

# Does the effect of power distance moderate the relation between person environment fit and job satisfaction leading to job performance? Evidence from Afghanistan and Pakistan

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## Abstract

This study examines the relation between person-environment (P-E) fit with job satisfaction and job (task) performance. This cross-national study is based on faculty members of universities from Kabul (180) and Islamabad (270). Data is collected through self administered questionnaires and is tested following the Baron and Kenny (1986) moderation and mediation procedures. The study contends that power distance moderates the relationship between P-E fit and job satisfaction. Contrary to expectation, power distance does not moderate the hypothesized relationship. This study finds that individual's satisfaction from high power distance culture depends on their cultural norms because they give more preference to cultural norms than their own needs and demands. Moreover, results show the direct relationship of P-E fit with job performance in Afghanistan (Kabul) and Pakistan (Islamabad). We compared the results of hypothesized model cross-nationally and find some variation regarding employee's job satisfaction. Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationships between P-E fit and job performance in Kabul, while in Islamabad job satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between P-E fit and job performance. By asserting the role of culture, this study developed practical implications for both theorists and practitioners.

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## 1. Introduction

The selected countries (i.e. Afghanistan and Pakistan) labor market is facing serious challenges such as, lack of knowledge, skills, and abilities because of the political instability, the insurgencies, law and order situations from the last three decades specially Afghanistan is affected more than any country in the world. The lack of unskilled or misfit have serious detrimental consequences both for the organization and the employees (Lee & Ramaswami, 2013). Therefore, a match or compatibility between the environment and the situation is essential. Person environment (P-E) fit is a construct that has achieved a lot of consideration from scholars and practitioners to understand the attitudes and behaviors at workplace since last two decades (Bednarska, 2017; Lee & Antonakis, 2012; Edwards, 1991; Kristof,

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1996; Nolan & Morley, 2013). Psychological theory of work adjustment proposed that the congruence between employee's attributes and those of the workplace leads to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984). The fundamental concept of P-E fit is the psychological mechanism of compatibility that has been mimicked from similarity and need fulfillment (Kristof-Brown & Guay 2010). Thus the psychological development plays a significant role to enhance culture (Lehman, Chiu, & Schaller, 2004). P-E fit can vary from culture to culture; there is still a debate among researchers to explain this extant effect of P-E fit on numerous attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

The construct of P-E fit is appealing for examining the cultural effect over a decade (Schneider, 2001). However, there are limited empirical studies about the generalizability and the validity of P-E fit across cultures (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2010). Hence, one of the major objectives of the current study is to generalize the concept of fit. In line with previous studies suggestions, the current study has taken power distance as a moderator between the relationship of P-E fit and job satisfaction, which is consistent with the studies of Lee and Antonakis (2012). They found that employees in a higher power distance culture will be happy if they get what they desire. However, if their preferences are not fulfilled according to the social norms and values beside a high level of fit the individual will be dissatisfied. Moreover, based on the previous findings we assumed that culture might play a significant role between P-E fit and job satisfaction in a novel context. These findings are generally failed to report for the effects of cultural values on psychological mechanism that ultimately effect on employee behaviors (Lehman et al., 2004). In addition, we found an interesting analogy for our assertion on the moderating effect of power distance as below.

P-E fit research, especially with its focus on personal affective outcomes, is definitely a western tradition, dominated by an emphasis on the individual and on personal satisfaction. These are clearly not universal values and so at least one other the equation environmental variable, national culture, must enter the equation for P-E fit research. It must but has not (Schneider, 2001. p. 148).

Job satisfaction is defined in many different ways. However, the most authentic definition is that of Locke (1969) "Job satisfaction is a positive or pleasurable reaction resulting from the appraisal of one's job, job achievement, or job experiences" (p.317). The employees' job performance is the consequence or result of the individual's behavior (Sonntag and Frese, 2002). Furthermore, Bartram (2005) found that employee's having good knowledge of their job are expected to perform their job successfully. The plethora of research supported the notion that a good fit between employees and their environment have positive consequences for the individual and the organization. For example, this notion is lately confirmed from the meta-analysis of (Oh et al., 2014; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005) that P-E fit is strongly associated with individual outcomes described by prospective employees. Similarly, empirical analysis found that employee's are found satisfactory, committed with their jobs because of a mutual fit between the characteristics of his own and requirements of the organization (Oh et al., 2014; Mulky, 2012).

Triandis (1994) emphasized on the cross-cultural perspectives of the research and described that, the theories that are presented in western developed countries which make 30% of the world population and findings of these theories are implementing on the remaining world 70% population. Addressing the need for cross-cultural studies on P-E fit notion, Lee and Ramaswami (2013) described that "efforts to provide a cultural perspective on fit are rather scant or invisible" (2013). To address this cross-cultural issue in fit research, the current study examined the relationship between P-O fit and P-J Fit and job satisfaction leading to job performance, and further it explain why this particular relationship occur. Perception of P-O Fit and P-J fit are essential for enhancing employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Cable & DeRue, 2002), therefore in this model P-O fit and P-J fit enhancing employee job satisfaction and job performance in a novel context. To examine this particular proposed relationship, we tested the model by using teachers samples from Afghanistan (n=180) and Pakistan (n=270). The Afghanistan and Pakistan have mostly similar culture practices but are mostly neglected in organizational research. This difference between the cultures has the vantage points for understanding the proposed model of fit. First, as according to Aycan et al. (2000) Pakistan is under research country, whereas Afghanistan is considered among the least research countries. So the main objective of the study is to analyze the level of fit and its relationship with attitudinal and behavioral outcomes among the university teachers of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Secondly, the universities are providing a high level of education to the community so there is a need to have congruence between a high level of fit between the teacher and their job and also with their organization. According to MOHE Afghanistan (2013) less than 2% of the current university teachers have Doctoral degrees and 36% have MS/MPhil. This may affect the capability of individuals to deliver the forecasting accepted results due to lack of misfit (Aris, 2007). Thirdly, the differences in culture between the two countries are indicated in the results in organizational settings (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005), it can effect on the fit-

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