their larger work environment.
- ▶ Person-vocation (P-V) fit occurs when people’s careers match their interests (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Further information on this concept of fit will be covered in a separate upcoming umbrella summary.
- ▶ Person-job (P-J) fit occurs when there is a good match “between a person’s characteristics and those of the job or tasks that are performed at work” (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005, p. 284). Two specific types of P-J fit include demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit. Demands-abilities fit occurs when the abilities and skills possessed by the employee align with job requirements, and needs-supplies fit occurs when what the

employee needs or desires within their role is met by the job they are assigned (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

- ▶ Person-group (P-G) fit, sometimes called person-team fit, looks at the level of compatibility between an individual and their team or work group (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).
- ▶ Person-supervisor (P-S) fit looks at the dyadic relationship of an employee and their supervisor and whether characteristics like their values, goals, and personalities are compatible with each other (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).
- ▶ Person-organization (P-O) fit is defined as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both” (Kristof, 1996, p. 4).

How is employee fit typically measured?

There is quite a bit of diversity in how fit is measured. Three main types of measurement include perceived fit, subjective fit, and objective fit. Perceived fit is simplest, and it is found by asking individuals to rate their perceptions of how well they fit with a specific reference point, such as the group, supervisor, job, or organization (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Thus, measures of perceived fit focus on perceptions, rather than explicitly measuring characteristics of the individual or the environment. In contrast, the measurement of subjective and objective fit involves rating specific characteristics of the person and environment. The environment in this case could refer to whichever level of measurement (e.g., organization, job) is most important to the researcher or practitioner. Subjective fit is measured by comparing ratings of the individual and the environment, as rated by the same employee respondent (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Objective fit is calculated using person and environment ratings from different sources (Arthur et al., 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Typically, individuals provide ratings of their own characteristics, which are then compared with an aggregate rating of the environment from all applicable organizational members’ perspectives. Fit is then measured as the congruence between one’s self-rating and the overall environmental rating (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006).

The measurement of fit may also differ based on the timing of the assessment. Before an individual chooses to enter an organization, they likely develop judgments about how well they would fit with the organization, based on all the available information at their disposal (e.g., organization’s website, recruitment process, site visit, discussion with interviewers; Ostroff & Zhan, 2012). Likewise, during the recruitment process, the organizational representatives may be making judgments about how well they think the applicant will fit with the organization. Organizations may even utilize commercial hiring measures for fit in order to assess the anticipated degree of fit that the applicants will have with the organization, and they may make judgment calls for hiring based off of the results of these measures or in conjunction with other pre-employment assessments. Thus, during this pre-hire phase, perceptions of anticipatory fit

may be measured. Once an applicant has joined and worked for the organization, the employee and organization can then develop perceptions about the degree of fit that was ultimately achieved (Ostroff & Zhan, 2012).

There are quite a number of scales that may be used for actually measuring perceived fit. One of the most common measures consists of three items assessing perceived P-O fit, which include the statements, “The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values,” “My personal values match my organization’s values and culture,” and “My organization’s values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life” (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Perceived fit can also be measured using the Perceived Person-Environment Fit Scale (PPEFS) which consists of four different measures, including the Person-Job Fit Scale (PJFS), Person-Organization Fit Scale (POFS), Person-Group Fit Scale (PGFS), and Person-Supervisor Fit Scale (PSFS; Chuang et al., 2016). Using this scale, items are rated from 1 (no match) to 7 (complete match). Example items include “How would you describe the match between your professional skills, knowledge, and abilities and those required by the job?” (PJFS), “How would you describe the match between your emphasis and your organization’s emphasis on achievement?” (POFS), “How would you describe the match between you and your group members on personality?” (PGFS), and “How would you describe the match between your work style and your supervisor’s work style?” (Chuang et al., 2016). Importantly, these four measures are each distinct, so composite fit scores should be calculated separately for each measure (Chuang et al., 2016).

Why is fit important?

Fit is important because it is linked to recruiting outcomes and employee behaviors and attitudes. The consequences of fit depend on the specific type of fit that is examined.

Applicants

- ▶ Perceptions of person-organization fit as measured during the recruiting process are strongly related to applicant attraction to the organization and whether individuals intend to pursue a job, but are not ultimately related to job-choice decisions (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012).
- ▶ Perceptions of anticipated P-J fit are strongly related to applicant attraction to the organization, but not to job-choice decisions (Uggerslev et al., 2012).
- ▶ Perceived fit (which in this case is defined as encompassing both P-O fit and P-J fit), results indicate that perceived fit is strongly related to job-pursuit intentions and organizational attraction, moderately related to job-acceptance intentions, and is not related to job-choice decisions (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Additionally, research on fit at different time points indicates that the strength of the relationship between fit and applicant attraction tends to remain constant over the recruiting process (Uggerslev et al., 2012).

Employees

- ▶ Person-job fit: P-J fit is strongly related to employee attitudes of job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). It also has a moderate, positive relationship with organizational commitment and a moderate, negative relationship with intent to quit. However, P-J fit is not related to job performance or turnover.
- ▶ Person-group fit: P-G fit has a moderate, positive relationship with employee job satisfaction and a moderate, negative relationship with intentions to quit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). P-G fit is also modestly related to job performance and has no significant relationships with organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors.
- ▶ Person-supervisor fit: The only significant finding regarding P-S fit is that it is moderately related to job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). P-S fit is not related to job performance or organizational commitment.
- ▶ Person-organization fit: P-O fit has moderate relationships with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, contextual performance, turnover, and turnover intentions (Arthur et al., 2006). P-O fit is also modestly related to job performance, and this positive relationship between P-O fit and job performance is stronger when P-O fit is measured as perceived fit versus subjective or objective fit.

What contributes to fit?

Person-environment fit may be influenced by different factors during varying stages in the recruiting and employment process. On a theoretical level, the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework proposes that individuals will be attracted to organizations that have similar characteristics or values, and organizations are likely to select employees that are similar to them (Schneider, 1987). Once employed by the organization, attrition is likely to occur for employees that do not match the values held by the organization. Thus, those who remain at the organization are likely to be similar to each other and have high levels of fit due to these similarities (Schneider, 1987).

When examining the possible antecedents of fit on an empirical level, meta-analytic evidence indicates that job applicants' pre-hire perceptions of fit are influenced by a number of different factors. Specifically, characteristics of the job, organization, and recruitment process are all moderately related to perceived fit (Uggerslev et al., 2012). Perceived fit is not related to recruiter behaviors or applicant perceptions of alternative employment opportunities. For more information on other factors that are associated with recruiting outcomes, see the umbrella summary on [recruitment](#).

Once a new employee starts working at an organization, newcomer [socialization](#) tactics (also known as onboarding) may influence the degree to which an employee perceives they fit well at the organization (Saks et al., 2006). Formal socialization, which is characterized by separating a newcomer from current employees during a socialization period, is moderately associated with perceptions of fit. Further, when there are multiple newcomers, grouping them together

so they can collectively share in socialization experiences is also moderately and positively associated with perceived fit. Sequential and fixed socialization, which involve discrete socialization steps and a timetable for completing them, respectively, also have moderate relationships with perceived fit. Being given a mentor/role model, termed serial socialization, and having one's identity supported and affirmed, termed investiture, are also moderately associated with perceptions of fit. Out of all six socialization tactics, the social-based tactics of investiture and serial socialization have the strongest influence on one's ratings of perceived fit (Saks et al., 2006). Thus, how new employees are brought into the organization and familiarized with the people, job, and work culture may be an important component of how they come to perceive of their person-environment fit. Additionally, research indicates that perceived fit is an important partial mediator of the relationships between socialization tactics and job performance, intentions to quit, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Saks et al., 2006).

Though the primary purpose of employee selection processes is to optimize the match between an employee and their job, there do not appear to be any meta-analyses examining this connection. Best practice, however, is to first identify the job demands—tasks and required knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs)—through a process called job analysis. Hiring strategies are then designed to assess the KSAOs that cannot or will not be acquired through training or on-the-job experience. Likewise, training curriculum is designed to impart KSAOs that were not required at hire and cannot or will not be acquired on the job. Collectively, the goal is to ensure the best fit between job demands and employees. It is particularly important to use job analysis as the basis for any decisions about the optimal type of personality needed to perform the job. Without that foundation, attempts to achieve fit between new employees and their supervisors or teams could lead to biased hiring decisions. When supervisors and/or team members are involved in hiring decisions, candidates may more likely be selected because of their perceived similarity (and therefore familiarity) to the hiring panel than to the demands of the job. This can compromise the equity of the hiring process and reduce workforce diversity. Thus, any attempts to increase employee fit through the hiring process should be made with caution.

QIC-WD Takeaways

- ▶ Fit consists of the congruence between individuals and their work environment.
- ▶ Fit can be labeled as supplementary (when individuals are similar to their organization) or complementary (when individuals fill a gap in their organization).
- ▶ There are many different types of fit, including person-environment (P-E) fit, person-vocation (P-V) fit, person-job (P-J) fit, person-group (P-G) fit, person-supervisor (P-S) fit, and person-organization (P-O) fit.
- ▶ Anticipated P-J fit is strongly related to applicant organizational attraction, but not to job choice decisions.
- ▶ Anticipated P-O fit is strongly related to job pursuit intentions and organizational attraction, but is not related to job choice.

- ▶ P-J fit is strongly related to job satisfaction, has moderate relationships with organizational commitment and intent to quit, and is not related to job performance or turnover
- ▶ P-G fit has moderate relationships with job satisfaction and intent to quit, is modestly related to job performance, and is not related to organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors.
- ▶ P-S fit is moderately related to job satisfaction and has no relationship with job performance or organizational commitment.
- ▶ P-O fit has moderate relationships with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, contextual performance, turnover, and turnover intentions, and is modestly related to job performance.
- ▶ Characteristics of the job, organization, and recruitment process are all moderately related to pre-hire perceptions of fit.
- ▶ Several onboarding strategies are associated with employee fit.
- ▶ Fit can be measured by looking at perceived fit, subjective fit, or objective fit. Those wanting to measure perceived fit should consider using the three-item measure from Cable and DeRue (2002) or the four measures within the Perceived Person-Environment Fit Scale (PPEFS) from Chuang and colleagues (2016).
- ▶ Efforts to improve employee fit via hiring processes should be made in accordance with professional and legal guidelines.

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