The Influence of Co-Worker Relationships on Person-Organisation Misfit

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27th ICAP: 11-16 July 2010
Theoretical background of person-organisation (PO) fit and misfit

**PO Fit Theory**

- Schneider (1987): Individuals are attracted to, selected into, and stay/leave organisations based on their fit against other employees.
- Implicit that PO (mis) fit develops via interactions with co-workers.
- PO fit can be:
  - Complementary: More of the same, eg, similar values/abilities OR
  - Supplementary: Something additional eg, new values/abilities

**PO Misfit Theory**

- Bipolar: Having more or less than some elements relative to co-workers.
- Unipolar: Having more or less than some elements relative to co-worker ideal.
  - Jansen & Kristof-Brown (2005) employees working faster or slower than norm.
- Qualitatively different element:
  - Lovelace & Rosen (1996) present ethical misfit idea.
  - Also race, gender, & other categorical variables.
Dimensions of PO Misfit derived from past research

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

Demographic
- Race
- Gender
- Age
- Tenure
- Socio-economic status

Characteristics
- Cognitive style
- Personal style & values
- Work skills

ORGANISATION FACTORS

Structural
- Policies
- Job demands

Social
- Pace of work
- Values & ethics
- Practices/ norms
- Feedback

Research Aim & Method

- Misfit is under-researched (Judge, 2007). Idea for investigating misfit sparked by quote from a study on social relationships at work
  - *I don’t really feel a part of my company...I don’t think like the others do, kind of like I don’t really belong...at times I feel really lonely*

- **Research Aims:**
  1. To understand how individuals perceive their misfit with the organization
  2. To understand what individuals believe the causes of misfit are

- **Respondents**
  - 537 Australasian employees recruited in online survey via snowballing;
  - 167 spontaneously provided comments in open section to the question: *Please comment generally on your social relationships at work*
  - Professional employees (eg, lawyers, researchers), 25-60 years (mean = 43 years), mostly female (72%)

- **Responses grouped into 4 themes:** Demographics, individual differences, role, and organisation
Misfit themes

NB quotes have been amended to fit presentation space

Theme 1: Demographics
- I am gay. I am reserved around my co-workers and always feel a bit out of place but there are some kind people which is why I stay on
- I’m the young guy at work....They don’t go out of their way to make me feel included

Theme 2: Individual Differences
- We have just done the Myers- Briggs and it made me realise how different I am and why I don’t get on with everyone. Our relationships aren’t the greatest and now I have some idea why
- I like to keep my work and social life separate

Theme 3: Role
- I am the only person at work with my job title....being the sole researcher causes a distance
- Part-time employment…staff in my area are not that interested in building rapport with part-timers

Theme 4: Organisation
- There is a clique at work that strains what could be a more cohesive environment. This makes people feel on the outer
- Competition for career advancement ...prevents sincere friendships developing and can make people feel on the outer
Findings & Conclusions

- Individual & organisational factors contribute to perceptions of misfit
  - Similar to past research, we identified demographics & individual differences
  - Different to past research, we identified role & organisation but not structural or social elements

- Overall, the findings suggest that co-worker relationships can have direct and moderating effects
  - Direct effects: Perceptions that you do not have good social relationships at work can make you feel like you do not belong or fit
  - Moderating effects: Positive co-worker relationships can buffer PO misfit, while negative relationships can exacerbate PO misfit

Conclusions

- Perceptions of relationships with co-workers are a key component of PO misfit
- Globalisation & diversity will increase the potential for PO misfit; a focus on developing & supporting positive co-worker relations could offset this