Can dissimilar be congruent as well as the similar? A study on the supplementary and complementary fit

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the contributions of supplementary and complementary fit on the affective commitment. Person-organization fit is also examined in order to analyze its mediating effect on this relationship. Data is collected by an online questionnaire through a convenient sample of 224 employees working in various industries in Turkey. Research hypotheses are tested by regression analyses. Analyses results have shown that both supplementary and complementary fit have positive effects on affective commitment and person-organization fit mediates this relationship.

1. Introduction

Person-organization fit (P-O fit) is an acceleratingly used concept in both academic studies and management applications in recent years. P-O fit is simply defined as the fit between individual values and organizational norms and values. It examines how the membership to an organization affects the individual and whether the individual will be committed to organizational norms or not (Chatman, 1989). P-O fit comprise person-job fit (P-J fit) that is known as the match between an individual and the requirements of a specific job (Carless, 2005). Organizations seek for two types of fit for employees: (1) fit between the knowledge, skills, abilities (KSAs) of the individual and the task demands or critical requirements for the job which is also known as P-J fit; (2) fit between the overall personality of the individual (e.g. needs, interests, and values) and the climate or culture of the organization (Bowen et al., 1991).

Kristof (1996), investigates P-O fit from two points of view: subjective and objective P-O fit. Objective fit defines the “real” fit which is the empirical result of the evaluations of individual and organizational values separately. Subjective fit on the other hand represents the perceived fit. It is the direct judgements of individuals towards organizational fit which means in subjective fit members make comments on how well individual characteristics match with the organizational characteristics (Kristof 1996, Judge & Cable, 1997; Piasentin&Chapman, 2006). Schneider states that, people’s preferences about organizations are based on their implicit judgments of congruence of their own characteristics and the attributes of organizations (Schneider et al., 1995). If employees believe that their values adjust with the values of the organization and the other employees in the organization, they should feel involved with the broader mission of the organization (Cable&DeRue, 2002). Good fit perceptions also lead to people define themselves in terms of their organizations; which means high P-O fit perceptions increase employees

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identification with their organization (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Therefore, it can be stated that, subjective P-O fit is quite decisive to predict employee attitudes and work outcomes during the employment. In this study P-O fit is considered as subjective fit and based on the employees’ fit perceptions about their organization.

P-O Fit is a key predictor of important work outcomes. Several studies in the extant literature investigate the relationship between P-O fit and work outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment and employee turnover (Verquer, M. L., Beehr, T. A., & Wagner, S. H., 2003, Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C, 2005). Most of the studies in the literature emphasizes that the similarity between the individual and the organizational characteristics results P-O fit. On the other hand perceived subjective fit does not always necessarily require similarity. Subjective fit may also sometimes be influenced positively by the perception of the individual of some differences between his/her characteristics and the characteristics of the organization and/or the other members of the organization. Sometimes the difference between those characteristics may be perceived as a positive difference. The individual may perceive the dissimilarity of her/his characteristics as a variety that may add value to the organization. Supplementary fit and complementary fit are evaluated in this context (Cable & Edwards, 2004; Piasentin & Chatman, 2006; Guan et al., 2011), whether the individual supplements (represents similarity) or complements (represents dissimilarity) the organization with his/her values, talents, skills and other characteristics.

Despite the fact that a cornucopia of research probed the relationships between P-O Fit and key employee outcomes, a limited number of researchers examined the effects of supplementary fit and complementary fit in this context. Accordingly, this study examines the contributions of supplementary and complementary fit on the affective commitment while controlling the effect of person-organization fit. In this context, the study begins with a literature review on P-O Fit, Supplementary Fit and Complementary Fit, then will go on to development of hypotheses. Methodology, analyses and results will take place in the next section. Finally, results of the analyses will be discussed and recommendations will be provided for researchers and academicians.

2. Literature Review And Hypotheses

2.1. Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit)

One of the most interesting topics of organizational behaviour which tries to understand individual behaviour in organizations is Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit) framework. Chatman (1989) defines P-O fit as the congruence between the norms and values of organizations and the values of the people. It is defined by Kristof (1996) as “the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both.”

Chatman and her colleagues made several investigations and in their studies they showed that the congruence between people’s values and their organization’s values predicts important organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, commitment and intention to leave (Chatman, 1989, 1991; O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell, 1991). Some of the literature on P-O fit has made studies on the human resources recruitment and selection processes. The organizations which are complying with job seeker’s personal characteristics are preferred to work so the people’s perception of fit is another critical issue (Cable & Judge, 1994, Judge & Bretz, 1992). If job seekers perceive high degree of fit with the organization they desire to work for, they contribute and committed to the organization. But if people who perceive low degree of fit they don’t join to the organization or they leave (Bretz & Judge, 1992; Cable & Judge, 1996).

The conflict between organizational values and individual values results in low P-O fit. The results of low P-O fit may show up in different ways: the individual’s values may change by resembling to those of the organization’s; organizational values may change or if there is no change at all in both sides and P-O fit cannot be provided then the individual leaves the organization. On the other hand high P-O fit occurs when the individuals share organizational values and make positive contributions to the organization. While a high P-O fit is a desired context and have positive work outcomes in an organization, sometimes too much high degree of P-O fit by most of the members of the organization may have some unwanted negative consequences. Too much connectedness between the members and the organization may prevent them realize the outer environmental changes or may prevent them following innovations, so falling behind the improvements. Sometimes low fit may be perceived as an opportunity for the individual to learn and improve (Chatman, 1989).

Both theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that, people try to find comfortable, supporting organizational
environments and so they can develop themselves. And if a complete fit occurs between the organization and the
individual, he/she can achieve higher levels of success and job satisfaction than those who do not catch an exact fit
(Bretz & Judge, 1992).

2.2. Supplementary and Complementary Fit

P-O fit comprises both supplementary and complementary perspectives of fit (Kristof, 1996). For the emergence
of supplementary fit employee should supplement, embellish, or possess similar characteristics to the other individuals
in an organization. Complementary fit is differentiated from supplementary fit, because in this fit, characteristics of
employee corrects the deficiencies of the organization or add what is missing in it (Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

Supplementary fit represents the similarity situation between the employees’ values, characteristics and the
organization’s as well as with the other organizational members’. Complementary fit on the other hand, may occur in
situations where there is dissimilarity between those characteristics, values etc. This kind of fit only appears when the
individual believes and perceives that those different characteristics, talents, skills, knowledge, values of him/herself
make contributions to the organization by adding value. In both of the situations (in supplementarity and
complementarity) it is expected that P-O fit will emerge. (Piasentin & Chapman 2007; Carless, 2005).

Complementary fit occurs when the characteristics of a person or an organization meets the others’ needs; while
supplementary fit occurs when a person and an organization have similar or compatible characteristics (Cable &
Edwards, 2004). It can be considered that in complementary fit an employee has a skill set that an organization
needs, or an organization provides the rewards that an individual desires (Edwards, 1991). The supplementary fit
concept exists when an employee and an organization have similar and matching attributes. Supplementary fit occurs
if an organization has already possessed this kind of employees but hire new ones similar to them to replicate its
workforce (Cable & Edwards, 2004).

2.3. Affective Commitment

The organizational commitment concept has been the subject of many various academic studies and is central to
organizational behavior research. Organizational commitment is defined as an individual's attitude towards an
organization that consists of (a) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values; (b) a
willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership
in the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). Organizational commitment is the feeling of belongingness, involvement in
the organizational affairs and emotional connectedness towards the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer et
al., 2002). Highly committed employees intend to stay within the organization and to work hard toward its goals
(Luthans, McCaul, Dodd, 1985).

The early theories about organizational commitment refer to exchange and investment theories (Amernic & Aranya,
1983). According to social exchange theory, commitment increases or decreases related to the benefit relationship
between the individual and the organization. Individual point of view states that, if employees are satisfied by what the
organization provides their commitment level increases.

Investment theory, also stated as side-bet theory in the literature, puts forth that commitment depends on the
accumulation of investments that individual will lose or the value will be diminished in case of leaving the
organization. The effort of the individual or the performance he/she presented in the organization will turn into many
sort of acquisition like knowledge, experience, increase of power in social relations, increase in income etc. The
investments of the individual accumulate through the time he/she stays in the organization (Becker, 1960).

Beginning from the 1970s onwards many commitment scales have been formed (Porter et al., 1976; Meyer & Allen,
1991). One of the mostly used scales is the Meyer and Allen’s scale. Meyer & Allen (1991) argued that there were
three types of organizational commitment: (1) Affective Commitment: refers to the employee’s emotional attachment
to, identification with, and involvement with the organization. Employees with a strong affective commitment
continue employment with the organization because they want to do so. (2) Continuance Commitment refers to an
awareness of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Employees whose primary link to the organization is
based on continuance commitment remain because they need to do so. (3) Normative Commitment reflects a feeling of
obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to
remain with the organization. People feel continuance commitment due to the costs that should be arised in case of leaving the organization. Normative commitment is about the obligation and responsibility feelings of the individual towards the organization. They feel committed because they think that’s right and ethical. Employees feel affective commitment because they want, continuance commitment because they need and normative commitment with the feelings of obligation (Allen & Meyer, a.g.e, s.3).

Previous researches have shown that organizational commitment can be predicted by P-O fit. In those studies high level of perceived P-O fit results with high level of organizational commitment(Saks& Ashford, 1997; O'Reilly &Chatman, 1987; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Finegan , 2000; Verquer, Beehr &Wagner, 2003; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Piasentin&Chapman, 2006; Piasentin&Chatman, 2007). Although affective, continuance, and normative commitment are used to capture the multidimensional nature of organizational commitment, affective commitment is considered a more effective measurement of organizational commitment. Employees with strong affective commitment would be motivated to higher levels of performance and make more meaningful contributions than employees who expressed continuance or normative commitment (Brown, 2003:31). Thus, affective commitment alone is one of the key concepts of employee behaviour.

Based on the literature review, we propose the following hypotheses.

H1: Supplementary fit has a higher effect on person-organization fit than complementary fit.
H2: Higher supplementary fit leads to higher affective commitment.
H3: Higher complementary fit leads to higher affective commitment.
H4: Person-organization fit mediates the effects of the supplementary and complementary fits on affective commitment.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Goal

The purpose of this study is analyzing the effects of supplementary and complementary fit on affective commitment. In addition, possible mediation effect of P-O fit on these relationships is also probed. In order to test the hypotheses, a field research was conducted by using the survey methodology. Our research model is shown in Figure 1.
3.2. Sample and Data Collection

Data is collected by an online survey comprising several questions about person organization fit, supplementary fit, complementary fit and affective commitment. Through convenient sampling a total of 224 individuals who were working in a variety of industries including education, higher education, services, banking, finance, automotive, textile, IT and construction, participated in this study by voluntarily filling the online questionnaire. Questionnaires are coded and entered into a SPSS spreadsheet in order to perform the data analyses. Research hypotheses are tested by regression analyses.

3.3. Analysis and Results

Affective Commitment was measured using 6 items taken from the “Organizational Commitment Questionnaire” developed by Lee, Allen, Meyer and Rhee (2001). Participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using five-point Likert type scales (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). Examples of items include “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”; “I really feel as if this organization’s problems are my own”.

Supplementary and Complementary Fit was measured by Piasentin and Chapman’s scale (2007) which is composed of 15 items originally. In this scale 6 items are used to measure perceived similarity and 9 items are used to measure complementary fit. Participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using five-point Likert type scales (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree). One item from the complementary fit “I seem to get along best with employees who have personality traits that are different from my own” is deleted after factor analysis which was loaded weakly with a value of 144 and which also was deleted in the original article of Piasentin and Chapman.

Subjective Fit was measured on a 4 itemed scale which is also adapted from Piasentin and Chapman (2007). Participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the statements using five-point Likert type scales (1= strongly disagree; 5= strongly agree).

The mean age of the participants was 34.2 years (range:22-58; sd.= 6.82) and 51.8% were female; 57.6% were married, most of them had graduate (50%) and postgraduate degrees (42%). Nearly half of them (52%) were working for government organizations. Mean organizational tenure was 6.41 years (range: 1-39).

Before testing the research hypotheses, we made some preliminary analyses to control the dimensionality and reliability of both the affective commitment scale and supplementary-complementary fit scales. Scale dimensionalities were controlled by principal component analysis. Principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and a factor extraction according to the MINEIGEN criterion (i.e. all factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1) was employed. Scale reliabilities were assessed by internal consistency using Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient.

Affective Commitment scale is subjected to factor analysis. KMO and Bartlett’s test results showed that the scale is appropriate for factor analysis (KMO= 0.894; Bartlett’s test of sphericity p<0.001). Principal component analysis suggested that affective commitment scale explained 71% of the total variation in the data. The factor analysis results of perceived supplementary and complementary fit and person-organization fit items can be observed in Table 1.
Table 1. Factor Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Supplementary and Complementary Fit Items</th>
<th>Supplimentary Fit</th>
<th>Complementary Fit</th>
<th>P-O Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Supplementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The underlying philosophy of this organization reflects what I value in a company.</td>
<td>.760</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personality is similar to the employees I work with.</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share a lot in common with people who work for this company.</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My personality is well suited for the personality or ‘image’ of this company.</td>
<td>.776</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My skills and abilities match the skills and abilities this organization looks for in employees.</td>
<td>.467</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ability level is comparable to those of my co-workers.</td>
<td>.640</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Perceived complementarity                          |                   |                   |        |
| I feel that I am important to this company because I have such different skills and abilities than my co-workers. | .771              |                   |        |
| My co-workers rely on me because I have competencies that they do not have. | .804              |                   |        |
| When key decisions are made, my co-workers consult me because I have a different perspective than they do. | .775              |                   |        |
| My knowledge, skills, and abilities offer something that other employees in this organization do not have. | .772              |                   |        |
| I feel that I am a unique piece of the puzzle that makes this organization work. | .683              |                   |        |
| Even though my personality differs from my co-workers, it seems to complement their personalities. | .710              |                   |        |
| People in my organization seem to value that I am different from the ‘typical’ employee. | .616              |                   |        |
| ‘I seem to get along best with employees who have personality traits that are different from my own’ | .144              |                   |        |
| My values make me feel unique because they are different from the company’s values. | .437              |                   |        |

Subjective Person-Organization Fit Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplementary and Complementary Fit Items</th>
<th>Supplimentary Fit</th>
<th>Complementary Fit</th>
<th>P-O Fit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘I fit in well with other people who work for this company’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This organization is a good fit for me in terms of what I look for in an employer’.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I think other people would say that I fit into this organization’,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘I would probably fit in better at another organization than the one I currently work for’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Explained Variance of Perceived Supplementary and Complementary Fit 54.5%
Total Explained Variance of Subjective Person-Organization Fit 55%

The reliability analysis results can be seen on Table 2 which indicates that the Cronbach’s Alpha values for each factors exceeds 0.70. Therefore the scales are said to be reliable. Responses to the items under each scale were averaged and composite variables are created for hypotheses testing.

Table 2. Reliability Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Scale Format</th>
<th>Cronbach Alpha</th>
<th>Scale Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary fit</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>LRF</td>
<td>.813</td>
<td>Piasentin and Chapman, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complementary Fit</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>LRF</td>
<td>.878</td>
<td>Piasentin and Chapman, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-O Fit</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>LRF</td>
<td>.717</td>
<td>Piasentin and Chapman, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>LRF</td>
<td>.920</td>
<td>Lee, et al., 2001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: LRF- Likert Response Format (Five point: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree)

Regression analysis is conducted to test the hypotheses and to define the direction and magnitude of the effects. The results of the analysis can be seen in the below Table 3. As it is seen in Table 3, Supplementary and Complementary Fit have significant effect on person-organization fit where the beta level of supplementary fit is higher than complementary (β=.597; .135 respectively and p= .000 both). So H1 is accepted which claims that supplementary fit has a higher effect on person-organization fit compared to complementary fit. Those two independent variables have also significant effects on the affective commitment (β=.516; β=.200 respectively and p= .000 for both) therefore H2 and H3 are accepted.
Person organization fit has the highest beta effect on the affective commitment which is $\beta = 0.716$ ($p = 0.000$). When they are entered the analysis together, the beta effects of supplementary and complementary fit decreases to 0.182 and 0.124 respectively and also P-O fit beta level decreases to 0.559, while still all of them statistically significant. So the model which is aimed at measuring the mediating effect of P-O fit on the relationship between supplementary and complementary fit on the affective commitment is found statistically significant and finally H4 is also accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regression Model</th>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Depended Variables</th>
<th>Standardized $\beta$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Adjusted R2</th>
<th>F Value</th>
<th>Model Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1A</td>
<td>Supplementary Fit</td>
<td>Person-Organization fit</td>
<td>0.597</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.421</td>
<td>81,954</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complementary Fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1B</td>
<td>Supplementary Fit</td>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>0.516</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>65,328</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complementary Fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1C</td>
<td>Person-Organization fit</td>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>0.716</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.511</td>
<td>233,781</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1D</td>
<td>Supplementary Fit</td>
<td>Affective Commitment</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>90,089</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complementary Fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.124</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Person-Organization fit</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.559</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Conclusion

Examining the mediation effect of person-organization fit on the relation between perceived supplementary and complementary fit and the affective commitment, this study is purported to be a contribution to the behavioral sciences and the management studies in general. The results of the analysis have supported the entire hypotheses of the study while also comply with the previous literature. According to those results, supplementary fit which is the perceived similarities of the individual in the organization and complementary fit which is the perceived differences from the organization and the other individuals within the firm, had positive effects on the affective commitment. Supplementary and Complementary fit are also supported for being predictors of person-organization fit which supports the previous studies (Kristof, 1996; Piasentin&Chapman 2007; Carless, 2005). In the mediation analysis it is observed that most of the effects of the two independent variables on the affective commitment arise from the mediating effect of P-O fit. It is also derived from the literature and stated above that the high P-O fit leads to high levels of organizational commitment (Saks& Ashford, 1997; O'Reilly &Chatman, 1987; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Finegan , 2000; Verquer, Beehr &Wagner, 2003; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Piasentin&Chapman, 2006; Piasentin&Chatman, 2007). In this study it is also distinctly put forth that supplementary fit have higher effect on P-O fit compared to complementary fit.

These findings have some theoretical and practical implications. First of all, managers and human resources professionals should know that distinct perceived supplementary and complementary fits positively contribute to both affective commitment and subjective person organization fit. Also they should be aware and pay attention to that not only similarities between individuals and between the individual and the organization pave the way for commitment but also the differences do. Heterogeneity with diverse skills, knowledge and values contribute to the commitment which in turn will affect many work related outcomes. Managers should also consider the positive relation between perception of differences and affective commitment, while they should also take into consideration the significantly higher positive relation between the perception of similarities and affective commitment. Those considerations are
significant for strategic human resources management involving selection, recruitment, and training and development activities. It may be stated that in order to attain higher affective commitment, managers must look for employees whose values and characteristics are congruent with the company and also try to. However, this is not always practical or possible especially in the globalizing business world where people come from different background, values, personalities and culture.

One of the limitations of the study is that data were collected from a convenience sample of respondents from various occupational and organizational backgrounds. Thus, results must be interpreted for casual relationships between the study variables and not to be generalized to wider populations. Further researches can be made upon surveys which are conducted on specific industries, occupations or organizations to understand whether these relationships differ according to different environmental factors. Further, employee characteristics such as age, gender, job and organizational tenure should also be controlled to understand how these relationships differ, if any, according to employee characteristics.

References


