

# Does The Person-Organization Fit Influence Employee Engagement at Work? Case Study: Administrative Personnel of Selcuk University

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## Abstract

The objective of this study is to probe whether person-organization fit makes any contribution to job engagement. The person-organization fit is defined as the extent of similarity between employee and organization characteristics, while the job engagement is the employee's willingness and discretionary efforts to help the success of the organization. This is a case study of the administrative personnel of Selcuk University. The questionnaire is used as a means of collecting the required data. The data is analyzed using the Pearson Correlation/ Linear Regression Tests using SPSS 24. The Pearson correlation outcome shows that there is a strong, positive correlation between P-O fit and job engagement. In the same way, the result of linear regression confirms that administrative personnel's job engagement increases by an average of 0.484 for each increase in the person-organization fit.

**Keywords:** Person, Organization, Fit, Job Engagement

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## 1. Introduction

Recruiting and retaining the right person for the job is the main responsibility of the human resources professionals in any organization. Similarly, the right job and the right organization is important for any employee in order to have a high quality of working life. Therefore, person-organization fit is an important concept both for the employees and employers which is literally defined as the compatibility between a person and the organization.

Considering the impact of work-related factors like job satisfaction and organizational commitment, which are nowadays called competitive advantage, are closely affiliated with a good fitness between organization and the workforce. Another work-related factor, which is also addressed to be a strength point for today's organization, is job engagement. Because, an engaged employee is energetic and committed that can enhance organizational productivity and profit. That being the case, it can be referred that job engagement is energy. In order to keep that energy consistent, workforce engagement to their jobs will be beneficial both for the organization and employees.

The literature review of this study shows that although there is no any direct work focusing on the relationship between person-organization fit and job engagement, however, there are some works which are indirectly related to this research. For example, Findik et. al. (2013) found that if employee fits into the organization, it results in more job



satisfaction and less turnover intention. Therefore, as satisfaction is a part of engagement, it leads to more attachment and engagement to the work. Moreover, based on the research done by Moynihan and Pandey (2008), if the PO fit is more, the outcome might be both high job performance and engagement. The same way, the Schneider study in 2001 shows that individuals are interested in working for those organizations they share to high extent the same values. Because it contributes to engagement (cited in Bono and Judge, 2003). In addition, findings of the study by Entec Corporation in 2004, suggest that 20% of employee engagement is predicted by individual characteristics, but 80% by workplace conditions. Moreover, this study shows that compatibility between organizational characteristics and values, with those of individuals will increase work engagement. Meanwhile, matching between the needs of employees and facilities offered by organization leads to some positive effects in engagement level (Kalliath et. al., 2012). In the same manner, if an employee and an organization feel they share the same values, not only it inspires higher level of engagement in employees but also motivates them to exert energy in favor of working activities (Bakker, et. al, 2003).

Other than the mentioned reasons and suggestions, this issue can be analyzed rationally and theoretically by field theory which has three main variables; behavior, person and environment (Lewin, 1952). Based on the theory, an employee behavior depends on the state of the person and his/her environment. The environment shapes the employee's behavior or behavior is a result of the way she/he perceive the surrounding environment. That is, when the person perceives the environment positively, he/she tends to behave positively. Accordingly, employees who perceive fit between individual and organizational values will behave in an engaged way towards their organization. So, both employees and organization values and value systems are the keys in motivation (Rokeach, 1973). With this in mind, since commitment is a part of engagement and communication is one of its drivers, any incongruence between organizational and individual values may cause problems in communication and commitment (Mankoff, 1974). In other words, any incompatibility between organizational values with that of employees might result in a negative attitude of individuals toward their works.

Therefore, this case study aims to probe the relationship between person-organization fit (PO fit) and job engagement of the administrative personnel of Selcuk University. This research helps to bridge the knowledge gap in the literature as well as the findings would benefit the in-charged staff to practice and behave precisely.

## 2. Person-Organization Fit (PO fit)

According to personalist intellectual stance, a person characteristics (personality traits, values and beliefs) affect his/her attitudes and actions in consistent and characteristic ways across situations and over time (Staw et. al, 1986; Weiss and Adler, 1984). Furthermore, based on interactional psychology perspective, "the behavior of individuals is the result of the interaction between personal attributes and situational attributes" (Chatman, 1989; House et. al, 1996; O'Reilly et. al, 1991; Schneider et. al, 1995). According to Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework, "individuals are not randomly assigned to situations, but rather they seek out situations that are fit to them". It means that the congruence occurs when "(a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (Kristof, 1996).

Kristof (1996) claims that there are four different operationalization of P-O fit in the organizations. First, it focuses on the measuring the similarity between fundamental characteristics of people and organizations such as values and personality. The second focuses on goal congruence with that of organizational leaders or peers. The third focuses on the compatibility between individual preferences or needs and the organizational systems and structures. The fourth is climate. Therefore, to define narrowly, the PO fit the congruence between the norms and values of organization "situational attributes" and the values of persons "personal attributes" (Chatman, 1989). Or, broadly defined as the compatibility between individuals and organizations or the compatibility of characteristics of the individual and that of organization (Cable and Judge, 1996; Chan, 1996).

Individual characteristics include individual's ideas, principles, interests and dispositional characteristics while organizational characteristics are made of organizational doctrine, norms, traditions and the overall organizational climate. Consequently, if compatibility occurs between the earlier and the later, the result is a supplementary fit. Similarly, if they complement each other, complementary fit occurs (Muchinsky and Monahan, 1987). Similar to Muchinsky and Monahan work, Caplan (1987) describes the PO fit concept named "needs-supplies" and "demand-

abilities fits". He acclaims that "need-supplies" occurs when an employee's needs, desires or preferences are fulfilled by what the organization supplies, and demands-abilities fit occurs when an employee's abilities can meet organizational needs.

Based on the Schneider and colleagues (1995), fit can occur at many different levels. In the same way, Kristof (1996) suggests that fit can be categorized into five different levels. "The first fit is at the vocational level and is defined as a person-vocation (P-V) fit". The second level is the person-organization (P-O). The third level is the person-group (P-G) fit, which is compatibility between individuals and their working group. The fourth level is the person-job (P-J) fit, which is the fit between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job. Finally, person-person (P-P fit) is the fit between an individual and his/her supervisor.

### 3. Job Engagement

The concept of employee engagement emerges from organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior (Robinson et. al, 2004; Rafferty et. al, 2005). However, Robinson and colleagues (2004) suggest that neither commitment nor citizenship behavior can show its two-way nature or two aspects of engagement. Likewise, Rafferty and colleagues (2005) state that job engagement is more than a simple satisfaction and commitment, and it is a two-way mutual process between the employee and the organization.

Engagement is about passion, commitment, the willingness and discretionary effort to help the employer success, which is definitely something beyond simple satisfaction or basic loyalty to the employer (White, 2008; Macey and Schneider, 2008). According to Truss and colleagues' work (2013), "engagement is mixture of three concepts; commitment to the organization, job satisfaction and extra-role behavior, i.e. discretionary effort to go beyond the job description". Perrin's Global Workforce Study (2003) defines the job engagement as an "employees' willingness and ability to help their organization success, by making discretionary efforts on continuous way." Or it is "a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value."

Referring to mentioned studies, employee engagement is the result of two-way relationship between employer and employee and there are things to be done by the both sides. For example, Vance (2006), believes that employee engagement is the result of what an employee offers (knowledge, skills, abilities, temperament, attitudes and personality) and that of an organization (leadership style, physical/social setting and HR practices).

Kahn (1990) describes three concepts affiliated with work engagement; meaningfulness, safety and availability. Meaningfulness "is the extent to which workers invest themselves into their work role performances and the feeling valued by the employer". Safety is "sense of being able to show oneself without fear of negative consequences to self-image or career." Availability "is the worker's belief that she/he has the physical, emotional and cognitive resources to engage the self in work." Similar to Kahn's work, Rothbard (2001) defines engagement as a psychological presence while adding "attention and absorption" components. Rothbard states that attention refers to "cognitive ability and the amount of time spent thinking about role" while absorption explains "being absorbed in a role and focusing on a role intensively".

Work engagement is a broad concept that can be distinguished from the relatively similar ones. First, when comparing job engagement with job satisfaction, Fernandez (2007) believes that employee satisfaction is not the same as employee engagement. Because, managers cannot rely on satisfaction to help retain the best employees. It seems that job satisfaction is a part of engagement that only and only reflects a superficial and transactional relationship. In addition, while work engagement refers to energizing, the job satisfaction refers to satiation and satisfaction (Erickson, 2005). Secondly, job involvement can be seen as a part of work engagement, but these two concepts do not share the same meaning (Macey and Schneider, 2008). Because, it is possible that someone may be engaged to his/her work, but might not be engaged and committed to organization or, adversely, someone may be committed to his/her organization, but might not be engaged to work (Roberts and Davenport, 2002). Third, both organizational citizenship behavior and employee commitment, willingness to exert energy for success of the organization, are important parts and predictors of employee's engagement. However, these two concepts cannot independently bear the same meaning as work engagement (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Robinson et. al, 2004).

Considering the differences of job engagement with those of similar concepts, studies suggest that meaning of work, growing opportunities and communication are the key drivers to build employees engagement (Penna, 2007; Blessing White, 2006). Similarly, Development Dimensions International (2005) study suggests that a manager should do five things to create a highly-engaged workforce. They are: (1) connecting efforts with strategy, (2) Empowering them, (3) Promoting teamwork among them, (4) helping them to grow and develop, (5) providing support and recognition where is needed. Equivalently, senior management's interest in employees' well-being, challenging work and decision making authority are the top three among the ten drivers or workplace attributes listed by The Towers Perrin Talent Report (2003) that can build employee's engagement.

## 4. Methodology of the study

### 4.1. Hypothesis and objective

Considering the points and statements just in the above, the hypothesis of this research is formulated as follows:

**H:** Person-organization fit contributes positively to organizational engagement.

The target group of this study is administrative personnel of Selcuk University, located in Konya, Republic of Türkiye. Therefore, the main objective of this work is to probe whether similarity between values of administrative employees with those of Selcuk university makes any contribution to job engagement in employees. To end this, questionnaires were used as means to collect the required data. Since the total number of the admin personnel is about 4000 (population size), with 90% confidence level and 5% margin of errors, a sample size of 250 is enough to represent the population. With this in mind, 270 hardcopies of questionnaire were randomly distributed to the employees, of them 185 returned. After having look at them, 165 were found usable and enough to represent the population as well as for analysis (Singh and Masuku, 2014). It is to add, in order to measure variables, the scales items developed by Aumann (2007) for person-organization fit (16 items) and for the job engagement, a shortened version (9 items) developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2006) are used in this study. Questionnaire is formed of three parts; first part is composed of demographic characteristics of the participants and PO fit and job engagement scales are placed in the second and third part, respectively. It is to mention; the questionnaires were customized culturally and linguistically. Both person-organization fit and job engagement measuring scales are ranked by the 5 Likert scale phrases in which "1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= No Idea; 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree".

## 5. Findings

### 5.1. Demographic findings:

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants**

Variables	F	%	Variables	F	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Marital Status</b>		
Man	118	71,5	Married	112	67,9
Woman	42	25,5	Single	48	29,1
Missing	5	3,0	Missing	5	3,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>
<b>Age</b>			<b>Education</b>		
18-24	39	23,6	Primary School	4	2,4
25-35	45	27,3	Secondary School	1	,6
36-50	40	24,2	High School	33	20,0
50-65	34	20,6	Associated Degree	42	25,5

Missing	7	4,2	Bachelor	60	36,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>	Master Degree	20	12,1
<b>Years of working.</b>			PhD	2	1,2
1 year and less	16	9,7	Missing	3	1,8
1-3	24	14,5	<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>
4-6	22	13,3	<b>Number of Personnel in your department?</b>		
7-9	19	11,5	10 and less	42	25,5
10 years and more	82	49,7	10-49	76	46,1
Missing	2	1,2	50-99	27	16,4
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>	100-249	7	4,2
<b>Are you working in your own-selected field?</b>			250 and more	13	7,9
Yes	124	75,2	Missing	0	0
No	40	24,2	<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>
Missing	1	0,6			
<b>Total</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>100,0</b>			

## 5.2. Factor analysis and Validity Tests

Table 2. Factor Analysis of the Person-Organization fit (P-O fit) and Job Engagement

Scale	KMO Test Result	Explained Variance	Sig. p Values	Number of Factors
P-O fit	,77	65%	,000	3
Job Engagement	,75	68%	,000	2

Based on the table-2, the item measuring the person-organization fit and job engagement were subjected to principal axis factoring to assess the dimensionality of the data. Respectively, the Kaier-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of each one is (0.77) and (0.75) which are above the recommended value of (0.6) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Sig = 0.000) of both of them reached statistical significance and meaningfulness ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating the correlations were enough for exploratory factor analysis. Due to P-O fit exploratory factor analysis three factors were extracted explaining 65% of the variance where the job engagement exploratory factor analysis with two extracted factors explains 68% of the variance. Therefore, the data is valid. The rotated factors' loads are as follow:

Table 3. Loads of Items for P-O Fit Factor Analysis

Factors			Loads		
Factor One: Assertiveness	Factor Two: Responsibility and Innovation	Factor Three: Humanity	F1.	F2.	F3.
To take risks			0.795		
Self-reliance			0.729		
Quickly use of available opportunities			0.647		
	Being socially responsible			0.727	
	Good reputation			0.698	
	Being innovative			0.657	
	Adaptability			0.587	
	Stability			0.541	
		Fairness			0.734
		Tolerance			0.654
		Job Security			0.621
		Being calm			0.575
		Directly addressing conflicts			0.521
		Decisiveness			0.507
		Aggressiveness			0.495
		Developing friendship at work			0.445
Total Variance Explained: 65%					

Table 4. Loads of Items for Job Engagement Factor Analysis

Factors		Loads	
Factor One: Vigor and Dedication	Factor Two: Absorption	F1.	F2.
I feel strong at my job.		0.734	
My work is inspiring.		0.692	
I am feeling energetic at my job.		0.667	
I am interested in my work.		0.583	
Early in morning, I feel happy to get to work.		0.501	
I feel proud what I do as my job.		0.478	
	I am absorbed at my work.		0.897
	I am so excited when I do my job.		0.695
	I feel good when I work intensely.		0.687
Total Variance Explained: 68%			

### 5.3. Reliability, Mean and Standard Deviation

Table 5. Cronbach's alpha, Mean and Standard Deviation

Scale	Number of Item	Cronbach's Alpha	$\bar{X}$	SD
Person-Organization fit	16	,853	3,53	0,73
Job Engagement	9	,787	3,55	0,53

Based on the findings in the above table-5, Cronbach's alpha is ( $0.853 > 0.7$ ;  $0.787 > 0.7$ ) for person-organization fit and job engagement respectively. Both values are higher than conventional and recommended value of 0.7. Therefore, they indicate a high level of internal consistency and reliability of the scales. The mean = 3.53 with a standard deviation = 0.73 and the mean = 3.55 with standard deviation = 0.53 of the variables show that the most selected options among the five Likert scale is between "3 = No idea and 4 = Agree".

### 5.4. Test of Hypothesis

To know which test is appropriate to run on the dataset, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run that resulted in  $\text{sig}=0.071>.000$ . The P-value states that dataset is close to normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests including Pearson correlation and Enter method of linear regression were selected for the analysis:

#### 5.4.1. Correlation Test of the variables

Table 6. Pearson Correlation of the variables

Variable	Person-Organization Fit		Job Engagement	
Person-Organization Fit	1	$r = ,661$	$p = ,000<0.05$	
Job Engagement	$r = ,661$	$p = ,000<0.05$	1	

In the SPSS package, Pearson correlation was run to assess the relationship between the person-organization fit and job engagement. Based on the coefficient and significance values in the table-6, there is a positive correlation between the two variables, while  $r = 0.661$ ,  $n = 165$  and significance is or  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ . Overall, there is a strong, positive correlation between any increases in P-O fit with job engagement. Put in other words, increase in job engagement is correlated with increase in P-O fit.

#### 5.4.2. Linear Regression of the variables

Table 7. Regression Analysis of the Person-Organization fit (P-O fit) and Job Engagement

Scale	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	df	F	P	B	Beta	t	Sig.
Job Engagement	,661	,437	,433	1	124,82	,000	1,85	,661	11,87	,000
				161			,484		11,17	,000

Simple linear regression was run aiming to predict job engagement based on person-organization fit. Based on the results given in the table-7, not only the ( $R=0.661$ ) that shows positive and medium level relationship between person-organization fit and job engagement, but also the result is significant and meaningful ( $p = 0,000<0,05$ ). Based on the table, the regression model is equal to **Job Engagement= {1,85+0,484 (Person-Organization fit)}**. As a result, in this model 43,7% increase in job engagement of the administrative personnel caused by person-organization fit of them while ( $R^2 = .437$ ). Or a significant regression equation was found ( $F(1, 161) = 124,82$ ,  $p < .000$ ), with and ( $R^2 = .437$ ). In addition to this, Selcuk University administrative personnel predicted that job engagement is equal to  $\{1,847+ 0.484 (\text{person-organization fit})\}$ . Hence, administrative personnel's job engagement increases by an average of 0.484 for each increase in person-organization fit.

## 6. Discussion and conclusion

In the related literature, there is no any direct work to gauge the relation of P-O fit with work engagement. To fill this gap, this study aimed to probe if the person-organization value fit makes any contribution to employees' job engagement. The result of Pearson correlation shows that there is a somehow strong and positive correlation between P-O fit and job engagement. To illustrate, increases in P-O fit are correlated with increases in job engagement. Similarly, linear regression result shows a meaningful, positive and medium level relationship between person-organization and job engagement. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed that (H: Person-organization fit contributes positively to organizational engagement). Moreover, the university administrative employees job engagement level can be increased by an average of 48.4% by one increase in the P-O values fit. The regression model for this study can be formulated in a way that job engagement = {1,85+0,484 (person-organization fit)}.

The factor analysis of P-O fit resulted in emerge of three factors which, based on the items gathered under each, are named Assertiveness, Responsibility/Innovation and Humanity, respectively. The general KMO test for the factors is .77 which is somehow above the recommended .60 value. It means the items of these factors showed good internal consistency. In addition, this study suggests that value fits between employees and organization leads to work engagement. The findings are in the same way as field theory by Lewin (1952). Based on the theory, Lewin argues that the behavior of a person is determined by interaction of the person and the surrounding environment. It means that if an employee perceives the organization values positively, the possible result is job engagement. To put in other words, compatibility between individuals and organizations encourages employee to hold a positive attitude towards the organization and behave in an engaged way. Congruity between individual's values with those of organization is not only beneficial for the employees, but also contributes to the organization success. It means that person-organization values and characteristics fit leads to psychologically attachment of employees to the organization. Hence, these employees go beyond their routine work practices and show discretionary efforts and exert energy in favor of the organization.

One of the dimensions that emerged due to P-O fit factor analysis is named humanity. This is because of interpersonal relations items like aggressiveness, developing friendship, fairness, tolerance, job security, addressing conflicts and so on. These findings can be explained at the framework of Kahn (1990) psychological safety concept. Based on this concept, those organization in which supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships exist, employees experience psychological safety. In these kind of organizations, employees freely experience new things without facing any objection of negative consequences. Therefore, similarity of the values such as tolerance, being people oriented and fairness and so on between employees and relevant organization, enhance psychological safety in the workplace. This in turn, contributes to attachment and engagement of the employees to their works.

The factor analysis of job engagement led to two sub-dimensions with general KMO value of .75. Therefore, internal consistency turned out to be higher than the recommended .60. As a result, based on the items gathered in the dimensions, the first factor was named vigor and dedication. Considering the items, the first factor reveals the concepts like "high levels of energy" and "willingness to exert discretionary effort for the success of organization" which are the points previous studies emphasized on (Perrin's Global Workforce, 2003; Truss et. Al.; 2013). Similarly, the second extracted factor was named absorption. The items gathered under this factor reflect the attachment of employees to their jobs. These findings are in parallel with those of previous studies and theories in the literature.

As a final word, for further research, it is recommended to interested people to probe the contribution of P-O fit to engagement of employees in different sectors and compare the outcomes if the results vary. Moreover, as this work shows that congruity of person and organization values plays as a driver of job engagement, it is recommended to all Selcuk University managers being in charge of administrative affairs, to do their best to have P-O values fit so as to have engaged employees.



## Resources

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