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# Person-Environment Fit From an Organizational Psychology Perspective

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## Summary

Person–environment (PE) fit is broadly defined as the degree of congruence or match between a person and environment. It is relevant to various theoretical foundations, including the interactionist theory of behavior, the attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) theory, and the theory of work adjustment (TWA). PE fit is a complex and multidimensional construct that has different forms and dimensions, including person–vocation (PV) fit, person–organization (PO) fit, person–group (PG) fit, person–person (PP) fit, and person–job (PJ) fit. Accumulated research evidence shows that PE fit has separate and interactive effects on employee outcomes in terms of attitudes (e.g., satisfaction and commitment), well-being (e.g., stress and burnout), and work-related performance (e.g., task performance and organizational citizenship behavior). PE fit is inherently dynamic, and the level of PE fit changes over time when characteristics of the person and environment change. The change in PE fit also influences changes in work-related affect and behaviors. When employees perceive PE misfit, they tend to engage in change-oriented activities in order to reduce the pain of misfit or achieve a better fit. Finally, various organizational practices such as recruitment, selection, socialization, and training and development play important roles in determining the degree of PE fit.

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**Keywords:** person–environment fit, person–vocation fit, person–organization fit, person–group fit, person–person fit, person–job fit, dynamic perspective, misfit, organizational practices

**Subjects:** Organizational and Institutional Psychology

## Introduction

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Individuals' fit or misfit with their environment is one of the most fundamental psychological experiences in organizational life. Those who experience fit with the environment usually have high levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, overall performance, motivation, well-being, and desire to remain in such an environment (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Those who experience misfit with the environment tend to feel uncomfortable, stressful, and exhausted and desire to escape or change the situation (Chi et al., 2020; Tong et al., 2015; Wheeler et al., 2005). These experiences are examples of person–environment (PE) fit and misfit. PE fit is broadly defined as the degree of congruence or match between a person and

the environment (e.g., Edwards et al., 1998; Holland, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987). The concept of PE fit is complex and multidimensional. For example, one often says “fit with something” or “someone” because the two are similar. One also says “fit” because what one has compensates for what another does not have. The former type of fit is called supplementary fit, and the latter type of fit is called complementary fit (Kristof, 1996). As another example, a person can fit with the characteristics of an organization or of a job. The former is called person–organization (PO) fit, and the latter is called person–job (PJ) fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996).

This article introduces the concept of PE fit by explaining its theoretical foundations, its various conceptualizations, and their relationships. It then reviews theoretical and empirical work on the outcomes of PE fit, the dynamic perspective of PE fit, how individuals address PE misfit, and the role of organizational practices on PE fit. Table 1 provides the list of acronyms used in this article.

**Table 1. List of Acronyms**

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
PE fit	Person–environment fit
ASA theory	Attraction–selection–attrition theory
TWA	Theory of work adjustment
PV fit	Person–vocation fit
PO fit	Person–organization fit
PG fit	Person–group fit
PP fit	Person–person fit
PJ fit	Person–job fit
DA fit	Demands–abilities fit
NS fit	Needs–supplies fit
OCB	Organizational citizenship behavior
PS fit	Person–supervisor fit
POQ	Perceived over-qualification
HR	Human resources

*Note.* The list is in the order of appearance.

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## Theoretical Foundations

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The basic idea of PE fit has a long history. For example, it can be traced back to the mid-20th century when Lewin (1951) proposed field theory. This theory states that human behavior is a function of the person and the environment. Beginning with this perspective, researchers integrated the factors of both persons and environments and argued that human behavior results from the interaction between that person and an organization. This is called the interactionist theory of behavior (Chatman, 1989; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987), which asserts that neither personal characteristics nor the situation alone adequately explains the variance in behavioral and attitudinal variables. Instead, the interaction between personal and situational variables accounts for the greatest variance (Turban & Keon, 1993). Another theoretical framework that is closely related to PE fit, especially PO fit, is the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory (Schneider, 1987). The ASA framework states that people are attracted to organizations with similar characteristics, are selected if they fit the organization's characteristics, and leave the organization if their personality and values no longer fit the organization's characteristics (Schneider, 1987; Schneider et al., 2001).

Other theoretical frameworks are relevant to individual careers and vocations. Holland's vocational fit theory (1985) is closely related to a person's fit with their vocation or occupation (person-vocation fit or PV fit). The vocational fit theory states that individuals prefer and choose vocations that are similar to their personalities (Holland, 1985). The theory of work adjustment (TWA) is the classic career theory that captures a more temporal and dynamic nature of fitting into a work environment. The TWA emphasizes the process through which individuals attempt to obtain and maintain fit with their environments. The fit fluctuates over time due to changes in the individual and the environment (Dawis et al., 1968). Individuals change themselves or their environments to achieve fit, and environments or jobs may change over time, resulting in changes in fit between the individual and the environment (Bradley et al., 2002).

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## Conceptualizations of Person-Environment Fit

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### Different Forms of PE Fit

There are different forms of PE fit in terms of the relationship between the characteristics of the person and the environment. PE fit can be conceptualized as complementary and supplementary (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Supplementary fit exists when the characteristics of a person and an environment are similar to each other (Cable & Edwards, 2004). In other words, supplementary fit is based on similarity. On the contrary, complementary fit exists when the characteristics of a person and an environment provide what the other wants (Cable & Edwards, 2004). Complementary fit can be achieved when an individual's characteristics meet an environment's demands (i.e., demands-abilities fit, DA fit) or when the characteristics of an environment fulfill an individual's needs (i.e., needs-supplies fit, NS fit; Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

These different forms of PE fit are also related to how PE misfit is understood. PE misfit can be understood simply as the lack of fit, but the nature of PE misfit differs according to the form of PE fit. For supplementary fit, misfit is conceptualized as dissimilarity between the

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characteristics of the person and the environment. For complementary fit, including DA fit and NS fit, PE misfit can be conceptualized as the excess or deficiency of the person or the environment against the other (Edwards, 2008a).

## Different Dimensions of PE Fit

Individuals have various characteristics, ranging from values and personality to knowledge and skills. Individuals are also surrounded by the different aspects or dimensions of the environment simultaneously, such as a vocation, an organization, a group/team, a person (e.g., a supervisor), and a job. Therefore, PE fit can occur with different targets, in terms of what aspects of the environment correspond with the individual's characteristics or the target into which the person fits. Person-vocation (PV) fit occurs when there is a match between individual characteristics (e.g., values, personality, knowledge, and skills) and the characteristics of one's vocational environment (Kristof, 1996; Ostroff, 2012). PO fit occurs when there is a match between individual characteristics (e.g., values and personality) and the organization's characteristics (e.g., organizational culture; Kristof, 1996). Person-group (PG) fit occurs when the characteristics of a person are similar to or compatible with those of the group (Kristof, 1996; Seong et al., 2015). Person-person (PP) fit occurs when there is a match between two individuals (e.g., supervisors and subordinates) (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Lastly, PJ fit occurs when an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) meet the job's requirements (i.e., DA fit) or when the individual's needs are satisfied by the supplies from the job (i.e., NS fit; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

## Objective and Subjective PE Fit

Theoretically, the characteristics of the person and environment and the resultant PE fit can be conceptualized objectively as actual characteristics. In this case, the objective level of PE fit is determined by comparing the actual characteristics of the person with those of the environment. The person, environment, and PE fit can also be conceptualized subjectively as a focal person's perceptions of these characteristics. In this case, subjective PE fit is the judgement that a person fits well in their environment (Cable & DeRue, 2002). These objective and subjective characteristics are theorized as being causally related (Ostroff, 2012). The objective characteristics of a person and environment each will influence the subjective perceptions of the person and environment, respectively. The PE fit, which is determined objectively, will influence the subjective experience of PE fit. Furthermore, the subjective experience of PE fit is influenced by not only objective PE fit but also subjective perceptions of the person and environment. Reflecting these relationships, Edwards and colleagues (2006) theorized that three ways of experiencing of PE fit, namely *atomistic* (perceptions of the person and environment as separate entities), *molecular* (the perceived discrepancy between the person and environment), and *molar* (the perceived similarity, match, or fit between the person and environment), sequentially occur as a subjective experience of fit. However, their empirical results showed that the relationships among the approaches deviate from the theoretical logic.

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## Direct and Indirect Assessments of PE Fit

The more empirical question about PE fit is how to measure it. PE fit can be assessed directly as a subjective experience of whether individuals perceive fit with the environment. PE fit can also be assessed indirectly by comparing the characteristics of the person and the environment. Direct assessment of the subjective experience of PE fit is rather simple, often using a Likert scale that asks the degree to which a person feels fit. A low level of PE fit measured in this way can be interpreted as PE misfit. An indirect assessment of PE fit that can be applied at both the objective and subjective levels is more complex because several patterns exist in how a person and their environment are compared. For example, when the characteristics of the person and environment are assessed by degree (e.g., high, middle, or low), PE fit can occur in which the characteristics of the person and the environment are both high, both middle, or both low. PE misfit can be understood as a situation in which the person's characteristics exceed those of the environment (e.g., over-qualification in the job; Erdogan & Bauer, 2020), the characteristics of the environment being less than what the person needs (e.g., supplies from the environment do not fulfill the person's needs), the environment's characteristics exceeding what the person needs (e.g., abundant environmental resources compared with the person's needs), and the person's characteristics being less than what the environment requires (e.g., the lack of skills to perform a job).

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## Consequences of Person-Environment Fit

### How PE Fit Influences Individual Outcomes

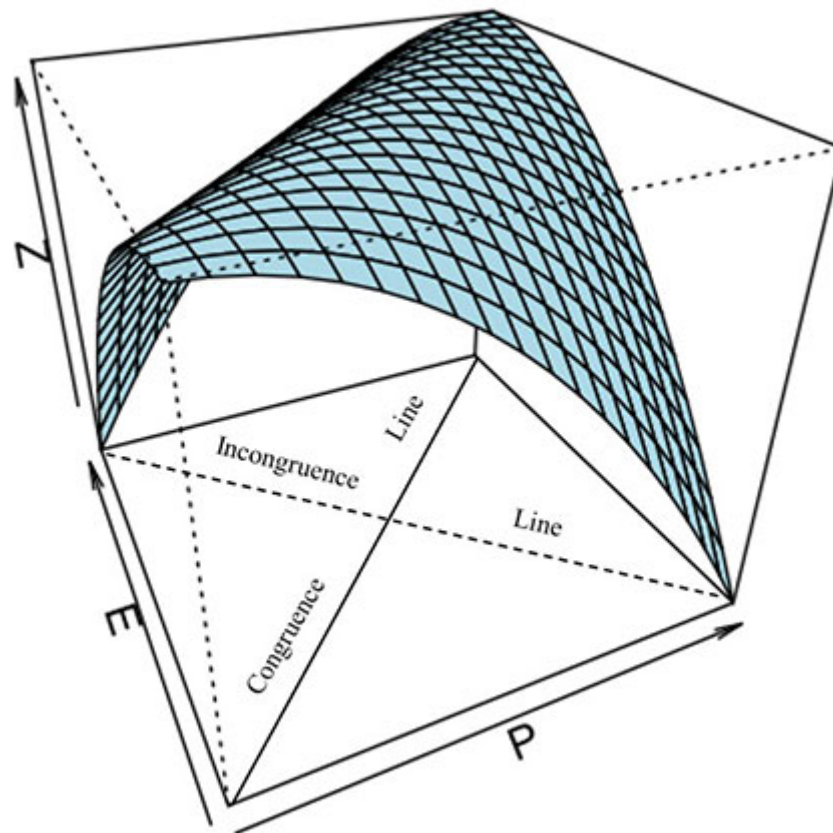
Theoretically, not only the degree of PE fit but also the characteristics of the person and environment can influence individual outcomes. These influences can be best understood using the following mathematical equation, usually called the polynomial regression equation (Edwards & Parry, 1993; Van Vianen, 2018).

$$Z = b_0 + b_1P + b_2E + b_3P^2 + b_4PE + b_5E^2$$

In this equation,  $P$  refers to the person,  $E$  refers to the environment, and  $Z$  refers to the individual outcome being predicted. The regression coefficients (denoted as  $b_1$ ,  $b_2$ ,  $b_3$ ,  $b_4$ , and  $b_5$ ) represent distinct effects from  $P$  and  $E$ , the quadratic for each ( $P^2$  and  $E^2$ ), and their interaction ( $P \times E$ ). The direct effects on individual outcomes by the person and the environment are represented by  $b_1P$  and  $b_2E$ . The influences of various natures of PE fit and misfit on individual outcomes, including the effect of fit—where the characteristics of the person and the environment are both high, both middle, or both low—are understood by the higher-order terms  $b_4PE$ ,  $b_3P^2$ , and  $b_5E^2$ . This way of capturing the effects of the person's and environment's characteristics and of PE fit can be applied both at the objective and the subjective levels using indirect measures.

The three-dimensional surface plot in figure 1 illustrates a theoretically idealized fit effect for the person ( $P$ ) and the environment ( $E$ ) on the outcome ( $Z$ ) (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Van Vianen, 2018). The congruence line in the figure represents optimal fit when  $P$  value and  $E$  value are the same (both high and both low). As the figure shows, the value of  $Z$  is the highest

and the surface should be flat along the congruence line. The incongruence line in the figure represents misfit when (a) P value is high and E value is low and (b) P value is low and E value is high. As the figure shows, the surface should be curved along the incongruence line and the value of Z decreases when E value is lower than P value (the right side of the figure) or when E value is higher than P value (the left side of the figure).



**Figure 1.** Surface plot representing the fit-outcome relationship

*Note.* P refers to the person, E refers to the environment, and Z refers to the individual outcome.

*Source:* The data used for this figure is based on Edwards (2008b).

Van Vianen (2018) reviewed studies on PJ fit and PO fit that used polynomial regression with surface plot analyses and concluded that the relationships among the person, the environment, PE fit, and individual outcomes are more complex than the symmetrical relationship that PE fit models propose. First, not only the PE fit but also the person and the environment can independently influence individual outcomes, with the effects of organizational attributes being greater than those of personal attributes. Second, although the effects of PE fit occur at all levels (e.g., high-high, middle-middle, low-low), PE fit at higher levels of an attribute generally produces better outcomes than PE fit at lower levels. Third, the two types of PE misfit—deficiency and excess—both produce negative consequences, with the negative influence of deficiency being stronger than that of excess. Excess can be as beneficial as fit, depending on the fit attributes.

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## The Relationship Between Subjective and Objective PE Fit

Subjective PE fit is a more proximal predictor of various individual outcomes (Andela & van der Doef, 2019; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Additionally, subjective PE fit is considered to mediate the relationship between objective PE fit and individual outcomes (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Yu, 2009). This is because individual attitudes and behaviors are more influenced by what the individual perceives than by the objective characteristics of a person and the environment (Caplan, 1987). Empirical studies have shown that subjective PE fit or PE fit with direct measures is a stronger predictor of certain outcomes, such as job attitudes, than objective PE fit or PE fit with indirect measures is (Judge & Cable, 1997; Leung & Chaturvedi, 2011), although common method variance might have an influence when a direct measure is used (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011).

## Outcomes of Different Dimensions of PE Fit

Several meta-analytic studies have summarized the effects of different dimensions of PE fit on various employee outcomes (Arthur et al., 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014; Verquer et al., 2003). PO fit and PJ fit have been investigated most frequently (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Research shows that PO fit and PJ fit are likely to have positive effects on individuals' attitudes, well-being, and work-related performance. For example, PO fit and PJ fit increase commitment and satisfaction and decrease stress (Andela & van der Doef, 2019; Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chen et al., 2016; Edwards et al., 1998; Gabriel et al., 2014; Gregory et al., 2010; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). PO fit and PJ fit also have positive influences on various performance constructs such as overall job performance, task performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and innovative work behavior (Afsar et al., 2015; Farzaneh et al., 2014; Vogel & Feldman, 2009). Hamstra and colleagues (2019) found that the positive effect of employees' perceived PO fit on in-role performance evaluations was stronger when the supervisor's perceived PO fit was high rather than low. Further, PO fit and PJ fit are negatively related to turnover intention and actual turnover (Andela & van der Doef, 2019; Boon & Biron, 2016; Liu et al., 2010).

Scholars have shown that a high level of PV fit increases employees' job performance and their subjective career success, and it also decreases employees' turnover intention (Nye et al., 2012, 2017; Vogel & Feldman, 2009). The empirical findings are less clear regarding its relationship with job satisfaction. Some studies have shown that PV fit positively influences job satisfaction (Feij et al., 1999; Swaney & Prediger, 1985), while early meta-analytic studies have suggested that PV fit has a weak relationship with satisfaction (Tranberg et al., 1993; Tsabari et al., 2005). Consistent with these findings, Wille and colleagues (2014) demonstrated that although individuals' interest-occupation congruence remained relatively stable across a 15-year time interval, their congruence was not associated with job satisfaction.

Research on PG fit has shown that PG fit is related to a variety of positive outcomes such as job performance, individual performance, and turnover intention (Chuang et al., 2016; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014). Seong and Kristof-Brown (2012) examined three types of PG fit—value-based, personality-based, and abilities-based—and found that PG value fit is significantly related to commitment to one's team, PG personality fit is significantly related to voice behaviors, and PG ability fit is significantly related to knowledge sharing. Seong and

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Choi (2014) examined PG goal fit and PG ability fit, and found that only PG goal fit had a significant effect on group performance. Seong et al. (2015) found that overall PG fit perception was significantly associated with group performance. Similarly, De Cooman and colleagues (2016) found that PG fit is significantly related to team effectiveness, and they examined the mediating role of team cohesion.

Van Vianen and colleagues (2011) found that employees' PS fit perceptions are both directly and indirectly (through commitment to the supervisor) related to organizational commitment. Astakhova (2016) compared the effects of PS fit between the United States and Japan and found that perceived PS fit was directly and indirectly (mediated by perceived PO fit) related to affective organizational commitment in Japan but only indirectly related in the United States. Additionally, research has shown that PS fit is negatively related to work-related strain and turnover intention, and positively related to job satisfaction (Klaic et al., 2018; Tak, 2011). Marstand and colleagues (2017) found that when a leader's fulfillment of employees' work values (i.e., the complementary PS fit) is high, the leader-member exchange quality tends to be higher, which can increase task performance and OCB. Xu and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that when supervisor-employee congruence in proactive personality is high, employees tend to perceive high levels of psychological safety, which facilitates their engagement in voice behavior.

The effects of PE fit differ by national culture. Oh et al. (2014) meta-analytically examined the relationships among PJ fit, PO fit, PG fit, and PS fit and organizational commitment, job satisfaction, intent to quit, and job performance in East Asia, Europe, and North America. Their findings suggest that the effects of rational fit (PO fit and PJ fit) are stronger in North America and, to a lesser extent, Europe than in East Asia. Contrarily, the effects of relational fit (PG fit and PS fit) are stronger in East Asia than in North America. Their findings highlight that in collectivist and high-power-distance (vs. individualist and low-power-distance) cultures, relational (vs. rational) fit is more salient in influencing employees' perceptions about their work environments. The results are less clear concerning job performance.

## **Simultaneous Effects of Multiple Dimensions of PE Fit**

Given that individuals are simultaneously nested within multiple aspects of an environment (Chuang et al., 2016; Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006), researchers have examined the simultaneous effects of multiple dimensions of PE fit, both theoretically and empirically. Theoretically, different dimensions of PE fit will influence individual outcomes in both additive and interactive ways. Different dimensions of PE fit have additive effects on outcomes, but the relative importance of a particular dimension of PE fit may differ according to the outcomes (Chuang et al., 2016; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006). Different levels of PE fit influence outcomes interactively through buffering or spillover effects (Chuang et al., 2016; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006).

Empirical evidence of this "nested" or "holistic" view of PE fit is being accumulated. Using an experimental policy-capturing study, Kristof-Brown, and colleagues (2002) found that the perceptions of PO, PJ, and PG fit have not only separate effects on work satisfaction but also interactive effects. Chuang et al. (2016) found that PJ, PO, PG, and PS fit perceptions are related, but each of them can be perceived as distinct. Specifically, the relative importance of each fit perception differed strongly by outcome variables, such that PG fit explained the



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greatest amount of variance in in-role behavior, PJ fit explained the greatest amount of variance in job satisfaction, PO fit explained the greatest amount of variance in turnover intention, and PG fit explained the greatest amount of variance in OCB.

Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001) showed that PO fit has a more significant influence on turnover intentions than PJ fit does, but there is no difference in their relative influence on job-focused satisfaction. Contrarily, Tak (2011) found that PJ fit is associated more strongly with turnover intention than PO or PS fit is. Choi and Yoo (2005) also showed that PJ fit has a stronger correlation with turnover intention than PO fit does. Andela and van der Doef (2019) found that PJ fit and PO fit are more strongly associated with work-related outcomes (i.e., burnout, job satisfaction, and turnover intention) than PG fit and PS fit are.

Using a sample of participants in a 12-week internship program, Resick and colleagues (2007) found that interns' PO fit was more strongly associated with satisfaction when they experienced low NS fit, whereas PO fit was less critical for satisfaction when the interns' NS fit was high. In addition, PO fit was more strongly linked to job-choice intentions for interns who experienced a low level of DA fit. Chi et al. (2020) focused on the context of newcomer adjustment and found that newcomers' PG fit alleviated the positive effects of initial NS misfit on subsequent actual turnover. In addition, newcomers' fit within a specific interpersonal relationship (i.e., person-mentor fit) buffered the negative effects of initial DA misfit on subsequent task performance.

To summarize, there is substantial evidence showing that different dimensions of PE fit have substantial benefits for individuals, teams, and organizations. These findings also suggest that each dimension of PE fit not only has a relatively different effect on the outcomes, but also drives the outcomes nested with other types of PE fit in interactive ways.

## **The Dynamic Perspective of PE Fit**

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While past research on PE fit tended to study PE fit in a rather static way (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Jansen & Shipp, 2013), PE fit is an inherently dynamic phenomenon because organizational life is more volatile than stable, and characteristics of the person and work environment change (Caplan, 1983; Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Sekiguchi, 2004b; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). In response to this view, an emerging body of research has focused on within-person changes in PE fit and has examined how and why fit changes over time. DeRue and Morgeson (2007) examined how PE fit dynamically changes over time in a team context and found that value-based person-team fit is usually stable over time, whereas the overall mean of PJ fit decreases over time. Jansen and Shipp (2013) proposed a temporal theory of fit and highlighted the effect of psychological time on fit perceptions. They argued that individuals' current fit cannot be viewed in isolation but that past fit and anticipated fit must also be considered. They proposed that individuals' past fit and anticipated fit influence their current fit, which ultimately affects work-related outcomes. Consistent with these ideas, an interview-based study conducted by Jansen and Shipp (2019) demonstrated that individuals' current fit depends on what they recollect and forecast. On the other hand, Vleugels and colleagues (2018) discussed that the fluctuations of fit perceptions should be explained by what is going

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on at that moment, rather than by prior changes in PE fit perceptions. Another study, by Boon and Biron (2016), showed that PO fit and PJ fit influence each other over time, supporting the idea that different types of PE fit can affect each other over time.

Prior research has identified factors that increase or decrease PE fit. Bayl-Smith and Griffin (2018) found that career initiative activities and job change negotiation behaviors lead to an increase in individuals' DA fit over time but only when one's work style fit is high. Sylva et al. (2019) found that increases in one's career initiative over time are related to increases in one's perceived DA fit over time. Lu and colleagues (2014) found that work engagement is positively related to changes in DA fit through changes in physical job crafting and is positively related to changes in NS fit through changes in relational job crafting.

A growing number of studies have examined how changes in PE fit relate to changes in work-related affect and behavior (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance). Gabriel et al. (2014) found that changes in perceived PJ fit are positively related to changes in job satisfaction. Kim et al. (2020) also showed that change in PJ fit predicts increases in affective organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Other studies have suggested that changes in PE fit may have relatively small temporal impacts on these desirable outcomes. Vleugels et al. (2018) showed that changes in PE fit have no temporal impacts on work-related affect and work performance but are only momentarily associated with changes in them. Similarly, Ghetta and colleagues (2020) found that changes in PE fit are related to neither simultaneous change in job satisfaction nor subsequent job satisfaction.

To conclude, there is accumulating evidence that PE fit changes over time, such that individuals' current fit can be influenced by past fit, anticipated fit, or what is going on at that moment. These findings also suggest that work adjustment behaviors (e.g., career initiative activities) potentially contribute to the change in PE fit. Consequently, changes in PE fit have shown to influence the changes in individuals' attitudes and behaviors.

## Responses to Person-Environment Misfit

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Because PE fit is inherently dynamic, individuals experience misfit in some aspects of their working environment when changes occur to the environment or the individuals themselves. Indeed, scholars have demonstrated that misfit is prevalent in most work situations and could happen at any point in one's career (Wheeler et al., 2005, 2007). Contrary to PE fit, PE misfit is often presumed to be an uncomfortable and stressful experience with uniformly negative outcomes (e.g., Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Sacco & Schmitt, 2005). Therefore, when individuals perceive PE misfit, they may be motivated to resolve it (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013).

Because the research on PE fit has shown that good fit is negatively related to turnover intention, it is assumed that employees who perceive misfit are expected to leave the organization (Schneider, 1987; Wheeler et al., 2005). However, a growing body of research has challenged this perspective by demonstrating that misfit may not always result in turnover (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Wheeler et al. (2005) suggested that employees who experience misfit would leave an organization only if other promising work opportunities exist. A poor labor market and unacceptable outside alternatives often hinder employees'

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voluntary turnover. The empirical study by Wheeler et al. (2007) indicated that although misfit would decrease employees' job satisfaction, it might not result in increased turnover intention if employees perceive few available job alternatives.

To further elaborate on the individuals' responses to misfit, Follmer and colleagues (2018) conducted a qualitative study and identified three strategies with which individuals respond to PE misfit. The resolution approach (leaving or making adjustments to oneself or the environment) is aimed at fixing the problem stemming from the misfit, while the relief approach (surface-level behavior change, buffering misfit with fit, or framing misfit as short-term) is aimed at reducing the pain of misfit and making the person more comfortable. These two strategies represent the positive end of a response continuum. When these strategies fail, the resignation approach (distancing oneself from work or taking pride in one's misfit), which represents the negative end of the response continuum, tends to be employed.

Several studies have examined the proactive responses to misfit. Simmering et al. (2003) found that when employees with high conscientiousness perceived autonomy misfit between them and their organization, they were more likely to engage in developmental activities, which can provide them with increased autonomy at work and subsequently lead to better fit. Devloo and colleagues (2011) showed that managerial employees who hold an incremental implicit person theory (i.e., the belief that individuals' characteristics and competences are malleable) exhibit proactive feedback-seeking behavior when they observe incongruent demands and abilities. Vogel et al. (2016) found that employees who engage in job crafting (i.e., making changes in their tasks or relationships at work) and employees who have leisure activities (e.g., exercise, community involvement, and personal hobbies) can maintain higher levels of engagement despite the perceptions of misfit in the workplace.

One type of misfit that has been paid much attention is over-qualification, which refers to the situation where an individual's qualifications (e.g., education and experience) exceed the job requirements (Erdogan & Bauer, 2020). On the one hand, previous research has shown that perceived over-qualification (POQ) is associated with negative outcomes including lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being (Alfes et al., 2016; Fine & Nevo, 2008; Harari et al., 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2000); lower extra-role behaviors (Erdogan et al., 2020); counterproductive work behaviors (Liu et al., 2015; Luksyte et al., 2011); and withdrawal behaviors, such as active job search behavior and voluntary turnover behavior (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013; Wu & Chi, 2020). On the other hand, scholars demonstrated that POQ can lead to positive outcomes. For example, POQ has been shown to be positively related to supervisor-related performance (Erdogan & Bauer, 2009; Fine & Nevo, 2008). In addition, POQ is positively associated with employees' proactive behaviors (Zhang et al., 2016), and can influence OCB and creativity under certain circumstances (Hu et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2017; Luksyte et al., 2020; Luksyte & Spitzmueller, 2016).

To summarize, although misfit is often regarded as a stressful experience and associated with negative outcomes, individuals' responses to misfit are complicated. Misfit does not completely cause employees to quit the job, especially under uncertain conditions of the labor market. In order to cope with the stressful situation resulting from the misfit, employees tend to take action to adapt to the environment.

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# The Role of Organizational Practices on Person-Environment Fit

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Organizational practices such as human resources (HR) practices play important roles in determining the degree of PE fit, both objectively and subjectively. For example, during organizational entry, recruitment and selection practices are usually aimed at creating a good fit between a person and the organization or job (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Dineen & Noe, 2009; Sekiguchi, 2004a). These practices interact with the individual's job-search behavior and job-choice decisions based on fit perceptions (Cable & Judge, 1994, 1996; Yu, 2014). After organizational entry, organizational socialization tactics and training and development practices help newcomers to develop PE fit with various aspects of the organization (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chao et al., 1994; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2005; Riordan et al., 2001; Sekiguchi, 2006; Yu & Davis, 2016).

## Recruitment

PE fit is critical within the recruitment context from the companies' perspective, as well as within the job-search context from the job seekers' perspective (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Most research on fit in the recruitment context focuses on PO fit and, to a lesser extent, PJ fit. Carless (2005) found that perceived PO and PJ fit influenced organizational attractiveness at different stages of the hiring process and that organizational attractiveness mediated the relationship between PO and PJ fit and intention to accept a job offer. In experimental studies using a Web-based recruitment context, Dineen and colleagues (2002) found that objective PO fit was positively related to organizational attractiveness, and Dineen and Noe (2009) found that applicant pool PO and DA fit became greater when fit information was customized. Roberson et al. (2005) found that detailed recruitment messages led to enhanced PO fit perception, which, in turn, increased intention to apply to the organization.

Yu (2014) showed that experiencing PO fit as values congruence during the recruitment process perpetuates certain expectations about one's future work environments and employer relationships, which in turn have a positive impact on organizational attraction. Furthermore, Swider et al. (2015) found significant initial differentiation in PO fit perceptions across recruiting organizations at the start of the recruitment process and that the extent of differentiation in these PO fit perceptions increased throughout the recruitment process, predicting future job choice. Vanderstukken and colleagues (2019) showed that job seekers' perceived PO fit was influenced by not only the focal organization's characteristics but also industry characteristics. In the internship context, Sekiguchi et al. (2020) found that NS fit mediated the relationship between the characteristics of the internship and organizational attractiveness.

## Selection

One of the major purposes of employee selection is to find the best person to fit various aspects of the organization. In this regard, PJ fit—especially the match between job demands and an individual's abilities, or DA fit—and PO fit are the most salient in the selection context, from employers' perspective (Anderson & Ostroff, 1997; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Werbel &

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Gililand, 1999). Adkins et al. (1994) found that work value congruence between applicants and recruiters was significantly related to recruiters' judgements of the applicant's fit and general employability. Cable and Judge (1997) further demonstrated a strong positive relationship between recruiters' perceptions of the applicant's PO fit and hiring. Higgins and Judge (2004) showed that interviewers assess applicant fit and that job applicants use influence tactics to influence the interviewers' applicant-fit perceptions. A meta-analytic study found a moderate to strong relationship between PJ fit and PO fit and intention to hire (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Several studies examined the roles of PO fit and PJ fit in the selection process simultaneously. Sekiguchi (2007) proposed that the characteristics of the positions influence the relative importance of PJ and PO fit in selection, such that PJ fit will be more important when the organization emphasizes transactional psychological contracts and general human capital, whereas PO fit will be more important when the organization emphasizes relational psychological contracts and firm-specific human capital. Chuang and Sackett (2005) found that PJ fit was more important during first interviews, whereas PO fit became more important in subsequent interviews. Nolan and colleagues (2016) found that practitioners consider PO fit more important when they expect to work closely with new hires and PJ fit more important when they do not expect to work closely with them. Sekiguchi and Huber (2011) found that when decision makers weigh PO fit and PJ fit in assessing job candidates, they weighed PO fit more heavily for permanent positions but weighed PJ fit more heavily for hiring fixed-term contracts and knowledge-intensive positions.

## **Socialization and Other Practices**

Research has shown that individuals' personal values become more similar to those of their organizations during the socialization process (Chatman, 1991; Kim et al., 2005; Ostroff & Rothausen, 1997). Chatman (1991) found that objective PO fit, assessed after hiring, was correlated with socialization activities, which in turn predicted positive change in PO fit. Saks and Ashforth (1997) proposed that the differences between fit perceptions formed before organizational entry and those made after joining an organization are primarily attributable to the socialization process. Cooper-Thomas et al. (2004) found that within several months after organizational entry, individuals' perceived PO fit became more similar to their objective PO fit. Cable and Parsons (2001) found that organizations using institutionalized socialization tactics (sequential, fixed, serial, and PE fit investiture tactics) improved newcomers' levels of perceived PO fit. Likewise, Riordan et al. (2001) found that institutionalized socialization tactics were positively related to post-entry perceptions of PJ fit. A meta-analysis conducted by Saks et al. (2007) found that institutionalized socialization tactics positively influenced perceived PO fit and PJ fit.

Employees can also play an important role in the socialization process by seeking information and networking with insiders to increase PE fit (Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998; Griffin et al., 2000; Morrison, 1993; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Kim et al. (2005) demonstrated that the relationship between socialization tactics and perceived fit was influenced by the degree to which employees took a proactive role in their new organizations. Specifically, if employees proactively developed strong relationships with their supervisors (PS fit), it replaced the effect of institutional socialization tactics on perceived PO fit. Through a 6-

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month longitudinal study, Deng and Yao (2020) found a reciprocal causal relationship between proactive socialization behaviors and student-university fit (PO fit), in which some dimensions of proactive socialization behavior influenced subsequent PO fit, which in turn influenced those proactive socialization behaviors.

Previous research has also examined how other HR practices such as training and development impact PO fit. Atry and Wheeler (2005) found a positive relationship between formal training and long-term employees' PS fit and PO fit. Kooij and colleagues (2017) examined the effects of a job crafting training intervention using an experimental field study and found that participating in the intervention led to job crafting among older workers, which was positively associated with DA fit and NS fit. Mostafa and Gould-Williams (2014) found that high-performance HR practices such as training and development were perceived as major factors that facilitated employees' PO fit, which subsequently influenced job satisfaction and OCB. Similarly, Kilroy et al. (2017) found that high-involvement work practices (e.g., development practices) were positively related to perceived PO fit, which in turn decreased employees' emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

## Conclusion

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PE fit is one of the most fundamental psychological experiences in organizational life. It involves the basic question of how the relationship between a person and an environment in an organizational context influences various individual outcomes. Research on PE fit has evolved from a static view to a dynamic, simultaneous, and multidimensional view. Because the concept of PE fit is broad and even elusive, there still are many challenges to understanding this concept more deeply. For example, it is related to various theories, forms, dimensions, and measures and empirical analyses. Organizational psychologists' continuing efforts to research PE fit will contribute to a deeper understanding of organizational life.

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