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

Helena Cooper-Thomas, University of Auckland &

Sarah Wright, University of Canterbury

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Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

Theoretical background of person-organisation (PO) fit and misfit

▣ <u>PO Fit Theory</u>

- ▣ 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

▣ <u>PO Misfit Theory</u>

- ▣ Bipolar: Having more or less than some elements relative to co-workers
  - ◆ Chan (1996) study of cognitive misfit: continuum of adaptive to innovative
- ▣ 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
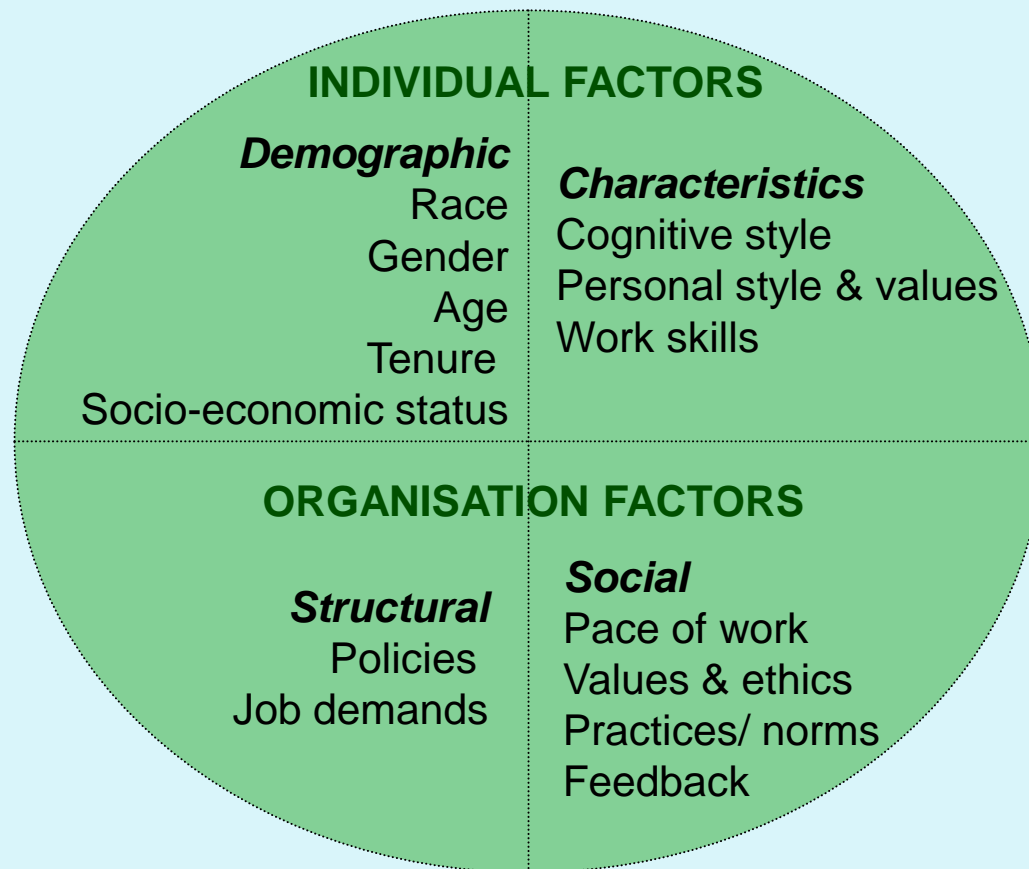 - ◆ Also race, gender, & other categorical variables

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

Note. Elements taken from Chan (1996), Elfenbein & O'Reilly (2007), Lovelace & Rosen (1996), Jansen & Kristof-Brown (2005), Robert & Wasti (2002), Sacco & Schmitt (2005)

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 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 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 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