



# Person–job fit, person–organization fit and innovative work behavior: The mediating role of innovation trust



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## ABSTRACT

The relationship between person–environment fit and employee's positive work attitudes and behaviors has been well researched. However, there has been no study on the impact of person–environment fit on the innovative work behavior of the employees and how employee innovativeness leads to better job performance. The current study aims to fill this gap in the literature by examining the effects of two person–environment fit perspectives – person–job fit (PJ fit) and person–organization fit (PO fit) – on innovative work behavior through innovation trust. Using multisource data from 459 individuals and their supervisors, we found that innovative work behavior was positively related to an employee's job performance. Employees' perceptions about their job fits and organization fits positively affected innovative work behavior, and these relationships were mediated by innovation trust. We discuss the implications of these findings for innovation theory and research, as well as for management practice.

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## 1. Introduction

Innovation is crucial for organizations to remain competitive and successful (Smith & Tushman, 2005). Due to intense competition in the marketplace and continuous threat of new competitors, differentiation and continuous innovation by inspiring employees to promote and implement new ideas are considered as important strategies for gaining competitive advantage by every organization (Tajeddini & Trueman, 2008). Among many ways to foster rate of innovation, engendering innovative work behavior (IWB) among employees is one of the best (Van de Ven, 1986). Employee innovativeness plays a key role to achieve organizational objectives and high firm performance (Darroch, 2005; Karatepe & Sokmen, 2006; Klomp & Van Leeuwen, 2001). The literature on IWB suggests that organizational justice, job characteristics, psychological contract, intrinsic motivation, rewards, leadership, quality of working relationships, to name a few, might help to engage employees in IWBs (e.g. De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010; Dorenbosch, Engen, & Verhagen, 2005; Ramamoorthy, Flood, Slattery, & Sardesai, 2005; Reuvers, Van Engen, Vinkenburg, & Wilson-Evered, 2008; Scott & Bruce, 1994). See Fig. 1

People make a difference and the right person for the right job and the right organization help achieve positive work outcomes (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). Many researchers believe that employees whose values fit better with the values of their organizations as well as with their jobs display high levels of citizenship behavior (e.g. Goodman & Svyantek, 1999; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Vigoda, 2000). Since IWBs are purely discretionary citizenship behaviors which are not expected of employees in their formal job descriptions and roles (Janssen, 2000; Ramamoorthy et al., 2005), therefore the impact of person–organization fit and person–job fit on IWB is worth exploring. However, a little empirical support has been found about the impact of similarity of individual's values with the task or job characteristics (person–job fit), and the match between individual

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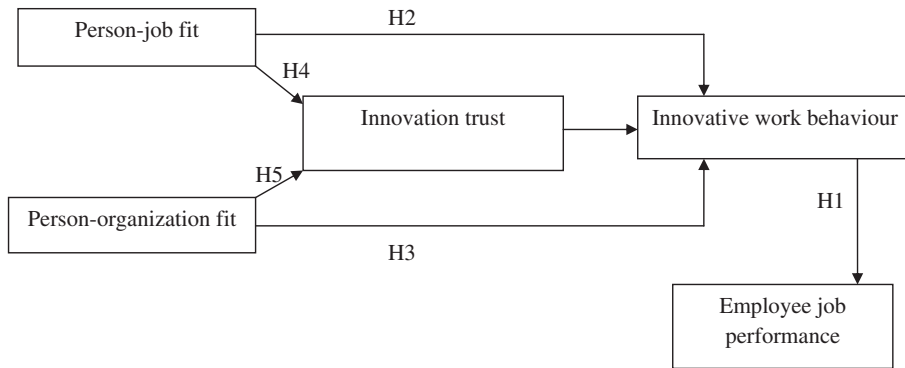


Fig. 1. Theoretical framework.

and organizational fundamental characteristics (person–organization fit) on individual's IWB. Person–organization fit has been defined as the degree of confluence between individual values and the organizational values (Kristof, 1996). Person–job fit has been defined as the match between an individual's personality, knowledge, skills, and abilities and the requirements of a specific job (Kristof-Brown, 2000).

Results linking person–organization fit and person–job fit to IWB have been inconclusive. While researchers have studied the relation between person–organization fit and creativity which is the first stage of innovative work behavior (Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004), minimal attention has been given to the effect of person–job fit and person–organization fit on overall IWB construct. Creative ideas are novel and original which offer out of the box solutions to the organizational problems and are potentially useful to the employing organization (Amabile, 1983), whereas innovative behavior is the generation, promotion, implementation and realization of those creative ideas (Janssen, 2000; Shalley et al., 2004). Creativity could be thought of as a first step of innovative work behavior (Tierney, Farmer, & Graen, 1999). For an individual to display IWB, it is necessary for him/her to be creative; whereas it is not necessary for a creative person to exhibit IWB behavior. Some individuals have the ability to generate effective ideas but then they do not take the burden of pursuing those ideas to convert them into realities due to a number of hurdles they have to face while implementing those ideas. An employee is able to display IWB only if idea generation works in tandem with idea implementation (Shalley et al., 2004; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Studies with a focus on employee's creativity use references from studies that focused on employee's innovative behavior and vice versa (Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). Clearly, there is a need for greater attention to be paid to delve into the mechanisms and processes through which the match (fit) between employee's values and his/her job and organizational characteristics influence work related behaviors like IWB, in order to develop a more complete understanding of the person–job fit and person–organization fit and their impact on positive work behaviors (Hoffman, Bynum, Piccolo, & Sutton, 2011).

Innovative work behavior is considered risky (Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004) and beyond explicitly mentioned job obligations by many employees (Chang & Lee, 2008), therefore managers need to provide an inner environment of trust and autonomy to support these innovative behavioral traits (Bysted, 2013; Dobni, 2010). In this article, we argue that innovation trust mediate the relationship among person–organization fit, person–job fit and IWB. An inner environment characterized by innovation trust allows employees to more freely introduce new ideas, knowing that their co-workers would respond positively to new ideas and their social ties would remain intact (Bysted, 2013). Innovation trust is important as this reduces the perceived riskiness and negative reactions caused by IWB (Unsworth & Clegg, 2010). Individuals with a better PJ fit and PO fit engage in discretionary behaviors such as IWB but they would not let their social bonds, understanding, working relationships and homogeneity to minimize in exchange of generating and implementing novel ideas. When individuals feel safe without fear of negative social consequences, they tend to explore new ways of doing things (West & Anderson, 1996). It contributes to an environmental readiness for innovative initiatives and makes employees confident when bringing suggestions and input (Ellonen, Blomqvist, & Puumalainen, 2008). Because innovation trust nourishes a positive response from the environment and sets out to be a powerful precursor to creativity which is a crucial component of innovative work behavior (West, 2002), therefore it helps employees to come forward with more innovative initiatives. As such, innovation trust mediates the effect of person–job fit and person–organization fit on innovative work behavior. The logic behind this model is that both PO fit and PJ fit perceptions can positively impact employees' engagement in IWBs only when they do not fear weakening their social ties, working and networking relationships with their co-workers. An environment characterized by open-mindedness and trust by co-workers makes employees feel confident and secure while sharing ideas. Employees engage in IWBs under such circumstances because they believe their working relationships are not compromised even after challenging the status quo.

The current study has three purposes. First, to test the effect of employee's IWB on job performance. Second, to investigate the impact of person–organization fit and person–job fit on employee IWB and find out which of the two fits is associated more strongly to employee's innovativeness. Third, to elucidate the mediating role of innovation trust among person–organization fit, person–job fit and employee IWB.

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