Understanding the Role of Person-Group Fit in Driving Job Performance: A Focus on the Interaction of PG Fit*

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This study explores how the interactive relation of person-group (PG) fit affects job performance. From the standpoint of situation strength theory, this study hypothesizes an interactive effect of PG fit content dimensions such as value and personality fit as boundary conditions, on the relationship between PG demands-abilities (DA) fit and job performance. Our analysis finds that when the boundary condition of fit (value and personality fit) is low, the main effect of DA fit on job performance is positive. In contrast, the main effect is negative when the boundary condition is high. The present study also reexamines new phenomena often overlooked in fit studies, providing practical implications for organizational research.

Keywords: *Person-group (PG) fit, demands-abilities (DA) fit, value fit, personality fit, content dimension, job performance*

Introduction

Over the years, plenty of research has delved into the antecedents and consequences of person-environment (PE) fit, particularly its effect on organizational outcomes (Edwards and Shipp 2007; van Vianen 2018). Researchers have dealt with a wide range of its outcomes, including commitment to the organization, job involvement and satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, and task performance (Kristof-Brown and Jansen 2007; Greguras and Diefendorff 2009; van Vianen 2018).

However, there has been criticism in the fit literature that, with the exception of a small number of studies (Greguras and Diefendorff 2009; Seong and Kristof-Brown 2012), the interactive effects of different types regarding fit have not been investigated yet. In earlier studies, scholars have considered person-organization (PO) fit, based on the extent to which one's values, goals, personality traits, and/or abilities match with an organization, as criteria for PE fit. These criteria have often been utilized to identify the level of similarity or dissimilarity between individuals, teams and groups, and organizations (Verquer et al. 2003). However, relatively little effort has been made to compare and contrast different operationalizations of fit (Kristof-Brown 2000; Seong and Kristof-Brown 2012). Simultaneous consideration of the various sub-dimensions of PO fit is especially essential to refine our understanding regarding the effect of fit on work-related outcomes. To fill this gap in the literature, this study investigates differential types of person-group (PG) fit based on the content dimensionality of fit constructs. PG fit has been defined as "the compatibility between individuals and their workgroups" (Kristof 1996, p. 7). Specifically, we focus on individual perceptions of fit with one's demands-abilities (hereafter, DA), values, and personalities, and ultimately on the interactive impact of these factors on employee performance.

In order to address this issue, we need to identify the unique features that characterize particular types of fit (Kristof-Brown and Jansen 2007). This study attempts to contribute to fit studies as follows. First, it explores the impacts of three different fit content dimensions on job performance: PG DA fit, value fit, and personality fit. More precisely, the study extends fit literature by testing the effect of PG DA fit on job performance and considering other fit dimensions (value fit and personality fit) as boundary conditions. Second, this study will fill research gaps by revealing how the three types of fit differentially affect job performance. Most previous studies have been directed toward the effects of PG fit on affective outcomes such as employee

satisfaction, workplace stress, organizational commitment and work engagement (Kristof 1996; Cable and DeRue 2002). Balanced research concerned with behavioral and affective aspects of organizational outcomes, such as task-related outcomes explored in our study, can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of PG fit sub-dimensions along the various features of organizational behavior.

Hypothesis Development

Situational Strength Theory and Person-Group Fit

This study explores a causal relationship between DA fit and job performance, moderated by value and personality fit derived from the theoretical concept of situational strength (Meyer et al. 2010; Judge and Zapata 2015; Keiller et al. 2019). Situational strength represents an implicit or explicit clue to the potential behavior desired by an external agency (Meyer et al., 2010). Situational strength places psychological pressure on individuals to exhibit or commit to specific behaviors or to avoid them altogether.

According to situational strength theory, strong situations function as distinct organizational norms to induce or suppress individuals' behavioral outcomes. Thus, a strong situation acts as a contextual factor that induces a more uniform response among individual members. Dispersion in dependent variables reflects how differently an individual behaves or performs compared to other members within the same settings. The central tenet of situational strength theory indicates that strong situations limit the extent of an individual's behavior or outcome, resulting in a decrease in this variability (Bowling et al. 2015). This indicates that the intensity of a given situation inhibits the variance of the dependent variable, weakening the predictability from other independent variables (Michel 1973, 1977; Meyer et al. 2009).

The components of situational strength constitute contextual factors that affect the predictor-criterion relationship. In this case, the variance of the dependent variable is shaped or structured by contextual constraints. As described by Keller et al. (2019), these restricted variance effects represent certain types of interactions in which contextual strength influences the variance of the dependent variable. When this is limited, the relationship between the predictor variable and the dependent variable weakens (Cortina et al. 2019). This means that in strong situations (e.g., constrained situations),

the range of results is limited, making it difficult to detect significant and direct causal relationships between variables.

In a departure from existing studies on conceptualizing situational strength in person-situation interactions (Mischel 1973, 1977; Meyer et al. 2009, 2010; Bowling et al. 2015; Keeler et al. 2019), this study incorporates two fit variables (value and personality fit) as situational factors. Organizations are full of complex situations that provide various stimuli (Judge and Zapata 2015). Distinguishing between strong and weak situations within organizations based on situational strength can bring about an interesting theoretical and practical framework. Strong situations constrain individual behavior through a high level of normative clarity or psychological pressure. Nguyen and Borteyrou (2016) found that occupations with strong homogeneous characteristics signal the presence of a strong situation. Similarly, this study presupposes that value fit and personality fit will act as contextual factors. High value fit and high personality fit are expected to make workers aware of a strong organizational situation based on homogeneity, resulting in personal behavioral outcomes that limit job performance.

Interactive Effects of Different Fit Dimensions Based on Situational Strength Theory

PG fit emphasizes the degree of similarities in personal attributes among team members or between work demands and individual capabilities (Kristof-Brown 2000). Among them, DA fit occurs when an employee's abilities meet the criteria required by the team. Since this particular type of fit is directly associated with an individual's work competency, it has a close and significant relationship with job-related outcomes. In fact, fit perceptions regarding ability and expertise have been consistently shown to affect work behavior, organizational identification, and turnover intention (Tang et al. 2021).

As mentioned above, most prior studies emphasize the positive effects of PG fit. However, according to situational strength theory, high fit might signal the presence of high situational strength, which limits individual behavior and negatively affects job-related outcomes accordingly. In situations with strong work demands and lack of control, individuals are less likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Häuser et al. 2010). This implies that various fit dimensions will interactively limit individual behavior as distinct contextual factors. Similarly, studies have shown that fit perception is

influenced by the interaction between individuals and their organizational environments, resulting in dynamic changes for work-related outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005). Thus, rather than focusing on the direct relationship between DA fit and individual job performance, our study develops a theoretical framework where different fit dimensions are intertwined as situational factors and influence the relationship in an interactive fashion. Considering that the intensity of a situation can vary depending on several aspects, we include multiple types of fit rather than a single-dimensional fit.

Situational strength increases as the specific clues to fit dimensions are more pronounced. If strong situational factors exist, the effect of DA fit on job performance will be reduced or negatively polarized because the high level of value and personality fit conflict with each other for job performance. Seong and Choi (2023) demonstrated that value fit at the individual level can function as a negative situational factor by inhibiting the positive relationship between ability fit and an individual's proactive behavior. Thus, high value fit and/or high personality fit are likely to work as a contingency that suppresses the active behaviors of members and pressures them to exhibit behavior consistent with group norms. Substantial value and personality fit may activate a stable climate and inhibit DA fit in the team. Therefore, strong situations deliver clear guidelines for norms and structures within organizations (Meyer et al. 2010).

Conversely, conditions in which low value fit and low personality fit coexist are perceived as weak situations. In particular, individuals with high DA fit can perceive weak situations as an organizational environment with less normative constraints and may feel free to exert their abilities. Because weak situations do not restrict the desired behavioral path, individuals can act freely according to their own motivations and work preferences (Meyer et al. 2010). Following this logic, the effect of DA fit on job performance is expected to vary based on the following circumstances: (1) conditions with either high value fit or high personality fit, (2) conditions with both high value and personality fit, and (3) conditions with both low value fit and personality fit. The first two conditions listed above are considered strong situations, where the relationship between DA fit and job performance is likely to be suppressed and negative. The final condition is considered a weak situation, where the relationship between DA fit and job performance is expected to be more positive. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1: There is a three-way interactive effect of DA fit, value fit, and personality fit on job performance, such that the effect of DA fit on job performance is positive at the low levels of value and personality fit (i.e., in a weak situation) and the effect of DA fit on job performance is negative at their high levels (i.e., in a strong situation).

Method

Procedures

We collected data from employees and their team leaders at a private firm in the manufacturing sector in Korea at two points in time. In the first round of data collection (T1), team members first responded to a questionnaire, which included survey questions except for the items designed to evaluate the team member's job performance. Then, two weeks later (T2), team leaders filled out the questionnaire to assess each member's performance. Of the 550 employees of the firm, 248 (response rate 45.09%) completed the questionnaires. Excluding incomplete cases, the final sample size was reduced to 211.

Measures

    Demands-abilities fit (T1). We measured demands-abilities (DA) fit by adopting three items ($\alpha = .89$) based on Cable and DeRue (2002). The items included "The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills."
    Value fit (T1). We measured value fit with a three-item measure ($\alpha = .94$) based on prior research by Cable and DeRue (2002). The items included "The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values."
    Personality fit (T1). We assessed personality fit by measuring the personality fit ($\alpha = .94$) adapted from Cable and DeRue (2002). The items included "My personality fits with my team's personality."
    Job performance (T2). We evaluated job performance assessed by their supervisor using five items ($\alpha = .91$) adapted from Williams and Anderson (1991).
    Control variables. We controlled gender and age in our analysis.

Results

We carried out confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the distinctness of the items analyzed in this study. We checked this four-factor model against plausible alternative models. The results found that the hypothesized model is the best-fitted one ($\chi 2$ ($df = 71$) = 163.65, $p < .001$; CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .074, SRMR = .041). The results of CFA are shown

TABLE 1

CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AMONG VARIABLES

Model	Description	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	χ^2/df	RMSEA	SRMR	Change from Model 4	
									$\Delta \chi^2$	Δdf
1	One-factor model	1380.07***	77	.47	.37	17.92	.297	.219	1216.41	6
2	Two-factor model[a]	612.35***	76	.82	.78	8.05	.172	.079	448.70	5
3	Three-factor model[b]	359.39***	74	.90	.88	4.86	.127	.048	196.28	3
4	Four-factor model[c]	163.65***	71	.97	.96	2.31	.074	.041		

Notes: n = 211. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation.
SRMR = standardized root mean residual.
[a] Fit perception (value fit, personality fit, and DA fit) combined together as one construct.
[b] Value fit and personality fit combined.
[c] Hypothesized model.

TABLE 2

MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS AMONG ALL INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL VARIABLES

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	40.33	8.52						
2. Gender	1.34	.47	−.23**					
3. PG DA fit	5.74	.81	.05	.02	(.89)			
4. PG value fit	5.38	.94	.09	−.09	.62**	(.94)		
5. PG personality fit	5.38	.99	.05	−.03	.66**	.69**	(.94)	
6. Job performance	5.38	.85	.02	−.04	.07	−.02	.07	(.91)

Notes: n = 211. The reliability coefficients appear in parentheses along the main diagonal.
PG DA fit = Person-group demands-abilities fit.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

in Table 1. Table 2 shows the study variables' descriptive statistics.

To test our hypothesis, we implemented hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Raudenbush and Bryk 2002), the results of which are presented in Table 3. We used mean-centered predictor variables to compute interaction terms. In Step 1, we inserted two demographic variables into the equation as controls in predicting job performance. In Step 2, three dimensions of PG fit were added. Among them, value fit was significant ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .05$). On the other hand, DA and personality fit were not significant ($\beta = .05$, ns; $\beta = .14$, ns, respectively). In Step 3, we entered the two-way interactive terms. The results show that none of them were significant statistically. Then, in Step 4, we introduced the three-way interaction term among PG content dimensions, as a significant predictor of job performance. The positive and significant coefficient for the three-way interaction suggested that the relationship between DA fit and job performance changes depending on the

TABLE 3
HIERARCHICAL LINEAR MODELS: INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG PG DA FIT, VALUE FIT, PERSONALITY FIT, AND JOB PERFORMANCE

	Job Performance			
Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Step 1: Controls	5.41***	5.41***	5.41***	5.41***
Age	.01	.08	.01	.01
Gender	−.11	−.11	−.13	−.10
Step 2: Main effect				
PG DA fit		.05	−.09	-.09
PG value fit		−.19*	−.19*	−.24*
PG personality fit		.14	.15	.12
Step 3: Two-way interaction				
PG DA fit × PG value fit			−.07	−.08
PG DA fit × PG personality fit			−.02	.04
PG value fit × PG personality fit			−.02	−.03
Step 4: Three-way interaction				
PG DA fit × PG value fit × PG personality fit				.11*
Pseudo R^2		Δ.40	Δ.28	Δ.70

Note: $n = 211$. PG DA fit = person-group demands-abilities fit.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4
SIMPLE SLOPE TESTS

Pair of comparison	Slope	t
1 (Low value fit, high personality fit)	−.07	−.12
2 (Low value fit, low personality fit)	.03	.07
3 (High value fit, high personality fit)	−.02	−.04
4 (High value fit, low personality fit)	−.29	−.52
Slope difference		
(1) and (2)		−.10
(1) and (3)		.24+
(1) and (4)		−.20
(2) and (3)		−.05
(2) and (4)		−1.67+
(3) and (4)		.25

$^+ p < .10.$

levels of value fit and personality fit (β = .11, $p < .05$). This finding is consistent with the reasoning behind our hypothesis, which states that there are more complicated dynamics between various fit dimensions.

We further examined the interaction pattern in Figure 1 (Dawson & Ritcher 2006). Consistent with our expectation, the effect of DA fit on job performance under a low boundary condition of fit (both value and personality fit are low) was positive while its effect on job performance was negative in all three graphs (strong boundary conditions of fit). The plot reinforces how these interactions manifest differently under varying combinations of value and personality fit. The marginal significance of some slope differences in Table 4 (e.g., comparisons between slopes 2 and 4) adds further support to the hypothesis in that high value fit and/or high personality fit can function as a situational strength factor that suppresses the positive relationship between DA fit and job performance.
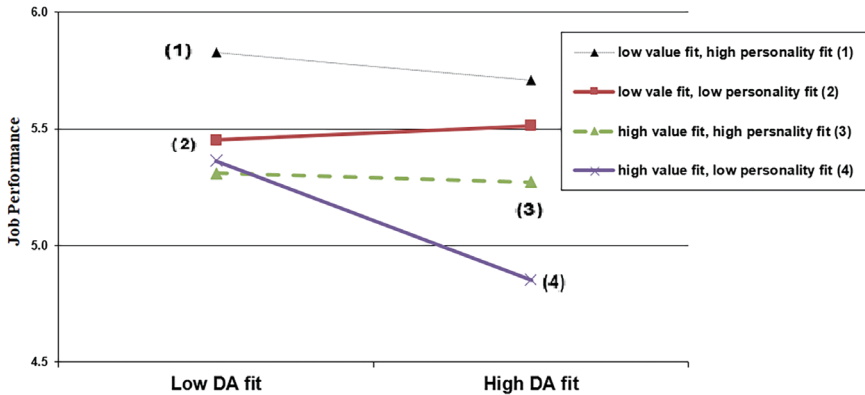
FIG. 1.—THREE-WAY INTERACTIONS OF FIT PERCEPTION IN PREDICTING JOB PERFORMANCE

DA fit = Demands-abilities fit

Discussion

This study investigated the effects of fit perception on job performance. Our findings showed that DA fit positively related to job performance under certain boundary conditions of other fit dimensions. More specifically, the impact of DA fit on job performance is contingent on value and personality fit. When the level of fit is low in both value and personality fit, a higher level of DA fit leads to higher job performance. This implies that DA fit may compensate for the low value and personality fit. On the other hand, when either value or personality fit and both value and personality fit are high, DA fit may negatively relate to job performance. This finding is consistent with the results of earlier research by Seong and Hong (2016).

Implications

Prior research on the PG fit framework generally suggests that a high level of fit leads to enhancing individual outcomes such as attitudes, behavior, and performance. There is abundant evidence that PG fit is associated with positive work attitudes and performance, such as affective organizational commitment and employee engagement (Hoffman and Woehr 2006; Judge and Cable 1997; Li et al. 2019; Meglino et al. 1989). Objective performance

measures such as productivity, product quality, and cycle time have been employed as more robust tests of the fit-performance relationship for individuals (Kristof 1996). However, there are a limited number of studies that have examined the relationship of DA fit to individual performance (Seong and Kristof-Brown 2012; Seong et al. 2017). There is some consistency between our findings and the prior research. Similar to the preceding research, we found that DA fit has a stronger relationship with team leaders' ratings of team members' job performance. Our research also raises the possibility that high levels of affective fit, value and personality fit in our study may function as organizational constraints, which, when accompanied by high DA fit, may ultimately harm work performance. The three-way effect, in which different types of fit are intertwined, further refines our understanding that employees perceive this as a strong situational constraint when different types of fit are simultaneously prevalent in an organization. By utilizing situation strength theory activated by fit dimension that may affect job performance and providing novel explanations, the present study offers new insights into a phenomenon that has been mostly neglected in the fit literature.

Limitations and Future Research

Our study has some limitations. It is necessary to reflect carefully on the conditions affecting PG fit. The company that our study focused on revealed a high level of homogeneity. A highly homogenous atmosphere tends to induce uniform and static group thinking, which may lead to adverse outcomes, discouraging creativity and innovation. Considering this context, it is likely to amplify the negative effects of high-fit combinations. Future research needs to consider both positive and negative consequences of similarity or fit together as the boundary conditions of PG fit by expanding research contexts (Seong and Hong 2021, Seong et al. 2024). Additional studies are needed to determine whether different settings influence these findings or whether there is an error that has an impact on the results. Thus, future studies are encouraged to explore similar variables in different contexts.

Future research should also incorporate the multilevel approach toward PG fit (Seong and Choi 2023) and focus on the contiguous effect of PG fit that makes "the fit situation." By investigating that factor, the practitioner can manage and adjust the optimal composition of PG fit. The effect of the three-way interaction of DA, value, and personality fit on job performance is

positive. Although the overall interaction pattern supports our hypothesis, the results are not statistically strong. This implies PG fit dimensions have a more nuanced role in influencing job performance. Under different organizational conditions, the differential or even reverse effect can be identified and should be researched further.

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