

Person-Organization Fit in the Employee Selection Process:  
An Instructive Framework for Practitioners and Implications for Human Resource Development

(HRD)

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### Abstract

Leaders in modern organizations seem recently concerned with workforce turnover and strategies for hiring and selecting employees who have a low risk of early departure. The concept of screening employees for “fit” with the organization as a key strategy for reducing turnover is well documented. However, communication of the research findings to practitioners is limited. Additionally, the role of Human Resource Development (HRD) in developing people and preparing the organization to implement P-O fit strategies remains relatively understudied. To contribute to the P-O fit literature and HRD, this article performs an integrative literature review on P-O fit with a specific focus on organizational selection processes. An integrated process model for using P-O fit in the organizational selection process is presented.

*Keywords:* Person-organization Fit, Employee Fit, Employee Selection

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Leaders in modern organizations seem especially concerned with workforce turnover and strategies for hiring and selecting employees who have a low risk of early departure.

Organizations are increasingly tasked with attracting, cultivating, and retaining talent with the skills and capabilities to maintain a competitive advantage in their industries (Aguirre, Post, & Hewlett, 2009; Alvino, 2014; Clifton, 2014; Dychtwald, Erickson, & Morison, 2013; Pangarkar & Kirkwood, 2013). In a survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) of 823 human resources executives working in companies of over 500 employees, respondents indicated that their top organizational challenge was employee turnover (SHRM, 2015). This focus may be for good reason. Reich, Hall, and Jacobs (2005) found that U.S. employers pay an average of \$4,275 in turnover costs every time a single employee is replaced.

More specifically and recently, there has been a distinct focus in the popular press on organizational selection processes that focus on “fit” as critical antecedents to tenure and commitment (Jacoby, 2015; Lawler, 2015; Wall Street Journal, 2009; Weber, 2015). The concept of screening employees for “fit” with the organization (beyond cognitive abilities and skills) as a key strategy for reducing turnover while improving organizational commitment and job performance is well-documented in the scholarly literature (Borman, Hanson, & Hedge, 1997; Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Kristof, 1996; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999) and supported by numerous empirical studies (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994, 1996, 1997; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Tom, 1971).

### **Problem and Contribution to HRD**

The problem with the existing P-O fit literature is threefold. First, while there are an abundance of useful empirical studies and meta-analyses (Hoffman & Woehr, 2005; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003) which have found positive behavioral and attitudinal consequences of selecting employees based on P-O fit, the synthesis and communication of these results along with the corresponding and evolving conceptualizations of P-O fit to managers and HRD practitioners has been limited (McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004). Second, descriptive studies have been sparse in comparison to prescriptive studies (Borman, Hanson, & Hedge, 1997; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Consequently, models that provide managers with a synthesis of the findings on P-O fit for practice are not readily available. Finally, while the focus of P-O fit as a Human Resource Management (HRM) strategy in selecting employees has been extensively studied, the role of HRD in preparing the organization to effectively use and assess P-O fit remains limited.

The lack of descriptive studies, synthesized models for practitioners, and implications for HRD in the literature may result from the many conceptualizations of what P-O fit is and how it is operationalized and measured (Kristof, 1996). Rynes and Gerhart (1990) described the construct of P-O fit as “elusive” to scholars due to its many conceptualizations. In the twenty-five years since Rynes and Gerhart’s (1990) commentary, studies are still seeking to define and distinguish P-O fit (e.g. Cable & Edwards, 2005; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Vianen, 2000). As managers seek to directly use P-O fit and HRD practitioners assume the role of preparing and developing the organization to use P-O fit, the need for a synthesizing process model becomes increasingly necessary.

### **Purpose**

This article intends to serve as a review, analysis, and synthesis of the P-O fit scholarly literature with a focus on organizational selection practices. The ultimate goal of this review is to respond to the stated problem and provide direction for future researchers studying P-O fit in an applied setting and present an instructive, synthesizing framework for hiring managers and HRD practitioners.

To accomplish the purpose, this paper is organized into four parts: (1) method, (2) a review the relevant theories, research, and practices of P-O fit within the selection process, (3) findings and implications, and (4) an instructive process model for managers and HRD practitioners seeking to use P-O fit in the selection process.

### **Method**

This paper is structured as an integrative literature review (Torraco, 2005). Based on recommendations by Torraco (2005), the following outlines the strategy of selecting and analyzing the articles and texts used in this review. The method of conducting this integrative literature review is in alignment with the article's stated purpose to provide a review of the P-O fit literature on theory, research, and practice with a focus on organizational selection practices. Research databases and portals such as Google Scholar, EBSCO Academic Search Premier, JSTOR, and ERIC served as the portals for accessing the literature. The databases were queried using the keywords: *person-organization fit*, *person-organization fit and HRD*, *organizational fit*, *employee fit*, and *employee selection*.

Articles were selected based on the following criteria. First, to provide a historical foundation of the psychology theories underpinning the modern concept of P-O fit, seminal articles on person-environment interaction were reviewed. These articles were identified using

the reference list in Kristof's (1996) most oft-cited (according to analytics by Google Scholar) integrative review of the P-O fit literature. Next, Kristof's (1996) conceptualization of the P-O fit construct served as the basis for selecting articles with significant contributions to the theorizing and empirical research of P-O fit to highlight and explain the construct's development. Third, meta-analyses that synthesized empirical studies on the antecedents and consequences of P-O fit were selected to provide evidence of the value of P-O fit. Finally, based on Judge, Cable, and Higgins (2001) article reviewing the research on the employment interview as the most prevalent organizational selection practice, articles were selected to situate the P-O fit construct within the practice of the organizational selection processes.

### **Review of the Literature**

The following review of the literature is organized to provide a comprehensive overview and synthesis of the theorizing and conceptualizations of P-O fit, the empirical research findings on the antecedents and consequences of P-O fit, and the use of P-O fit within the organizational selection process.

### **Definitions**

Person-organization fit has generally been defined as the compatibility of an individual with an organization (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2004). Within employment selection research, specifically, P-O fit has been defined as a match between a prospective employee and the organization aside from knowledge, skills, and other physical and cognitive abilities (KSAs) (Judge & Ferris, 1993; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Westerman & Cyr, 2004). These widely used and more general definitions of the P-O fit construct, however, have limitations and the potential to mislead researchers and practitioners due to their vulnerability to interpretation of the specific researcher (Kristof, 1996). Therefore, Kristof (1996) suggested the use of a multi-

dimensional definition of P-O fit that synthesizes multiple conceptualizations. Kristof's (1996) definition of P-O fit has endured in most subsequent studies. Kristof (1996) defines P-O fit as "The compatibility between people and organizations when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar characteristics, or (c) both" (p. 5).

This paper uses this definition to guide the review of the competing and overlapping theories and conceptualizations of P-O fit. Additionally, it is important to note that the major distinguishing factor and utility of P-O fit as one means of affecting work behaviors and attitudes is the focus on individual fit with the organization's characteristics as a whole entity. There have been other conceptualizations of fit that at times have been used interchangeable with P-O fit, yet look at qualitatively different constructs. Therefore, distinguishing P-O fit as a discriminant construct is important for this review.

### **Differentiating P-O Fit**

There have been three major areas of employee fit outside of the realm of P-O fit that have generated considerable attention in the literature: person-vocation fit (P-V fit), person-job fit (P-J fit), and person-group (P-G fit) (Kristof, 1996). These conceptualizations have, at times in the literature's progression, been defined interchangeably with P-O fit. Although each of these theories of fit may have value for organizations, scholars have relatively agreed on significant limitations of P-V fit, P-J fit, and P-G fit when used to select and retain employees, and on their effects on key workplace consequences such as turnover intention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (e.g. Behling, 1998; Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly et. al, 1991; Sekiguchi, 2004).

*Person-vocation fit* (Holland, 1985) is a useful theory that states that certain people, due to inherent and learned characteristics are suited for specific vocations. This conceptualization of

fit is useful in personal career decision-making, however it may not be a valid construct for the use of selecting employees who will be retained, satisfied, and committed to a specific organization. Schein (2010) found that cultures within and amongst vocations vary from one organization to another and therefore applying person-vocation fit theories to employee selection may not be useful to determine fit (Kristof, 1996).

*Person-job fit* (Edwards, 1991) is one of the most widely used conceptualizations of fit within employee selection processes amongst U.S. organizations (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2004). Person-job fit describes fit as occurring when a person's skills and abilities match with a particular job's tasks and demands (Edwards, 1991). There are significant limitations with using this theory to select employees for organizations. First, if "job" is being defined as a set of specific tasks, then fit can only be judged relative to the job itself and not relative to the entire organization. Second, the definition of a "job" can vary considerably from one context to the next, and most employees in an organization will hold more than one job during their career with the organization (if they are retained). Therefore, using P-J fit solely in selection decisions may not affect the retention, satisfaction, and the commitment of the employee in light of the empirical findings of the value of P-O fit (Hoffman & Woehr, 2005; Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2004; Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

*Person-group fit* has been defined as an individual's compatibility with the characteristics of a particular work group and team. This perspective has been widely used and studied in the last 15 years due to the increased focus and use of work teams (Guzzo & Salas, 1995; Hoerr, 1989). However, because there is widespread disagreement as to the definition of a work group or team, both agreed upon conceptualizations and measurements of this construct have proven elusive (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Additionally, groups are



nearly always situated within larger organizations and this theory is prone to neglect the cultural forces that act upon a work group once it is formed. In light of the limitations of the above perspectives, this review uses Kristof's (1996) recommendation to focus on P-O fit as the most influential type of fit on behavioral and attitudinal outcomes.

### **Theories**

Schneider (2001) stated, "...of all the issues in psychology that have fascinated scholars and practitioners alike, none has been more pervasive than the one concerning the fit and the environment" (p. 141). The study of the interaction between humans and their environments serves as the historical basis for the modern understanding of the P-O fit construct.

**Historical roots.** The 100-year old study of interactional psychology and behavior has served as the impetus for the focus in the management literature on "fit" (Ekehammer, 1974; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Lewin, 1935, Murray, 1938, Parsons, 1909; Pervin, 1968). The major theoretical assumption of interactional psychology presupposes that it is the continuous interaction between the individual and the environment that ultimately produces behavior (Lewin, 1938; Terborg, 1981). Argyris' (1957) work on *job enlargement* and *participatory management* began integrating interactionist theory into the workplace. Argyris (1957) claimed that behavior was a result of individual-organization interaction. Argyris theorized that incompatibility with the environment might produce lethargic and unmotivated individuals. Tom's (1971) suggestion that individuals will be most successful in organizations that share their personalities built upon this work. The ideas of compatibility with the environment sparked the theorizing on P-O fit as a mechanism of employee satisfaction, retention, and commitment and its subsequent study (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2002).

Since 1957, there has been significant debate around two opposing theoretical positions

regarding interactional theory: (1) that the situation is primarily responsible for the individual's behavior (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989) or (2) that personal characteristics are the primary determinant of behavior (Epstein, 1979). This debate has given way to a convergence of those theories, known as *person-environment fit* (P-E fit), that has investigated the link, or interaction, between personal characteristics and the situation (Chatman, 1989; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). Chatman (1989) and Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) theorized that it is the interaction between the person and environment that yields the greatest variance in behavior. *Person-environment fit*, therefore, serves as the backdrop to the development of P-O fit, which specifies the organization as the environment to be studied.

***Attraction-selection-attrition theory.*** Another important theory that has grounded the research on P-O fit is Schneider's (1987) *attraction-selection-attrition* theoretical framework. Schneider (1987) argued that individuals are not randomly assigned to situations but rather seek out situations attractive to them. Organizations are one situation in peoples' lives that individuals are also attracted to based upon congruent characteristics. The historical evolution of the concept of fit has resulted in two modern, distinct conceptualizations of fit: *supplementary fit* and *complementary fit* (Kristof, 1996).

**Supplementary fit.** *Supplementary fit* is thought to occur when a person "supplements, embellishes, or possesses characteristics which are similar to other individuals in the environments" (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987, p. 271). Kristof (1996) represented supplementary fit as the "relationship between the fundamental characteristics of an organization and a person" (p. 3). For the assessment of supplementary fit, the characteristics examined for alignment are the organizational culture, climate, goals, values, and norms and the individual's values, goals, personality and attitudes. Supplementary fit is said to occur when the organization

and the person are similar on these characteristics (Kristof, 1996; Westerman & Cyr, 2004).

**Complementary fit.** *Complementary fit* is distinguished from supplementary fit in that from the complementary perspective, fit is said to occur when an individual's characteristics or abilities add to an environment or fill some missing need in that environment (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987). The two major perspectives relating to complementary fit are the *needs-supplies perspective* and the *demands-abilities perspective*.

**Needs-supplies perspective.** From the needs-supplies perspective, fit is achieved when an "organization satisfies individuals' needs, desired, or preferences" (Kristof, 1996, p. 3). Therefore, when the organization is able to supply the distinct needs of the individual, congruence is reached. There have been significant findings that indicate when the needs-supplies perspective is operationalized, individuals feel a greater sense of job satisfaction at work (Judge, 1994; Downey, Hellriegel, & Slocum, 1975; Westerman & Cyr, 2004).

**Demands-abilities perspective.** The demands-abilities perspective of fit assumes that fit occurs when the demands faced by the specific organization are met by the characteristics, skills, and abilities of the individual. Specifically, individual resources such as time, commitment, experience and knowledge, skills, and abilities meet the congruent demands at the organizational level. Demands can be defined as time, effort commitment, experience, and tasks (Caplan, 1987; Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996).

**P-O fit as multi-dimensional.** The theoretical roots and multiple conceptualizations of fit have resulted in a recent definition of P-O fit that is multidimensional, and results in the interaction among these various conceptualizations of fit. Thus, the enduring definition of P-O fit is defined as "the compatibility between people and organizations when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar characteristics, or (c) both" (Kristof,

1996, p. 5).

### **P-O Fit Variables**

Person-organization fit has been operationalized in four primary ways in the literature: (1) values-congruence, (2) goal-congruence, (3) needs-supplies, and (4) personality-congruence (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Each of P-O fit's conceptualizations and subsequent operationalizations, while distinct, are not presented or recognized in the majority of the literature to be contradictory. Kristof (1996) stated, "...the *optimum* P-O fit may be achieved when each entity's needs are fulfilled by the other *and* they share similar characteristics" (p. 6).

**Values-congruence.** The congruence between personal and organizational values has perhaps seen the greatest amount of attention in the scholarly literature (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Chatman, 1989; Edwards & Cable, 2009; Kristof, 1996; Ostroff & Judge, 2007). Values are most widely defined as "...general beliefs about the importance of normatively desirable behaviors or end states..." (Edwards & Cable, 2009, p. 655). *Value congruence* indicates the degree of similarity between individual values and organizational values (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). O'Reilly et al. (1991) argue that the interaction between individual and organizational values "may be at the crux of person-culture fit" (p. 492).

**Goal-congruence.** A second operationalization of fit characterizes the individual's alignment of goals with the goals of leaders within the organization (Kristof, 1996; Vancouver & Schmitt, 1991; Zhang, Wang & Shi, 2012). This operationalization stems from Schneider's (1987) *attraction-selection-attrition* framework and more historically on Vroom's (1966) work that found when organizations helped individuals achieve their goals, they were more apt to select that organization for their careers.

**Needs-supplies.** A third operationalization of P-O fit has centered on the complementary fit perspective of needs-supply fulfillment. Needs-supplies fulfillment is described and measured by matching individual needs with organizational supplies (i.e. resources, benefits) (Cable & Judge, 1994). Need-press theory (Murray, 1938) is the root of this operationalization “in which environmental ‘presses’ facilitate or hinder the meeting of people’s physical and psychological needs” (Kristof, p. 5).

**Personality-congruence.** A fourth operationalization of P-O fit defines fit in terms of the match between the characteristics of an individual’s personality and the culture and environment within the organization (Tom, 1971). In this operationalization, fit occurs when a prospective employee possesses personality characteristic that match organizational ideals (Westerman & Cyr, 2004).

## **Research**

A very useful outcome of Kristof’s (1996) seminal review of the P-O fit literature was the synthesis of the conceptualizations and operationalizations of P-O fit. There has been widespread study of each operationalization and its effects on particular attitudinal and behavioral work outcomes. However, Kristof (1996) found that few studies specified the underlying conceptualizations of fit, and therefore it may be difficult to discern what the researcher purported to measure. Therefore, there are few existing studies that have conducted empirical research based on a multi-dimensional conceptualization of fit. However, some authors have integrated multiple conceptualizations of fit into important meta-analyses (Hoffman & Woehr, 2005; Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

**Measuring P-O fit.** In addition to the importance of specifying the operationalization of P-O fit measured, several authors (Kristof, 1996; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004;

Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003) have signaled the need to specify *how* the operationalization will be measured. There are three major distinctions in how P-O fit can be measured according to the literature: (1) commensurate measurement, (2) actual or perceived fit and (3) direct versus indirect measures.

***Commensurate measurement.*** Commensurate measurement of P-O fit involves measuring the individual's characteristics using the identical content dimensions as the organization (Caplan, 1987; Kristof, 1996). In this model, the same characteristics with the same operationalization should be measured and compared across both entities. There has been significant debate as to whether this is possible in measuring a highly variable construct such as P-O fit. Nonetheless, when designing studies purporting to use commensurate measurement techniques, it is important that researchers strictly and precisely define the constructs they are measuring across the two entities.

***Actual and perceived fit.*** The second distinction that needs to be made when measuring P-O fit is whether the fit measured is the *actual* or *perceived* fit (Kristof, 1996; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004). Perceived or subjective fit is the degree to which individuals sense they fit with an organization. When measuring perceived fit individuals are typically asked directly whether they think they are a fit with the organization. Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt (1985), in a subjective study of P-O fit, asked managers directly how well they felt their values aligned with the organization. The authors found that those who subjectively evaluated congruence reported higher levels of organizational commitment than those self-reporting low-levels of congruence. Other studies have found that the level of an individual's perceived fit may have more of an effect on work outcomes than when using absolute measures to determine fit (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

In contrast to perceived fit, *actual* fit refers to the objective measurement of the similarity of an employee's characteristics with the organization's characteristics (McCulloch & Turban, 2007). Actual fit is typically measured using the comparison between characteristics that are separately rated from the respective individual and organizational perspectives (Cable & Judge, 1996; Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2004). From this perspective, fit is said to exist when the statistical analysis of the results of an instrument measuring identical constructs demonstrates a statistical match on absolute criteria. Sekiguchi (2004) describes two of the most common methods of assessing actual fit. The first method examines the relationship of one entity to the other and entails using a variable that "reflects the moderating effects of one of the entities (person or organization) on the other entity" (p. 181). The second is to reduce the measures of fit into single variables and use polynomial regression to determine the degree of variance amongst the variables (Edwards, 1991, Edwards & Parry, 1993; Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2004).

***Direct and indirect measures.*** The third distinction to consider when measuring P-O fit is whether the study used a *direct* or *indirect* method of measurement. Direct measurement refers to methods that directly ask individuals or organizations if a fit exists (Kristof, 1996). Directly measured fit has been shown to have a very high correlation with individual work outcomes and behaviors (Cable & Judge, 1995; Kristof, 1996).

*Indirect* measures of fit refer to measures that assess actual fit. Indirect measures are verifiable assessments of similarity or complementary which do not take the judgment of the individual into account. The most prominent example of an indirect measure of fit is the *cross-levels approach* described by Kristof (1996). In this approach, individuals' characteristics are measured for compatibility against *verifiable* organizational characteristics. *Verifiable* organizational characteristics are agreed upon (by organization members) variables such as

values, goals, climate, or culture. Kristof (1996) recommends that to determine the organizational characteristics to be measured, there must be consensus of organizational characteristics such as culture. Kristof (1996) stated, “If an organization does not have a culture that is agreed upon by its members, then it does not make sense to assess an individual’s fit with that culture” (p. 13).

Given the complexity of the P-O fit conceptualizations, operationalizations, and measurement distinctions, much synthesizing work is left to be done in future research studies. Therefore, this review utilizes meta-analyses and modern studies of P-O fit consequences and antecedents to discern the key organizational practices that are found to be antecedents of P-O fit and the work outcomes that, empirically, have been found to be consequences of P-O fit (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Verqueer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

**Consequences of P-O fit.** In an integrative analysis of existing P-O fit theories, Westerman and Cyr (2004) found that empirical studies on P-O fit have found significant relationships between the level P-O fit and work attitudes, work behaviors, and work performance (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chatman, 1991; Dawis & Loftquist, 1984; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; O’Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Posner, 1992; Tziner, 1987).

**Work attitudes.** In a meta-analytic review of 21 studies which included information that allowed for the calculation of effect sizes, Verqueer, Beehr, and Wagner (2003) combined results of the studies specifically in relation to the effect of P-O fit on the following work attitudes: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Results were categorized in terms of the moderators previously discussed: type of fit, type of measurement used, operationalization of fit, and the method of measuring actual fit. The study found moderate



overall correlations of .25 with job satisfaction and .27 with organizational commitment, and a weaker -.18 correlation with turnover intention. However, the authors found an important distinction in results in terms of how the fit was measured. When P-O fit was measured using the subjective or perceived measure, correlations on each of the variables were much stronger. Using perceived measures of fit, correlations were .61 for job satisfaction, .59 for organizational commitment, and -.58 for turnover intention. Other studies have also found similar results (Cable & Judge, 1996, 1997) and were recently supported in the integrative analysis of P-O fit theories conducted by Westerman and Cyr (2004).

In addition, Verquer, et al. (2003) found that the operationalization of fit measured along with the specific instrument used for objective measurement were also significant. Specifically, the values-congruence operationalization was found to have significantly stronger relationships with each of the attitudinal outcomes than other conceptualizations. Therefore, the authors recommend a future focus on organizational and personal values when determining P-O fit. Finally, when fit was measured using the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) assessment, significantly higher correlations with turnover intention were found.

**Work behaviors.** Building on Verquer, et al.'s (2003) work, Hoffman and Woehr (2006) conducted a meta-analytic review of 58 empirical investigations on the effects of P-O fit on work behaviors. Specifically, the authors analyzed the behavioral outcomes of job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and actual turnover. Findings indicate that P-O fit correlated moderately with turnover (.26), job/task performance (.26) and organizational citizenship behaviors (.21). Interestingly, in terms of actual work behaviors, measures of perceived or subjective fit correlated more weakly (.17) with work behaviors than when

objective or actual fit measures were used (.27). Hoffman and Woehr's (2006) findings that effects on work behaviors were more favorably correlated to objective measures of fit juxtaposes Verquer, et al.'s (2003) findings that subjective measures yielded stronger correlations on attitudinal work outcomes. Therefore, it can be suggested that measures that incorporate both subjective measures of fit and objective measures of fit can yield a more holistic predictor of the effects of fit on both attitudes and behaviors.

**Antecedents of P-O fit.** Research indicates the major antecedents of P-O fit are applicant job choice behavior, organizational hiring practices, and organizational socialization processes (Adkins, Russell, & Werbel, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1994, 1996, 1997; McCulloch & Turban, 2007; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Sekiguchi, 2004). While there has been important work done investigating the antecedents of P-O fit, the study of the effects of antecedents on P-O fit is sparse in comparison to the extensive study on the consequences of P-O fit.

**Job choice behavior.** While this review specifically focuses on P-O fit within the organizational selection process due to its increasing relevance and use by practitioners, it is important to include perspectives related to an applicant's job search behaviors as an antecedent to both P-O fit and the subsequent organizational selection and entry processes the applicant will find themselves a participant within (Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015; Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012).

Swider, et al. (2015), in the most recent study on the factors influencing the perceptions of P-O fit within the job search process, found that when applicants had positive perceptions of P-O fit in the application process, "selection utility was improved. The authors also found that an applicant's P-O fit perception early in the recruiting and application process has a significant effect on the subsequent job choice.

***Organizational selection processes.*** A second antecedent affecting P-O fit is the organizational selection process. The organizational selection process has received the most attention from scholars, however, mostly within *prescriptive* studies (McCulloch & Turban, 2007). Sekiguchi (2004) divided the existing research on P-O fit during the organizational selection process into two areas: *prescriptive* and *descriptive*. The prescriptive approach is aimed at what practitioners should do, and descriptive studies focus on what managers are actually doing.

Under the prescriptive approach, researchers have found that many U.S. organizations have focused on person-job (P-J) fit as the method for determining fit. The use of P-J fit however, has been shown to have significant drawbacks (Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Researchers have repeatedly called for selection practices that are based on organizational effectiveness and less on task effectiveness. This view is underpinned by the assumption that a worker will most likely need to interact with the whole organization, and, if retained will most likely work on varying tasks and with diverse work groups over their career (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Kristof, 1996; Sekiguchi, 2004; Werbel & Gilliland, 1999). Overall, research using the prescriptive approach has recommended that the use of P-O fit is a critical factor for use within selection practices as opposed to other conceptualizations of fit (Sekiguchi, 2004).

The descriptive study of P-O fit has added to the body of literature on organizational selection processes by focusing on the employment interview as a key practice to determine P-O fit through field studies (Judge & Ferris, 1993). Specifically, researchers engaged in descriptive research on P-O fit have found that the employment interview is one of the most useful methods of assessing P-O fit (Cable & Judge, 1997). Cable and Judge (1997) found that interviewers could assess values congruence with significant accuracy. This research, coupled with the

extensive focus of managers on the employment interview as a key selection process stage warrants more of a narrow future research focus specifically on the employment interview as an antecedent of P-O fit (Hamdani, Valcea, & Buckley, 2014; Macan, 2009).

***Employment interview.*** The employment interview remains one of the most popular key methods organizations use to bring in new talent (Hamdani, et al., 2014; Lievens, Highhouse, & De Corte, 2005; Macan, 2009). Judge, Cable, and Higgins (2000a) found that interviews remain a critical method of assuring P-O fit namely because “interviews enable organizations and applicants to interact through direct organizational representation, allowing each party to determine if the other demonstrates congruent values” (p. 393). Not only have interviews been found to be the most widely used method of selection, they are also perceived very favorably by applicants as opposed to other methods of evaluation (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; Lievens, De Corte, & Brysse, 2003).

The use of the interview to determine P-O fit has led to researchers to explore how interviewers form perceptions of P-O fit through a structured interview (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1997). Contrary to some criticism in the literature regarding the moderator of interviewer bias in employment interviews, researchers have found that interviewers tend to evaluate P-O fit according to their organization’s attributes and not just their personal preferences (Cable & Judge, 1997; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990).

In addition, interviewers have used score sheets as a structured way to rate employees through the interview process. (Maurer, 2002; Macan, 2009). There is increasing evidence that the use of behaviorally anchored score sheets may serve a predictive purpose (Klehe & Latham, 2006; Taylor & Small, 2002). For example, when situational and behavioral score sheet rankings were used to evaluate teamwork, there was a significantly higher, positive correlation with

subsequent supervisor evaluations and assessments on teamwork once hired (Klehe & Latham, 2005).

This research also offers an example of a critical future direction for P-O fit research within the employee selection process. Combining research such as the reviewed research on interviewing with P-O fit may yield useful information for practitioners. In addition, HRD scholars and practitioners may need to assess and evaluate the knowledge and abilities of managers who are using score sheets and other methods of evaluating P-O fit.

### **Findings and Implications**

Five significant findings of this review are: (1) There is a need for a guiding model of assessing P-O fit designed for practitioners, (2) There is a need for organizations to perform pre-work, termed in this article as organization preparation, to set-up ideal processes to form organizational consensus to determine P-O fit, (3) HRD within organizations may need to focus on values and culture as key determinants of employee fit, (4) Utilizing multiple measures and conceptualizations of fit in selection processes are valuable, and (5) researchers should focus on developing valid tools such as score sheets for organizations to rate P-O fit during the interview stage of the selection process. Each finding is represented in the proposed model (Figure 1) and each has significant implications for managers and HRD researchers and practitioners.

### **Guiding Model for Managers and HRD Scholars and Practitioners**

First, after a review of the scholarly literature, it is clear that the P-O fit construct is complex, both theoretically and empirically. However, as HRD scholars and practitioners, it is important to connect the interesting and useful findings from years of P-O fit research with leaders and managers in organizations. Therefore, as a contribution to the P-O fit research, a process map that synthesizes the literature for managers and HRD practitioners and scholars is

presented in Figure 1.

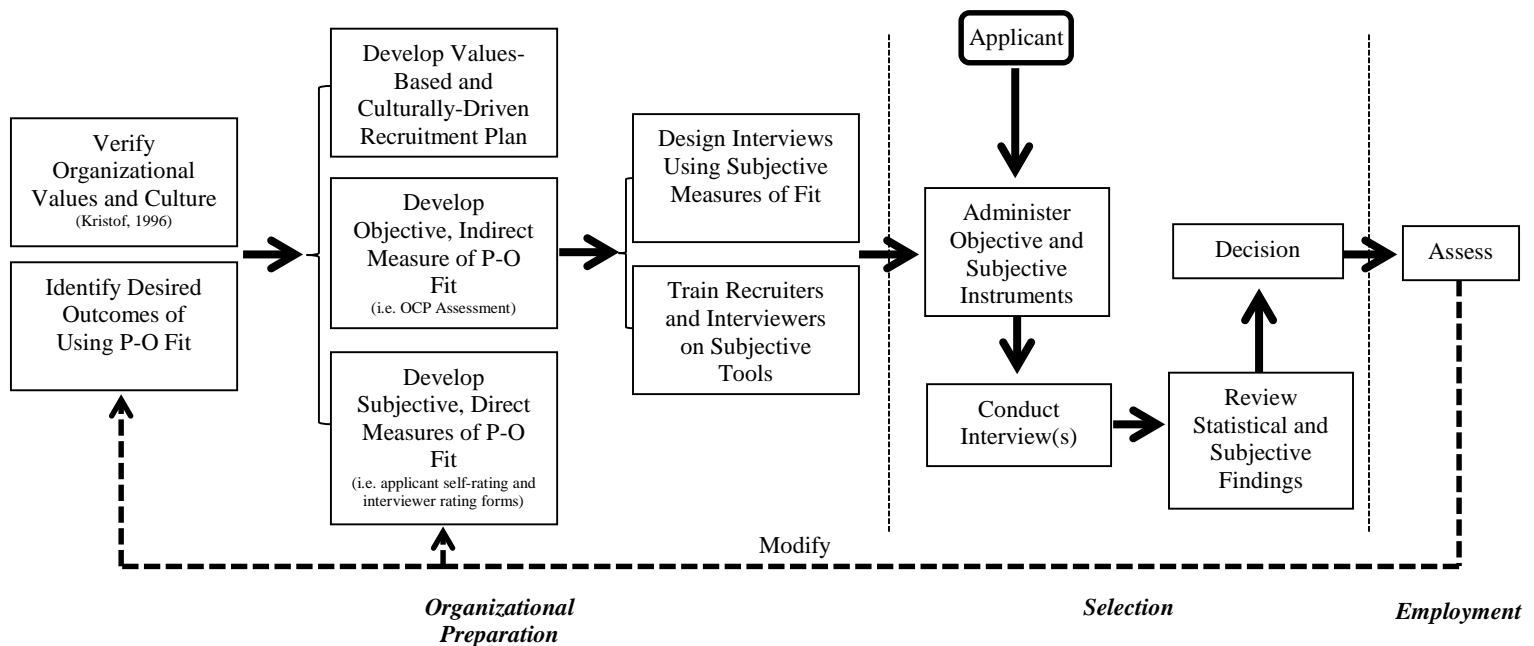


Figure 1. Process Model for Using P-O Fit in Organizational Selection

There are several important factors included in the instructive model depicted in Figure 1. First, through synthesizing the literature, the model proposes three distinct and necessary stages of using P-O fit: organizational preparation, selection, and employment/assessment.

**Organizational preparation.** First, the model highlights the literature's indication that organizations must conduct significant organizational preparation to construct a valid selection process that utilizes P-O fit. This work directly implicates both HRD scholars and practitioners. For example, research has implored the verification and consensus of organizational values and culture. Therefore, a future research of HRD scholars may focus on the development of verifiable values as related to P-O fit. This interaction between HRD and HRM functions is critical.

**Values and culture.** Values and culture are determined to be the key indicators of P-O fit

in the model. The literature has found that values congruence and culture fit have the most highly correlative effects on work behaviors and attitudes.

**Goals.** The model also encourages the organization to specify the goals of working with P-O fit. This organizational preparation will theoretically allow for the appropriate operationalization(s) of P-O to be selected for optimal results within the given context.

**Multiple measures.** In addition, to achieve the most holistic benefit of using P-O fit, multiple measures of fit are a best predictor of positive attitudinal and behavioral work outcomes as indicated by meta-analytic findings (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Westerman & Cyr, 2004; Verqueer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003).

**Assessment.** Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the model includes the assessment of fit measures in terms of their actual effects on work attitudes and behaviors of the selected employee post selection. This is an important implication for HRD practitioners. Consequently, the necessary and ongoing modifications of measures and processes to ensure an effective and responsive process are also included. Undoubtedly, there may be limitations and omissions in this model. However, as a first attempt to provide an instructive framework designed for practitioners that synthesizes the P-O fit literature, the hope is to spur more applied and descriptive research on P-O fit in practice.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this article reviewed, analyzed, and synthesized the P-O fit scholarly literature with a focus on organizational selection practices. By proposing a synthesizing process model for managers and HRD practitioners and scholars, this article provides direction for future researchers studying P-O fit in an applied setting and an instructive framework for managers seeking to utilize and measure P-O fit within the selection process. Additionally, this paper

should prompt HRD scholars and practitioners to assume a key role in preparing the organization for HRM processes such as the recruitment and selection of employees. HRD scholars and practitioners, therefore, may be prompted to reconsider roles in a traditional HRM function specifically in the areas of organizational preparation and the development of the organization to effectively enact P-O fit theory



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