The Use of Personality Measures in Personnel Selection: The Person-Job Fit and Its Relationship to Leaders' Performance and Burnout

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to find out if there is a significant association between the actual personality and the preferred personality that the job requires to the leader's performance and burnout symptoms. This study examines this problematic based on the person-job (PJ) fit theory. Survey data was collected from 95 leaders of a global manufacturing organization (n=52) and a multitechnological applied research organization (n=44). The result did support the PJ fit theory that the more similar the leader's personality is to the preferred profile that the job requires the less the leader's experience burnout feeling and the better the leader's work performance. The results also appear to give support to the suggestion that the grounds of an effective performance and burnout symptoms at leadership level could be different from each other. In this study there were no personality dimension which would have a meaningful association to both burnout and the leader's performance.

Keywords*:* burnout, leader, performance, person-job fit, personality

1. Introduction

The aim in the recruitment is to select the best possible applicant who has the capacities that are needed in the job and who will fit with the organization (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990). The most used theory in the employee selection context is perhaps the theory of fit (Sekiguchi, 2004). During the past century, models of fit or congruence have achieved a significant role in the field of industrial and organizational psychology and human resources management (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Schneider, 1987, 2001; Holland, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Pervin, 1968; Ekehammer, 1974; Lewin, 1935; Murray, 1938; Parsons, 1909). The employee selection processes have especially focused on achieving person-job fit (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999) which is the congruence between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). During the past decade or so several authors have recognized that the practitioner in the personnel selection and the scientific wings of discipline has divided and is moving more and more away from each other (e.g. Anderson, Herriot & Hodgkinson, 2001; Dunnette, 1990; Hodgkinson, Herriot & Anderson, 2001; Sackett, 1994). One example of this kind of a trend is that the American Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978), Harvey (1991) and Harvey and Wilson (2000) have recommended that the workers traits and abilities should be left out of the selection processes. According to them, the personal traits do not meet the requirements of verifiable and replicable job analysis data.

Typically in the PJ fit studies the job demands and the abilities include only education, experience and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Wilk & Sackett, 1996; Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; French, Caplan & Harrison, 1982). However, there are authors who argued the opposite (e.g. Raymark, Schmit & Guion, 1997; Peterson, Mumford, Borman, Jeanneret & Fleishman, 1999) and the practice seems to be the opposite also. According to the Piotrowski and Amstrong (2006), personality testing is popular in 20% of the major companies in the USA and during the past twenty years, psychological tests and assessment instruments have received more and more attention internationally (e.g. Gatewood & Felid, 1998; Ryan & Snackett, 1987). It is no surprise that the personality is stressed, because according to many researches the personal qualifications predict performance and job satisfaction sometimes even better than, for example, professional, technical or formal qualifications (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Salgado, Anderson, Moscoso, Bertua, & De Fruyt, 2003; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mount & Barric, 1995; Salgado 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003; Tett, Rothstein & Jackson, 1991; Judge, Bono, Ilies & Gerhardt, 2002; Hunter, Schmidt, Rauschenberger & Jayne, 2001). The companies are using the personality testing part of their selection processes and the American Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978) is recommending that the ground of personnel selection should be the job analysis based on PJ fit which is assessed by many kinds of selection tools.

At the moment the fit has been compared only in the organization or on the team/group level but not on the job level (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005). Therefore the purpose of this research is to find out if the congruence of personality and job does have an effect on a leader's burnout feelings and the subordinate´s satisfaction to a leader's performance. The theoretical framework is the person-environment (PE) fit model and this study is focusing on PJ fit that could give us more information on the leader´s recruitment's. The idea is to find data that we could use in decision-making processes in the future when we are searching for good and effective leaders and also to bring the practitioner in the personnel selection and the scientific wings closer and closer to each other.

2. Theory

2.1 The Theory of Fit

The research of fit has traditionally focused on PE fit which is defined as a match between the person and the environment (Kristof, 1996). During these past two decades the researchers have found other sub-dimensions of PE fit or congruence (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However the person-job (PJ) fit has traditionally considered being the most influential view in the employee selection studies (Sekiguchi, 2004). PJ fit refers to the congruence between the abilities of a person and the demands of a job (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996).

PE fit is a complex and multidimensional concept and in the early years of fit researches it hasn't always been clear which form of fit has been studied. In these days there are usually three dimensions that help researchers to conceptualize PE fit and the sub-dimensions of PE fit. The dimensions are complementary versus supplementary fit, complementary fit subsumes need-supplies versus demands-abilities and perceived versus actual fit.

Apparently Muchinsky and Monohan (1987) have been the first ones to realize that there are different forms of fit. According to Muchinsky and Monohan (1987) the sub-dimensions of fit are either complementary fit or supplementary fit. The difference between the complementary fit and supplementary fit is how the environment is defined. Complementary fit occurs when the individual's characteristics match with the demands of the environment (Muchinsky and Monohan, 1987). Supplementary fit occurs when the individual's characteristics are similar to other individuals in the environment (Muchinsky and Monohan, 1987). According to the PJ fit theory, people differ in their needs, abilities, and skills and therefore the job needs to fit with these individual characteristics instead of organizations creating jobs individually that are ideal for that person (Van Vianen, 2005). PJ fit is mostly conceptualized of complementary fit because, like in this study also, the environment is described according to the job, not the people.

Secondly, when conceptualized, the complementary fit researches have differentiated needs-supplies versus demands-abilities distinction (Kristof, 1996). When the environment satisfies the individuals' needs, the needs-supplies fit occurs (Kristof, 1996). When the individual has the resources that meet the environmental demands, the demands-abilities fit occurs (Kristof, 1996). Because this research is measuring PJ fit based on job analysis, which consists of the job demands and the required resources that the individual needs to have in order to meet the demands, the perspective is the demands-abilities fit.

Thirdly the PE fit is divided to perceived (subjective) versus actual (objective) fit. Perceived fit means that the fit is defined by a direct assessment of compatibility (French, Rodgers, & Cobb, 1974; Kristof, 1996). According to Kristof (1996) the actual fit means that the fit is defined by indirectly assessment of compatibility. Over the years the terms of perceived or subjective fit and the terms of actual or objective fit have often been used interchangeably (e.g. Cable & DeRue, 2002; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996). However the Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) have distinguished these concepts. The term perceived fit should be used when the "individual makes a direct assessment of the compatibility between P and E". Subjective fit means that "fit is assessed indirectly through the comparison of P and E variables reported by the same person". The term objective fit should be used when "fit is calculated indirectly through the comparison of P and E variables as reported by different sources". (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005, pp. 291).

2.2 Earlier Studies

When comparing the earlier studies it has to be stressed out that most reviews have been nonquantitative, not differentiated between various types of fit and moreover the strategies for measuring fit have also varied widely (Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005).

Even though the job analysis based on PJ fit is a highly recommended view to employee selection process (e.g. Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures (1978)) and even though the personal qualifications predicts the performance and personality tests are highly used in the selection processes, there are only a few studies that are focusing on this thematic. There are even fewer studies of PJ fit theory which have focused on personality because typically the job demands and the abilities include education, experience and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Wilk&Sackett, 1996; Dawis&Lofquist, 1984; French, Caplan& Harrison, 1982).

However, according to the Edwards' (1991) review of the PJ fit literature, the high level of PJ fit has positive outcomes, for example on job satisfaction, low job stress, motivation, performance, attendance and retention. Kristof-Brown et alt. (2005) found out in their meta-analysis that JP fit had positive correlations with job satisfaction, organizational commitment and negative correlation with intent to quit. Also Cable and Judge (1996), O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell (1991), Hall, Schneider, & Nygren, (1970), Hollenbeck (1989), Edwards (1996), Lauver & Kristof-Brown (2001) and O'Reilly (1977) have found similar results which supports the view that if the employees experience job fit they are satisfied with their work.

There are also a few studies which support the view that PJ fit is associated with good performance. For example Caldwell and O'Reilly (1990) found that managers' performance was higher when their skills and abilities fit the profile required for the job. Also Edwards' (1991) found out in the review of the PJ fit literature that the high level of PJ fit has positive association with performance.

Kristof-Brown (2000) studied what kinds of characteristics the assessors spontaneously associated with PJ and PO fit. 62 characteristics were put into categories of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), values, personality traits or other attributes. Most characteristics (n=30) referred to personality and only five referred to values. There are few studies which have examined the validity of personality measures as predictors in personnel selection. In these studies it has been found out that the personality predicts job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount & Judge, 2001; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mount & Barric, 1995; Salgado 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003; Tett, et al., 1991) and job satisfaction (e.g. Judge, et al., 2002). However, neither one of these studies have used the fit theory on the background theory, only focusing on the single personality tests and most of them have used the Big Five tests.

There are a few studies made that have been arguing that the personality may be an important determinant of fit with specific jobs (Jackson, Peacock, & Smith, 1980; O'Reilly, 1977; Paunonen, Jackson, & Oberman, 1987). The personality has been measured mostly through interviews and therefore these results cannot be compared straightly to this study. There is still some evidence that some personality traits (e.g. conscientiousness and emotional stability) are associated with job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991). There is also some proof that people who have certain personality traits are satisfied and successful in certain vocations (Assouline & Meir, 1987; Spokane, 1985).

3. Research Problems

The purpose of this research is to find out the relations between person – job fit and leader's job burnout. Moreover the study suggests that there are relations between the person – job congruence and the subordinate´s satisfaction to the leader´s job performance. This will give us more information in the future so that we will know should there be a fit between the job and the personality. There are only a few studies that have a focus on PJ fit and measured personality so this study will give us new information on this field. Because there are only a few studies which are concerning this area and because the results have been controversial, the tests will be made on two-tailed basis. The research problems of this study are:

- Q1: Is person-job fit associated with leader's performance scores?

Based on the person – job fit theory and earlier studies it is assumed in this study that the person – job fit is associated with the leaders performance scores (Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1990; Edward, 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, et al., 2001; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Salgado 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003; Tett, et al., 1991; Kristof, 1996)

- Q2: Is person – job fit associated with leader's burnout?

Based on the person – job theory and earlier studies it is assumed in this study that the person – job fit is associated with the leader's burnout (Edward, 1991; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Cable and Judge, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Hall, et al., 1970; Hollenbeck, 1989; Edwards, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O'Reilly, 1977).

4. Methods

There are several different ways to measure fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In recent researches, the fit has often been measured simply by asking people what degree they believe a fit exists on, especially when studying perceived fit. This kind of a direct way to measure fit has been criticized for that it confounds the independent effects of the person and the environment with their effect and secondly the data is based on human perceptions (Edwards, 1991; Caplan, 1987). Indirect fit has been typically measured by combining different measures into a single index (Edwards, 1996). However, the value of difference scores and squared difference scores is one option to assess fit. In this study we are studying the objective fit because the source of P and E variables have been reported in different sources and because the fit has been calculated indirectly (Kristof-Brown, et al., 2005).

4.1 Participants

The data was collected from two companies in Finland during 2010-2011 and all the participants were in a managerial position. The other company was a global manufacturing organization (n = 52) and the other one was a multitechnological applied research organization (n = 44). All but two lower and middle level leaders from the global manufacturing organization did participate in this research. The participation percentage in the multitechnological applied research organization was 89%. 3 to 6 subordinates were selected for each leader who evaluated the leader´s performance by WOPI 360 tool. 5 subordinates were on long sick leave, so employees who were next on the list replaced them. Each job analyzes were made by the supervisor, who analyzed what kind of personality traits would be ideal in certain jobs. A total of 96 leaders participated in this research so therefore there were 96 person-job dyads. 80 % of the participants were male and 20 % were female. The mean age was 46 years.

4.2 Methods and Study Variables

First the internal consistencies were computed for the scales. Values of Cronbach´s alpha were over 0.7 (= usually considered to be an acceptable value) in the case of leader´s job burnout (α = 0,86), and WOPI360 – tool (α = 0,99) and then meet the criterion. Instead all the sum dimensions that were concerning the congruence, the alpha coefficient were less than 0,7. The internal consistencies were 0,45 for congruence of achievement motives, 0,61 for congruence of leadership motives, 0,40 for congruence of interaction motives and 0,23 for congruence of thinking. The congruence variables were made firstly by summing the single dimensions separately and the "ideal" person results that were evaluated by the supervisor (for example focusing) and then the difference between the leader's score and the ideal personality score were calculated. After that the final sum dimensions were calculated by summing these single sum dimensions (for example congruence of focusing + congruence of competition = congruence of achievement motives). In spite of the low alpha values, they are considered acceptable because in newly developed scales the value may be under 0.7 (Nunnaly& Bernstein, 1994).

Personality and fit. Personality was measured by a standardized self-report questionnaire Work Personality Inventory (WOPI) (Niitamo, 2010; Nederström & Niitamo, 2010). WOPI is based on the psychology of motivation (7 scales), thinking (4 scales) and attitudes (3 scales). The items were responded on a dichotomous (True-False) scale (Niitamo, 2010). The inventory composes of 224 items with each 14 scales measured by 14 items (Niitamo, 2010). These 14 dimensions are arranged along the five general competencies at work (Niitamo, 2010). In this study the items are examined at the level of dimension sums rather than on the level of single dimensions. These dimension sums are Achievement motives, Leadership motives, Interaction motives, Thinking motives and Attitudes. The first four dimensions were studied and calculated using the data from the primary single dimensions. The fifth dimension sum, attitudes, consists of three separate attitudes and therefore does not create any sum dimension. The difference between the subordinate´s evaluated ideal personality and the leader´s personality factors were calculated for these four dimension sums.

Burnout. Job satisfaction was measured by the Masclach Burnout Inventory – General Scales (MBI-GS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). This study used the Finnish version which has been validated by Kalimo, Hakanen and Toppinen-Tanner (2006).

The MBI-GS consists of 16 items that are grouped. Items were scored on a 7-point frequency rating scale ranging from 0 (=never) to 6 (= every day). Burnout was evaluated, for example with the item "I feel emotionally drained from my work".

Leader´s Performance. Leader´s performance was measured by WOPI360 tool (Niitamo, 2010). WOPI360 is a multirater tool for appraising the competence resources and deficits (Niitamo, 2010). The leader's behavior was appraised with 45 standard questions. Questions were answered on a 0 (= not at all descriptive) to 6 (= very descriptive) Likert scale. This study used only one rater group, the manager's direct subordinates, the number of which ranged from 3 to 6 for each manager.

4.3 Analysis

The data was analyzed using the SPSS 18.0 for Windows – program. The associations between the person – job fit and the leader´s burnout and the person – job fit to the leader's performance were examined by Pearson correlation.

5. Results

Table 1 presents the correlations among the variables. As expected, the person-job fit had some associations with the leader´s performance scores (Q1). The difference between the preferred and the actual congruence of leadership ($r = 0.22$, $p < .05$), congruence of inspiration ($r = 0.22$, $p < .05$), congruence of perception ($r = 0.25$, $p < .05$), congruence of ambiguity ($r = 0.28$, $p < .01$) and the congruence of all the dimensions ($r = 0.26$, $p < .05$) were positively associated to the leader´s performance. The more similar the preferred personality and the actual personality congruence, the better the leader´s performance was. The congruence of other dimensions had no significant correlation to the leader´s performance.

The person – job fit had also some associations to the leader´s burnout (Q2). Unexpectedly the difference between the preferred and the actual congruence of orientation and thinking was positively related to the leader's burnout ($r = 0.34$, $r = 0.29$, $p< .01$). The more similar the preferred and the actual congruence, the more the leader's experienced burnout symptoms. Instead the difference between the preferred and the actual congruence of sociability ($r = -0.25$, $p < .05$), decision making ($r = -0.21$, $p < .05$) and optimism ($r = -0.32$, $p < .01$) was negatively related to the leader's burnout feelings. The smaller the difference between the preferred and the actual profile, the less the leader experienced burnout symptoms. The congruence of the other dimensions had no significant correlation to the leader's burnout feelings.

Table 1: Correlations between the Leader's Performance, Burnout and the Fit between the Actual Personality and the Ideal Job Demands

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.
1. Performance	1																
2. Burnout	-0.08	1															
3. FIT Focusing	0.01	-0.03	1														
4. FIT Competition	0.13	-0.07	**0.39**	1													
5. FIT Leadership	**0.22**	-0.18	0.00	**0.50**	1												
6. FIT Inspiration	**0.22**	-0.11	0.04	**0.50**	**0.64**	1											
7. FIT Sociability	0.09	**-0.25**	-0.04	0.05	**0.27**	**0.44**	1										
8. FIT Empathy	0.16	-0.13	0.20	-0.02	**-0.04**	**0.26**	**0.48**	1									
9. FIT Reliance	0.07	0.01	0.10	-0.11	**-0.25**	0.03	**0.28**	**0.41**	1								
10. FIT Orientation	0.04	**0.34**	0.19	0.17	-0.09	0.18	0.17	**0.33**	0.10	1							
11. FIT Perception	**0.25**	-0.01	**0.30**	**0.28**	0.10	0.18	0.16	**0.27**	0.06	**0.46**	1						
12. FIT Thinking	-0.14	**0.29**	0.00	-0.17	**-0.34**	-0.08	0.02	**0.21**	0.17	**0.46**	0.04	1					
13.FIT Decision Making	0.05 **0.28**	**-0.21** -0.20	**-0.49** **-0.32**	0.16 0.02	**0.31** **0.24**	**0.32** **0.22**	0.12 **0.29**	-0.08 0.07	**-0.30** -0.15	-0.00 **0.21**	-0.13 **0.37**	-0.00 -0.06	1 **0.41**	1			
14. FIT Ambiguity	0.14	**-0.32**	-0.07	**0.29**	**0.55**	**0.43**	**0.39**	-0.05	**-0.26**	-0.10	0.04	**-0.34**	**0.30**	**0.33**	1		
15. FIT Optimism	-0.01	-0.18	0.15	0.03	0.11	0.05	**0.24**	**0.32**	-0.01	-0.09	0.00	**-0.27**	-0.07	0.02	**0.40**	1	
16. FIT Self-Reflection	**0.26**	-0.19	**0.26**	**0.54**	**0.53**	**0.71**	**0.63**	**0.55**	0.15	**0.48**	**0.52**	0.08	**0.26**	**0.44**	**0.50**	**0.32**	1
17. FIT All dimensions																	

|0.21 – 0.26| significant at the 0.05 level, |0.27 – 0.64| significant at the 0.01 level

6. Discussion

The purpose of this research was to give new information about PJ fit theory and bring the practice and the science closer to each other. More specific, the purpose was to find out if there is a significant association between the preferred and the actual personality to the leader's performance and burnout symptoms. In this study it was expected to be based on the PJ fit theory and earlier studies that the similarity between the preferred and the actual personality is associated with the leader´s job satisfaction and better performance.

The result did mostly support the PJ fit theory that the more similar the leader's personality is to the preferred profile, the less the leader experiences burnout feeling and the better the leader's work performance is (Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1990; Edward, 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, et al., 2001; Hough, 1992; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Mount & Barrick, 1995; Salgado 1997, 1998, 2002, 2003; Tett, et al., 1991; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Cable and Judge, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Hall, et al., 1970; Hollenbeck, 1989; Edwards, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O'Reilly, 1977). More specific, the congruence between the preferred and the actual motivation in leadership, inspiration, perception, ambiguity to change and the sum variable of all the dimensions were associated to the leader´s performance. Based on these results it seems that the leadership, inspiration, perception and ambiguity motivations are the most important motivations when trying to find good leaders and at least these motivations in the selection process should match with the preferred motivation. Although the cause and the effect relationship cannot be verified, based on the PJ fit theory and the earlier knowledge of the stability of the personality, it can be assumed that if the leader's personality fits with the preferred profile it will have positive affect to the leader's work performance.

Unexpectedly, burnout feelings and PJ fit had a positive association with the congruence of orientation and thinking. It means that the more the orientation and thinking motivations fit with the expected, the more he/she will suffer from burnout feelings. However when comparing the preferred and the actual motivations in case of sociability, decision making or optimism, the congruence had negative correlation to burnout as expected (Edward, 1991; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Cable and Judge, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Hall, et al., 1970; Hollenbeck, 1989; Edwards, 1996; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O'Reilly, 1977). The more similar the leader's actual profile is to the preferred profile, the less he/she experiences burnout feelings.

In this study, when the leader's made the preferred personality profiles from their subordinates, many felt that the leaders have to see things widely and have the ability to see things in a more abstract level. Therefore one possible explanation for this unexpected result could be that actually from the job satisfaction point of view it is more preferred that the thinking process focus more on concrete issues. However, this is just an idea that needs more careful research in the future. The results appear to give some weak support to the suggestion that the grounds of effective performance and job satisfaction at leadership level could be different from each other. In this study there were no dimension which would have a meaningful association to both burnout and the leader's performance.

6.1 Limitations

When generalizing these results there are some limitations which should be noted. The study is cross sectional so therefore we cannot make any conclusion about the direction of causality. Moreover 80% of the participants were male so these results represent mostly the situation in male leaders. It should also be noted that all the variables were based on self-assessment. The weakness of self-assessment could be the socially desirable answering style or the unwillingness to answer some questions. For example when measuring burnout, those who are suffering from severe burnout symptoms, may protect themselves by reporting less burnout symptoms than they actually feel. It should also be recognized that this study was focusing on the job satisfaction from a negative point of view. It does not necessarily mean that people do not feel job satisfaction if they are not suffering burnout symptoms and vice versa. An important strength of this study can be considered to be the response rate (93 %).

6.2 Theoretical Implications and Future Studies

As expected, this research supported the PJ fit theory (Kristof, 1996; Edwards, 1991). These results suggested that the more similar the leader's actual personality is to the ideal job or position, the better the performance is and the less he/she suffers from burnout feeling. The theory of PJ fit has been well studied in the past but the focus hasn't been on the personality level. The results of this study suggest that the personality is an important factor in the recruitment decisions. Therefore we need more studies from this area.

One important aspect in future studies is also the similarity or the differences between the job satisfaction and job performance. The results of this study appear to give some support to the view that the grounds of effective performance and job satisfaction at leadership level could be different from each other. This needs to be taken in to account in future studies. Overall the theory of fit is an interesting and important background theory for many human resources management processes, particularly for the recruitment process.

However the longitudinal studies are needed to ensure the cause and the effect relationship. Moreover because there could be some variables which are either moderating or mediating for these relationships.

The results of this study indicate that the person-job fit does have a significant role concerning the leader´s work performance and the leader's job satisfaction and therefore this matter should be considered in the recruitment so that the organizations would be able to select the very best leaders.

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