

The mediating role of person job-fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment

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DECLARATION

I, Shiwe Ruth Thekiso, hereby declare that: **The mediating effect of person-job fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment** is my own work and that the views and opinions expressed in this work are my own.

Furthermore, I declare that the contents of this research study will not be submitted for any other qualification at any other tertiary institution.



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I, Ms Cecilia van der Walt, hereby confirm that I took care of the editing of the mini-dissertation of Ms S Thekiso titled *The mediating role of person job-fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment.*

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“Every block of stone has a statue inside it and it is the task of the sculptor to discover it”

Michelangelo

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Summary

Title:

The mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment among employees

Key words:

Positive psychology, strengths, weaknesses, well-being, perceived organisational support for strengths use, person-job fit, organisational commitment

For organisations to thrive they need to make sure that developing their employees is their priority, which is embedded in their human resource practices and strategy. This will create a favourable environment that allows employees to explore and use their natural abilities since they will be provided with sufficient job resources. These opportunities could lead to a positive person-job fit and organisational commitment outcome.

The general objective of the study was to test a structural model of Perceived Organisational Support for Strengths Use (POSSU), person-job fit and organisational commitment, and also to investigate whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between POSSU and organisational support. This study was conducted to add value to the existing literature on following a strengths use approach and to assist in creating enduring and measurable value both to organisations and individuals when strengths are explored and used in the South African context.

A cross sectional approach was adopted. An availability sample of ($N = 176$) from a manufacturing sector in South Africa, North West Province, was used. Structural equation modelling was applied to test the structural model and to determine the indirect role of person-job fit.

The results confirmed that a significant positive relationship exists between POSSU as a job resource provided by the organisation and the employees experiencing an increase in person-job fit. Results also indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between person-job fit and organisational commitment. Furthermore the results showed that a significant relationship exists between POSSU and organisational commitment.

Therefore the results reveal that person-job fit complimentary mediated the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment with a significant indirect effect of 0.09 ($p < 0.04$; 95% CI = [0.01; 0.37]). This result did not cross zero to classify person-job fit as a full mediator, since the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment remained significant in the presence of the mediator (person-job fit).

The knowledge gained from the application of positive psychology in the workplace has proved to be of utmost importance in the development of both the organisation and the employee. Due to POSSU, employees are open to the opportunity of developing their strengths at work, and the organisation is able to measure the effective work performance thereof. This study adds value to the limited research on positive psychology and its intervention in the workplace within the South African context.

Recommendations were proposed to be applied in organisations and in future research.

OPSOMMING

Titel:

Die bemiddelingsrol van persoon-werk-passing in die verhouding tussen werknemers se verstaan van hoe die organisasie ingestel is op ondersteuning aan hulle ten opsigte van die benutting van hul sterkpunte, en van hoe sterk hulle verbondenheid tot die organisasie is.

Sleutelwoorde:

Positiewe Psigologie, sterkpunte, swakpunte, welstand, persepsie van organisasie-ondersteuning rakende die benutting van sy werknemers se sterkpunte, hulle persoon-werk-passing, en hul verbondenheid tot die organisasie

Vir organisasies om te kan floreer moet hulle seker maak dat die ontwikkeling van hul werknemers hul prioriteit-aandag geniet, wat in hul mensehulpbron-praktyke en strategie ingebed moet wees. Dit sal 'n gunstige omgewing skep wat die werknemers in staat sal stel om hul natuurlike vermoëns te verken en te benut deurdat hulle van voldoende werkshulpbronne voorsien sal wees. Hierdie geleentheid sou kon lei tot 'n positiewe persoon-werk-passing en 'n organisasieverbondenheid-uitkoms.

Die oorkoepelende doel van die studie was om 'n strukturele model te toets vir hoe Werknemers die Organisasie se Ondersteuning Waarneem rakende dié se Aanwending van hulle (die werknemers se) Sterkpunte (WOOWAS) [Engels = (POSSU)], persoon-werk-passing en hulle verbondenheid tot die organisasie, en ook om ondersoek in te stel daarna of persoon-werk-passing die verhouding tussen WOOWAS en organisasie-ondersteuning bemiddel. Hierdie studie is uitgevoer om waarde toe te voeg tot die bestaande literatuur oor die volg van 'n sterkte-aanwendingsbenadering en daartoe by te dra om blywende en meetbare waarde by sowel organisasies as individue tot stand te bring wanneer sterkpunte binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks ondersoek en aangewend word.

'n Dwarsdeursnit-benadering is gevolg. 'n Beskikbaarheid-steekproef van $N = 176$ is uit 'n vervaardigingssektor in Suid-Afrika, Noordwes Provinsie geneem. Strukturele vergelykingsmodellering is toegepas om die strukturele model te toets en die indirekte rol van persoon-werk-passing vas te stel.

Die resultate het bevestig dat 'n betekenisvol positiewe verhouding bestaan tussen WOOWAS as 'n werkhulpmiddel wat deur die organisasie voorsien word, en die toename wat werknemers in persoon-werk-passing ondervind. Resultate het ook aangedui dat 'n betekenisvol positiewe verhouding bestaan tussen persoon-werk-passing en verbondenheid tot die organisasie. Voorts het die resultate getoon dat 'n betekenisvolle verhouding bestaan tussen WOOWAS en verbondenheid tot die organisasie.

Die resultate het dus aan die lig gebring dat persoon-werk-passing die verhouding tussen WOOWAS en verbondenheid tot die organisasie gedeeltelik met 'n betekenisvol indirekte effek van 0.09 ($p < 0.04$; 95% CI = [0.01; 0.37]) bemiddel het. Hierdie resultaat het nie nul oorskry om persoon-werk-passing te klassifiseer as 'n volledige bemiddelaar nie, aangesien die verhouding tussen WOOWAS en verbondenheid tot die organisasie betekenisvol gebly het in die teenwoordigheid van die bemiddelaar (persoon-werk-passing).

Die kennis wat ingewin is deur die toepassing van positiewe psigologie in die werkplek het bewys van die grootste belang te wees vir die ontwikkeling van beide die organisasie en die werknemer. Weens WOOWAS is werknemers ontvanklik daarvoor om hul sterkpunte by die werk te ontwikkel, en die organisasie word sodoende daartoe in staat gestel om die effektiewe werkprestasie daarvan te kan meet. Hierdie studie voeg waarde toe tot die beperkte navorsing oor positiewe psigologie en die intervensie daarvan in die werkplek binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks.

Aanbevelings is gemaak vir aanwending in organisasies en vir toekomstige navorsing.

CHAPTER 1

1. INTRODUCTION

This mini-dissertation is investigating the mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment among employees.

In this chapter the problem statement will be provided, as well as an overview of the research already performed on perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), person-job fit and organisational commitment. The research questions, research objectives and research hypotheses are provided, followed by a discussion of the research methodology. Lastly, the layout of the chapters and a summary of the chapters are given.

1.1 Problem Statement

The world of work is constantly changing and as a result has turned to a highly competitive environment. Higher than average skills, knowledge, talent, survival and performance are in today's world of work non-negotiable, as organisations compete to attract and retain high-quality employees (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Tarique & Schuler, 2010; Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014). Globalisation, pressure, innovation and growing competition for talented workers have given organisations added incentives to review their employee relations strategies (Tymon, Strumpf, Doh, 2010 Vaiman, 2010). Furthermore, the extensive training costs to ensure the adjustment and retention of new and old employees is also high since organisations need employees who are proactive, innovative, engaged, committed and resilient (Scullion & Collings, 2011).

Organisations at the moment experience an acute shortage of talented employees. This talented employee gap is financially harmful to organisations and yet partially preventable through a better understanding of employees, the organisation as a whole and practical strategies for developing an engaging culture in the workplace (Farndale, Scullion & Sparrow, 2010). The meta-analysis on organisational literature showed that positive psychology applications in the form of strengths interventions, organisational commitment and person-job fit can be relevant distal outcomes of this organisational adjustment processes. It is an

emergent acknowledgement that this trend transpires across South African organisations since they too have to compete both on local and international level (Denton & Vloeberg, 2003; Vaiman & Holden, 2011). The qualities of human resources seem to be of vital importance to the success of thriving organisations especially in this competitive environment (Lu, Wang, Lu, Du & Bakker, 2014).

Organisations are therefore challenged to re-evaluate their human resource strategy for training their employees. For years they have focused mainly on deficits, weaknesses or problems. Organisations are therefore challenged to re-evaluate their human resource strategy for training their employees. For years they have focused mainly on deficits, weaknesses or problems (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Clifton & Harter, 2003; Stienstra, 2010) which according to Strumpfer (2005) represent an approach based on the disease model whereby attention is focused on the study of weaknesses and damage.

The dominance of the deficit-paradigm has led to the development of a stereotype manner of thinking that focused solely on problems as well as almost exclusively focused on behavioural dysfunction in the workplace such as aggression, violence, depression and suicide and a host of stress-related physical disorders (Bourke, Humphreys, Wakerman & Judy, 2010; Fredrickson, 2004; Luthans, 2002). This deficit-based approach to problems prevalent in contemporary working life, results in low expectations rather than optimal functioning of employees. Furthermore, when following this approach in their training attempts, organisations only improved the employees' weaknesses as the only area of development (Clifton & Harter, 2003). Organisational success can no longer be attained by merely trying to fix weaknesses, but through focusing on what is being done correctly and building on strengths (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001, Roberts, et.al 2005).

A movement pioneered by numerous scholars has sought to refocus the discipline of psychology by means of which the focus is directed at strengths and virtue (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This movement has progressed to the development of the construct of strengths perspective known as psychofortology – the field of study in positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002). The strengths paradigm arguably represents a departure from fixing problems or things that are perceived to be wrong and weaknesses, to identifying and encouraging flourishing individuals, groups, communities and organisations (Luthans, 2002; Seligman, 2000). This implies that the general focus is on building strength in people and organisations as well as promoting psychological well-being

(Luthans, 2002; Seligman, 2000; Wissing & Van Eeden, 2002). Buckingham and Clifton (2001) argue that employees' performance may improve through the use of their qualities and strengths. Furthermore strengths use can foster complementary partnering of individuals with other employees (Linley & Harrington, 2006) thereby improving organisational performance and minimising individual weaknesses.

Buckingham and Clifton (2001) conceptualise strengths as a blend of talents (which includes patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviour), knowledge (facts and lessons learned) and skills – all the characteristics that allow people to perform at their best (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011). Strengths are further described as a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development, and performance (Linley, 2008, p.9). Strengths are also seen as an individual's natural capacity for behaving, thinking or feeling in a way that creates the possibility of optimal functioning and performance (Linley & Harrington, 2006). Thus strengths within an organisation can be seen as employees' dispositions; intellectual, physical and interpersonal capacities; motivation; and interests which are essential elements for high performance.

Research findings appear to confirm that applications of strengths are associated with a range of desirable outcomes (Biswas-Dienar, Kashdan & Minhas, 2011). Amongst others, the usage of strengths demonstrably increase subjective and psychological well-being (Govindji & Linley, 2007) which give rise to the attainment of goals (Linley, Nielsen, Wood, Gillett & Biswas-Diener, 2010) and thereby lead to optimal well-being. Furthermore, through strengths identification, increased happiness is experienced and a decreased rate of depression is notable (Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005). Employees who show signs of happiness in the workplace seem to be more productive and possess lower job withdrawal tendencies (Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). This forms a link with the happy productive worker theory. Cropanzano and Wright (2001) point out that happier employees are sensitive to opportunities and are more confident in their work. Using strengths over a period of time, as Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan and Hurling (2011) see it, also shows a higher level of well-being in employees.

Boyatzis, Smith and Blaize (2006) declare that an individual's experience when exploring and applying their strengths, produces a positive emotional response which in turn facilitates

flexibility, effective problem solving, decision making and evaluation of events (Erez & Isen, 2002). The effects of positive emotions can be of great importance to many South African employees considering their deprived background and the changes due to globalisation (Rothmann & Cilliers, 2007). Strumpfer (2006) further observed that when positive emotions are experienced over time, it builds the intellectual, emotional and social resources of an individual. This seems to form a positive link with the broaden-and-build theory. Fredrickson (2004) explains that the theory suggests that positive emotions help people in succeeding and uplifting them to a higher level of optimal well-being. Employees who capitalise on their strengths use are expected to show increased rate of development in their work (Minas, 2010) which will help them to be effective in coping with the job demands in general (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004).

For employees to use their strengths effectively they need support from their organisation .In this regard, Van Woerkom, et al. (2016) refers to POSSU perceived organisational support (POS) for strengths use. They conceptualise this as the extent to which employees perceive that their organisations support them to use their strengths in the workplace. These authors further conceptualise POS for strengths use as a job resource. Bakker and Demerouti (2007) conceptualise job-resources as the physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects that (i) can be functional in achieving work goals; (ii) can reduce work demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; and (iii) can stimulate growth, learning and development. Job resources have motivational potential which leads to excellent performance.

Hence it can be expected that POS for strengths use as a job resource may have a motivational potential that can lead to excellent performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Furthermore, it is observed that organisations that focus on employee strengths may facilitate motivation towards dedicated work procedures (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), and this can stimulate individuals to apply their best attributes to their job. When employees are able to align their skills, abilities and attributes with what the job requires from them they are likely to increase a fit between the job and themselves (Edwards, 1991; Kristof-Brown, 2000).

Person-job fit is conceptualised, according to literature, as the compatibility between employee's attributes and the job's characteristics and is subdivided into two categories, namely demand-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit (Cable & De Rue, 2002). The demand-

ability fit is achieved when an employee brings sufficient knowledge, skill and abilities to meet the job demand, while the need-supplies fit exists when the supplies offered from the job are compatible with the needs, preferences and desires of the employee. Cable and DeRue (2002) and Vogel and Feldman (2009) advance that the two categories are combined to give an overall definition of person-job fit.

Person-job fit is achieved when an employee possesses the skills required to meet the demand of the job or when the job meets the needs of an employee (Kristof-Brown, 2000). The world of work emphasises the importance of fit between employees' capabilities and their jobs. Research has shown that the existence of a good fit between employees and their job will ensure long-term effectiveness in an organisation (Boon, Boselie, Paauwe & den Hartog 2007). Therefore individuals would be satisfied with their job provided the organisational policies can meet individual preferences (Kristof, 1996). Boon, et al. (2007) holds that organisations seem to use developmental practices to stimulate desired employee behaviour, which in turn strengthens the match between organisations and employees. In other words, employees will feel that their talents are matched with their work through their engagement with their jobs (Lu et al., 2014).

Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005) further attest that organisations which experience high person-job fit among their employees experience high performance within their organisations. Employees seem to be able to take on additional work because when they use their natural talents more often it becomes their strengths and this is expected to increase their knowledge and skills to do their job (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). It is therefore important to match employees' goals and plans for the future with the knowledge and skill demands of their jobs (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski & Ezer, 2001).

Research, as reported by Rousseau and Parks (1992) and Ryan and Schmit (1996), indicated that the degree of fit between a person and the organisation is related to both productivity and retention or turnover. Furthermore a proper fit between employee capabilities and the job creates a feeling or a sense of belonging or attachment (Iplik, Kilic & Yalcin, 2011). When employees display a proper fit with their job it means they stretch their skills abilities. As such their job is invariably perceived as meaningful thus promoting a psychological bond between an employee, the job and the organisation.

Therefore it can be expected that person-job fit will be related to organisational commitment. Individuals are likely to stay in the organisation if a good fit exists and the congruence between an individual with the job will increase organisational commitment (Mathis & Jackson, 2003; Wheeler, Buckley, Halbesleen, Broue & Ferris, 2005). This suggests that person-job fit can be considered a factor in the development of organisational commitment (Iplik, Kilic & Yalcin, 2011).

Organisational commitment is referred to as an employee's psychological bond to an organisation (Joo & Shim, 2010) and a relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation (Bishop, Scott & Burrough, 2000).

This seems to imply that for organisational commitment to thrive, the employee's perception of the extent to which the organisation values their contribution and cares about their well-being should be evident (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2003). Riggio (2009) further argue that factors such as the variety of work, autonomy involved in the job, the level of responsibility that comes with the job, rewards and the quality of the social relationship at work are most probably factors that can affect organisational commitment. A link seems to develop with the social exchange theory which focuses on voluntary actions of individual that are motivated by the returns they are expected to bring (Blau, 1964). These factors are initiated when the organisation shows the willingness to support its employees' interests (Gould-Williams, 2007).

The employee-employer relationship seems to be a series of social exchanges (Cole, Schaninger & Harris, 2002). This tends to create a strong bond between employees and the organisation (Garrow, 2004). Therefore it can be argued that people who use their strengths more at work achieve better results and stay longer with their organisation (Stefanyszyn, 2007). This seems to increase levels of organisational commitment since employees are more engaged with what they do best. According to Aamodt (2007) engaged employees attend to their job, perform well and participate in behaviours that benefits the organisation and stay with the organisation.

Based on the literature above, perceived organisational support for strengths use may lead to increased levels of organisational commitment. Also, it can be expected that when employees are allowed to use their strengths at work, they are likely to experience a better person-job fit

and it is further suggested from the above-indicated literature that person-job fit may be associated with higher levels of organisational commitment. One question that seems to be unanswered is whether person-job fit acts as a mediator in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment.

At this stage no research has been done on the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, organisational commitment and the moderating role of person-job fit. The relationships are indicated in the structural model of this research and presented in Figure 1.

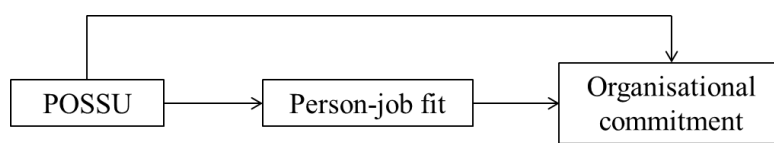


Figure 1: A conceptual model of the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, organisational commitment and person-job fit as the mediator.

In an attempt to respond to the general objective of this study, the following research questions are sought to be answered:

- How are the constructs *perceived organisational support for strengths use*, *organisational commitment* and *person-job fit*, conceptualised according to the literature?
- What is the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, organisational commitment and person-job fit?
- Does person-job fit mediate the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment?
- What recommendations can be made for future research and practice in this respect?

1.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives are divided into two categories, namely general objective and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General objective

The general objective of this research was to test a structural model that comprises perceived organisational support for strengths use, person-job fit and organisational commitment and to

determine whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To investigate the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, person-job fit and organisational commitment by studying the literature regarding this relationship.
- To examine the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, person-job fit and organisational commitment.
- To determine whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment.
- To make recommendations for future research practice regarding this topic.

1.3 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

H_1 : Perceived organisational support for strengths use is positively related to person-job fit.

H_2 : Person-job fit is positively related to organisational commitment

H_3 : Perceived organisational support for strengths use is positively related to organisational commitment.

H_4 : Person-job fit mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment.

1.4 RESEARCH METHOD

1.4.1 Literature Review

In the first phase the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, person-job fit and organisational commitment will be thoroughly reviewed. Theoretical frameworks and paradigms relating and giving essence to the topic at hand will also be operated. Articles relevant to the research will be obtained by searching databases such as those obtained from databases available on the internet, including EbscoHost, Emerald, Science Direct, Scopus, ProQuest, Sabinet Online, SAE Publications, Lexis Nexis, Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, EconLit, ERIC, PsychArticles, PsycInfo, SocIndex. Journals relevant to the topic of interest were consulted and included: *Academy of*

Management Journal, Human Resource Management Journal, International Coaching Psychology Review, Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Applied Social Psychology, Journal of Career Assessment, Journal of Happiness Studies, Journal of Industrial Psychology, Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies, Journal of Management, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Studies, Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, South African Journal of Industrial Psychology, The International Journal of Human Resource Management, The Leadership Quarterly, and Work & Stress.

1.4.2 Empirical Study

The empirical study included a research design, study population, measuring instruments, research procedure, statistical analyses and ethical considerations.

1.4.2.1 Research Design

A cross-sectional quantitative survey design was used for purposes of this study. It is also an exploratory study since not much is known about the specific topic. In addition to this, a cross-sectional design was also used and according to Salkind (2009) it examines numerous groups of people at a single point in time. Data collection is done electronically since participants were provided with a link to web-based questionnaires.

1.4.2.2 Study population

An availability sample of employees in the industrial sector ($N = 176$) was selected. The sample was diverse in terms of age, gender, race and language so as to accommodate the South African workforce. The required minimum educational level of participants was grade 12 for participants to be linguistically competent to complete the questionnaire in English.

1.4.2.3 Measuring Instruments

Biographical Questionnaire: Personal information such as age, gender, home language, race, educational level, job tenure and job level was determined by means of the biographic questionnaire.

Perceived organisational support for strengths use: Perceived organisational support for strengths use was measured by using one dimension of the Strengths Use and Deficit

Correction Scale (SUDCO) by Van Woerkom et al. (2016). The questionnaire was scored on a seven-point frequency scale that ranges from 1 (Never) to 7 (Almost always). Eight items were used to measure perceived organisational support for strengths use with an example item being “In this organisation my talents are used”. This instrument has proven to be reliable with $\alpha = 0.96$ (Keenan & Mostert, 2013; Van Woerkom et al., 2016).

The South African Employee Health Wellness Survey (SAEHWS) was used to measure the study variables, namely: person-job fit and organisational commitment. The SAEHWS is used to measure employee health and wellbeing in South African organisations (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006). The SAEHWS is a self-reporting instrument that assumes that the perceptions and experiences of employees can represent vital information regarding the climate in the organisation. It is said to be internally consistent with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient above 0.70, valid and equivalent for different languages, race and gender groups (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006) and this makes it a fair instrument. SAEHWS was therefore used to measure person-job fit and organisational commitment for purposes of this study.

Person-job fit was measured using a 6-point Likert scale that ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Four items were used to measure person-job fit with an example item being “The requirements of my job match my specific talents and skills”. Rothmann & Rothmann (2006) reported that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale is reliable at $\alpha = 0.76$.

Organisational commitment was measured using a 6-point Likert scales that ranges from (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree. Five items were used to measure organisational commitment with an example item being “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organisation”. Rothmann and Rothmann (2006) reported that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale is reliable at ($\alpha = 0.82$).

1.4.2.4 Research procedure

A letter requesting permission to conduct a study was sent to the manufacturing organisation with detailed information regarding the nature and goals of the research. An e-mail was sent by the researcher to inform participants of the purpose of the study and to request participation in the study. Participants were provided with a link to a web-based questionnaires and the treatment thereof was strictly confidential. The participants were

assured of confidentiality. Fair and ethical conduct is deemed highly imperative for the success of this research.

1.4.2..5 Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of this study was carried out by means of Mplus 7.31 (Muthen & Muthen, 2015). Cronbach alpha coefficients and exploratory factor analysis were used to ascertain the validity and reliability of the measuring instruments and Cronbach alpha coefficient indicated reliability (Struwig & Stead, 2010) and was acceptable at 0.70 or a larger value. To test Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3, a correlation matrix was computed to determine whether there were statistically significant relationships between POSSU, person-job fit and organisational commitment. The confidence interval level for statistical significance was determined at 95% ($p \leq 0.05$). Furthermore, to determine the practical significance of the results, effect sizes were utilised and, as determined by Cohen (1988), cut-off points of 0.30 (medium effect) and 0.50 (large effect) were established.

Mediation according to Preacher and Hayes (2008) occurs when a predictor variable impacts on a dependent variable indirectly through at least one intervening variable. The mediating hypotheses were tested by using structural equation modelling (SEM). Hereafter, a bootstrapping analysis was applied to determine the indirect or mediating effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), together with the associated standard errors and significance levels (confidence interval level at 95%; significance at $p < 0.05$). Bootstrapping is a significant and valid method of testing indirect effects and is also referred to as the preferred method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Thus this research entailed the investigation of the effect of the independent variable (perceived organisational support for strengths use) on the dependent variable (organisational commitment) that was mediated by the mediating variable (person-job fit). To assess the goodness of model fit, χ^2 statistic, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) were used. For the CFI and TLI, acceptable fit was considered at a value of 0.90 and above (Byrne, 2010; Hoyle, 1995). Cudeck and Browne (1993) point out that, for the RMSEA, a value of 0.05 or less indicates a good fit, but values of 0.08 and less were also considered an acceptable model fit. The cut-off point for SRMR was set at smaller than 0.05 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

1.4.2.6 Ethical considerations

Fair and ethical principles formed the core of this research since they were essential for the success of this study. Information regarding the purpose and importance of this study was given to the participants in advance to eliminate any unclear concerns. Informed consent was obtained from the participants and participation was voluntary and any ambiguity or threat was eliminated or avoided (Salkind, 2009). All the participants were treated fairly and with great regard for their individual socio-economic status (Struwig & Stead, 2010).

1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research Article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment

Abstract

Orientation: Organisations are challenged to supply employees with sufficient job resources that will enable them to foster innovative behaviours such as using their strengths to improve their ability to deal with the challenges they are confronted with in their jobs, explore new remedies for work-related problems and still be able to simplify the work at hand to reach organisational objectives.

Research purpose: The aim of the research was to determine whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU) and organisational commitment.

Motivation for the study: Organisational management have to gain more knowledge on whether employees will stay loyal to organisations when provided with a supportive environment that allows them to use their own unique strengths in their daily job routine.

Research design, approach and method: A cross-sectional research approach was adopted. The study population consisted of an availability sample ($N=176$) of employees from a manufacturing organisation in the North West Province in South Africa. A mediating analysis was carried out to determine the indirect effects.

Main results: The results support the hypothesis that POSSU is positively related to both organisational commitment and person-job fit. Person-job fit was further found to have a positive relationship with organisational commitment and it partially mediates the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment.

Practical/managerial implications: Managers can optimise a more committed workforce by focusing on human resource policies related to person-job fit, and by investing in a strength-based organisational management.

Contributions/ Value-add: This study contributes to the limited research on using strengths from both employee and organisational perspective and possible positive outcomes thereof.

Introduction

The world of work both locally and internationally is marked by many challenges which include amongst others skills shortages and retention of talented employees (Guthridge, Komm & Lawson, 2008).

In the past decade organisations have been exploring positive psychology at work that motivates employees to explore and use their natural abilities, strengths and inclination at work in pursuit of their personal and organisational success (Brook, 2013; Gable & Haidt, 2005; Luthans, 2002; Seligman, 2000). The survival of organisations in this dynamic global economy seems to rest upon retaining and motivating employees (Martin, 2005; Ployhart, 2006). Over the past decades many organisations' human resource managements used to focus on identifying and resolving employee deficits by providing training, feedback and coaching (Buckingham, 2005; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001). Times have since changed the point of argument is on building people's strengths (Luthans & Youssef, 2007).

Organisations need to implement a strengths-based environment since for years organisations have thrived on seeing employees' weaknesses as the greatest area of development (Bouskila-Yam & Kluger, 2011). While building on employees' strengths in the workplace may seem important in today's dynamic work environment it still poses several challenges to the organisations.

Time, organisational infrastructure and financial requirements are but a few of those challenges. The organisational transformation might seem unprofitable to organisations but Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) argue that a strength-focused management organisation holds significant promise for improving employee engagement, and organisational outcomes such as profitability and turnover. Lee and Bruvold (2003) demonstrated that investing in employee development challenges them to reciprocate in a positive manner which can improve the general performance of the entire organisation. Some evidence also exists that employees who perceive their organisational environment to be strength-based, perform better at work (Van Woerkom & Meyer, 2005) and are thus able to accomplish their tasks at hand.

It thus seems crucial to examine the conditions and processes that contribute to employees' optimal functioning (Cable & Haidt, 2005), such as teamwork. There is energy development around team members working together and according to Al-Rawi (2008) this energy fuse employee's personal energies and strengths to deliver tangible performance and this can be very beneficial to both the organisation and employees. Every employee possesses unique strengths because according to Biswas-Diener et.al (2011), strengths are dependent on context, personal values, interests and other strengths.

This kind of endeavour may help create an employment brand that will attract both existing and potential talent (Glen, 2006), and retain talent. It is therefore very appropriate to investigate the outcomes of strength-based interventions from an organisational perspective. Recently Van Woerkom et al. (2016) became interested in investigating the phenomenon perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU). These authors argue that employees are dependent on the organisation to provide them with the support in the interest of using their strengths. Once they receive that support they are likely to use their strengths in their work.

It can further be anticipated that when employees receive the support to use their strengths at work they may feel more at home within the organisation. A previous study executed by Pati and Kumar (2010) has shown that organisations that provide their employees with more organisational support found that those employees were willing to spend time on training and attending the attempts made to stimulate their abilities. The literature further according to (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Roberts et al. 2005) propagate that people can only excel when they can build on their strengths. Furthermore recent studies have indicated that strengths use may lead to valuable outcomes to the organisation such as higher levels of in-role and extra-role performance (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015) and enhanced ability to cope with job demands (Van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2015).

Therefore it is probable that these employees who feel that they can apply their strengths at work may experience a high fit within the organisation, an aspect typically referred to as person-job fit. It can further be argued that an employee who believes that there is a good fit between them and the organisation is more likely to stay loyal and committed to that organisation (Carless, 2005; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005).

From the above arguments it becomes clear that the relationships between POSSU, organisational commitment and person-job fit seem probable. However, these relationships have not been investigated with empirical research by testing a structural model. Therefore the purpose of this study is to test the structural model for the mediating effect of person-job fit between POSSU and organisational commitment.

Literature review

Perceived organisational support for strengths use

A strength can be defined as “a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes” (Linley & Harrington, 2006, p. 39). Biswas-Diener, Kashdan and Minhas (2011, p. 106) further define strengths as one’s “potential for excellence”. Literature indicates that employees need to be granted the opportunity of developing their strengths in order for them to flourish and to apply these strengths (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011). Therefore, since the aim is to reach optimal employee functioning, Stienstra (2010) sees focusing on strengths as a positive technique which aims at improving individual and organisational productivity. Since employees’ strengths are talents that come naturally they need to be developed and used in the workplace.

The benefits of using one’s strengths in the organisation include experience of positive emotions among employees (Govindji & Linley, 2007) feelings such as high energy and intrinsic motivation (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Seligman (2002) points out that when employees implement their strengths their happiness increases and this leads to less feelings of depression (Seligman, 2005 et al.)? and they are seen to be more productive (Clifton & Harter, 2003) at work. These findings confirm the “happy-productive thesis”, which argues that employees are more productive at work when they are happy (Zelenski, Murphy & Jenkins, 2008). Clifton and Harter (2003) further indicated that organisations whose of which the employees have reported that they had received support to develop and use their strengths at work, experience lower turnover.

As seen above, organisations and individuals can greatly benefit from using strengths at work. Van Woerkom et al. (2016) suggest that employees firstly need the support from the organisation to apply their strengths in their jobs. In light of this, these authors came up with

the concept perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU). POSSU is defined as the extent to which an employer actively supports the employees in applying their personal strengths at work (Van Woerkom et al., 2016).

Perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU) and Person-job fit

POSSU is likely to make employees feel more autonomous in their job since it is described as providing employees with the resources necessary to perform their job efficiently. When employees are allowed to use their strengths, they are likely to feel more competent in doing their jobs (Mitchelle, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Ezer, 2001) because organisational support enables the employees' knowledge and abilities to expand (Ballout, 2007; Dawley, Houghton & Bucklew, 2010). Strengths identification and use can bring about groups of strengths into employees' awareness and that can be matched with tasks and challenges (Buckingham, 2005, Yost & Chang, 2009) at work. Consequently employees who can use their strengths in their work are likely to experience a good fit between themselves and the organisation. The latter is known as person-job fit.

Person-job fit is defined as the fit between the abilities of an employee and the demands of the job (Edwards, 1991). It involves matching the person with the requirements that are directly associated with a specific job (Newton & Jimmieson, 2009). Researchers confirm that employees are more successful in their jobs when the jobs are compatible with the interests, values and abilities of the employees (Chuang & Sackett, 2005; Kahya, 2009). A good fit exists when an employee possesses the right skills and abilities to perform the job or when the job can fulfil the employee's needs (Edwards, 1991). Li and Hu (2010) found that when fit exists between a person and the job, employees tend to exert more effort in carrying out their work duties, which leads to more effective job performance. Some studies propose that poor person-job fit would significantly increase turnover intentions (Christensen & Wright, 2011; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). This suggests that there are instances where the employees' abilities do not match their jobs. This should be prevented.

It can be argued that using one's strengths may assist one in experiencing a sense of mastery (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), which might increase the success at work and the fit between the person and the job. The development of strengths seems to have a positive effect on person-job fit, since person-job fit emphasises the relevance of congruency between an employee's skills and the demands that come with the job (Cable & Rue, 2002). The

relationship between POSSU and person-job fit can further be explained using the field theory developed by Lewin (1951). He proposed that the interaction between the person and the work environment would lead to certain human behaviour such as individual perception towards the work environment. This may imply that when employees perceived that their organisation supports them to use their strengths at work they may tend to demonstrate positive behaviour. Therefore, when employees perceive themselves to fit in with their job and organisation they work for, they tend to perform their jobs effectively by engaging in their role within the organisation's mission and vision of success (Hamid & Kahya, 2011).

Evidence also exists that a high level of person-job fit has a number of positive outcomes. Research conducted provides proof that person-job fit is related to motivation and job performance (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Edwards, 1991). Since POSSU provides employees with motivation, this may develop their proactive behaviour, and employees with proactive behaviour are said to be equipped to shape their job to better fit their personal needs (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). Employees on the other hand choose jobs that utilise their traits (Carless, 2005). It is further postulated by researchers that employees are more successful when their jobs are compatible with their abilities (Edwards, 1991; Gregory & Albritton, 2010). It can thus be deduced that a fit between employees and their jobs can be determined by means of strengths use since POSSU emphasises the value of integrating employees' uniqueness with the way work is performed (Nishii, 2013; Shore, Randel, Chung, Dean, Holcombe Ehrhart & Singh, 2011). This correlates with the literature on person-job fit that emphasises the importance of congruency between employees' skills and the demands of the job (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

Based on these assumptions, it can be hypothesised that POSSU will have a significant positive relationship with person-job fit (Hypothesis 1).

Person-job fit and organisational commitment

Based on the congruency theory developed by Barrett (1978) person-job fit exists between individual preferences and one's knowledge, skills and abilities.. This is of exceptional importance in the interest of producing positive outcomes such as job performance (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Kristof (1996) and Montgomery (1996) profess that employees work for organisations that enable them to utilise their skills and abilities and that person-job fit is directly related to compatibility between a person and a specific job (Zheng, Kaur & Zhi,

2010). Good fit enable employees to get involved in meaningful work that fosters their motivation (Shuck et.al, 2011), thereby allowing employees to deliver significant contribution to the success of the organisation (Popli & Rizvi, 2015). Thereby when the employee feels more compatible with the job, the more they will want to become and remain an employee in an organisation (Carless, 2005; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005). Therefore it can be argued that when an employee experiences high levels of person-job fit, they are likely to feel more committed towards the organisation.

Organisational commitment, as Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) define it, is “the degree to which an employee identifies with the goals and values of the organisation and is willing to exert effort to help it succeed”. Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) further argue that commitment is more of a psychological state that brings the employee closer to the organisation. This psychological state, Meyer and Allen (1991) claim, can occur in three distinguished themes of commitment labelled *affective*, *continuance* and *normative*. These themes focus mainly on retention, productive behaviour (Klein, 2009; Meyer & Allen, 1997) and both psychological and physiological well-being (Meyer 2009). It has been found that committed employees will be willing to give their best effort to reach the organisational objectives (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009). The effect of organisational commitment is related to positive job outcomes such as turnover and job performance (Klein, Becker, & Meyer, 2009).

Past research has shown that the degree of fit that exists between a person and the job could influence both the productivity and employee commitment (Iplick, Kilic & Yalcin, 2011; Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1992). Employees who are not satisfied with their work environment either leave the organisation or may psychologically withdraw themselves from their job and the organisation (Noe, Hollenbeck & Wright, 2005). According to Joo (2010) argues that if the dissatisfaction is totally connected to the job, the employees may show low levels of job involvement (i.e. the degree to which employees identify or fit themselves with their jobs). Otherwise, if dissatisfaction is with the employee as a whole and the organisation, a low level of organisational commitment is inevitable (i.e. the degree to which an employee identifies with the organisation and is willing to put forth effort on its behalf (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). Wim and Margriet (1998) add to this, by pointing out that employees who are highly committed will be keen to take on additional work beyond what is required of them in their day-to-day jobs. Employees who are better fitted in their organisations are

committed and want nothing more than to remain part of their organisation (Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Based on the above discussion, it can be hypothesised that person-job fit will have a significant positive relationship with organisational commitment (Hypothesis 2).

The mediating role of person-job fit in the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment

Mediation, as Baron and Kenny (1986) see it, occurs when an independent variable exerts a certain influence on the dependent variable primarily through a mediating variable, and in this case person-job fit is the mediator. In line with what mediation is, we expect POSSU to lead to person-job fit, which in turn leads to organisational commitment.

However, it is also reasonable to expect that POSSU may be directly related to organisational commitment. Demerouti and Bakker (2011) advocated that organisations focussing on employee strengths may facilitate motivation towards dedicated work procedure. Also, Gould-Williams (2007) confirm that organisational commitment is initiated when the organisation shows the willingness to support their employee interests. Wim and Margriet (1998) point out that employee who are highly committed will be keen to take on additional work that goes over and beyond their job requirements. Employees perceiving that they have a high level of organisational support display an increase in extra role behaviours as well as a lower turnover intention (Chen, Eisenberger, Johnson, Sucharski & Aselage, 2008; Maertz, Griffeth, Campbell & Allen, 2007).

Based on these assumptions, it can be hypothesised that POSSU will have a significant positive relationship with organisational commitment (Hypothesis 3). Finally, it is hypothesised that person-job fit mediates the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use and organisational commitment (Hypothesis 4).

In light of the above, the following model was tested:

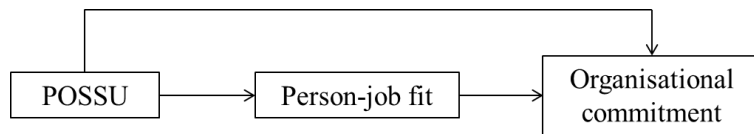


Figure 2: Conceptual model of the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, organisational commitment and person-job fit as the mediator.

Research design

Research Approach

The objectives of this research project were achieved by applying a cross-sectional quantitative survey design. A cross-sectional design, as defined by Salkind (2009), examines numerous groups of people at a single point in time. This approach is best suited for this research project due to its time effectiveness and economic implications.

Research Method

Research Participants

The study population was selected on the basis of availability of employees within a manufacturing organisation in North West Province. A convenience sample of employees was obtained ($N = 176$). The characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participant characteristics N = 176

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Home language	Afrikaans	143	81.3
	English	28	15.9
	IsiZulu	3	1.7
	Sesotho	1	0.6
	Setswana	1	0.6
Gender	Female	37	21
	Male	139	79
Ethnicity	Black	5	2.8

	Indian	6	3.4
	Coloured	6	3.4
	Other	1	0.6
	White	158	89.8
Age Categories	20-29	19	10.8
	30-39	35	19.9
	40-49	48	27.3
	50-59	55	31.3
	60 and older	19	10.8

The sample was dominated by males' 79% and 21% females. Afrikaans, with 81.3% of the total sample, was the predominantly spoken home language, followed by English 15.9%. The other languages represented 2.9% of the total sample, which comprised isiZulu, Setswana and Sesotho-speaking participants. Furthermore, 89.8% of the total number of participants was White, followed by Indian 3.4%, Coloured 3.4%, Black 2.8% and lastly others 0.6%. From the sample 31.3% of age category 50-59 fell in the largest category. The second-largest age category was 40-49 with 27.3%, age category 30-39 with 19.9% and lastly each of the age categories 20-29, and 60 and older constituted 10.8% of the total sample.

Measuring Instruments

Biographical Questionnaire: A biographic questionnaire was utilised to determine the personal characteristics of the participants. Characteristics such as gender, race, home language and age were measured by means of the questionnaire.

Perceived organisational support for strengths use: The Strengths Use and Deficit Correction (SUDCO) scale developed by Van Woerkom et al. (2016) was used to measure POSSU. The scale consists of six items which were scored on a seven-point frequency scale that ranged from 1 (Never) to 7 (Almost always). The items include, amongst others, "This organisation ensures that my strengths are aligned with my job tasks". Van Woerkom et al. (2016) notes that this dimension of the SUDCO has been proven to be reliable with $\alpha = 0.96$.

Organisational Commitment and Person-Job Fit: Organisational commitment and person-job fit were measured using the South African Employee Health and Wellness Scale (SAEHWS) and it is a self-reporting scale. This scale is used to measure employee health and wellbeing in South African organisations (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2006). Although the SAEHWS is used for measuring a range of different variables, only the two dimensions *organisational*

commitment and *person-job fit* were used for purposes of this study. All the instrument items were scored on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Organisational commitment was measured using four items (e.g., “I feel as if this organisation’s problems are my own”). Rothmann and Rothmann (2006) reported that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale is reliable at ($\alpha = 0.82$). Person-job fit was measured using four items (e.g., “My personality fits with the type of work that I do”). Rothmann and Rothmann (2006) reported that the Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for this scale is reliable at ($\alpha = 0.76$).

Research Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Once permission had been obtained from the participating manufacturing organisation in North West Province, a letter requesting the employees’ participation followed. It also included the explanation of objectives and importance of the research project for the attention of individuals who were to take part in the research project. A web-based survey was created and the link to the survey was sent via email. Participation on the research project was voluntary, and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were emphasised. Thereafter the analysis of data followed.

Statistical Analysis

The structural equation modelling (SEM) methods of this study were performed by means of Mplus 7.31 (Muthen & Muthen, 2013), and the maximum likelihood estimator was used to test the hypotheses. The input type was the covariance matrix. Item parcelling methods were not used, and no error items between dependent variables were forced to correlate in the syntax. The following four indices were considered: comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardised root mean residual (SRMR). Acceptable fit for CFI and TLI is considered at 0.90 or above (Hoyle, 1995). For RMSEA, Browne and Cudeck (1992) suggest that the considered value of 0.05 or less indicates a good fit, but the value that equals to 0.08 or below 0.08 should also be considered an acceptable model fit.

Bootstrapping analysis was applied to determine the indirect or mediating effects. A confidence interval at the 95% level (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) was considered and it was decided to set the bootstrapping at 5 000 draws.

Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to assess the reliability of the measuring instruments (Struwig & Stead, 2010) and were acceptable at 0.70 or above which is an indication of an agreeable internal consistency (Lance, Butts & Mitchels, 2006; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The relationship between the research variables were observed with Pearson correlation with cut-off points set at 0.30 (medium effect) and 0.50 (large effect) for the practical significance of coefficients (Cohen, 1988). The overall confidence interval level for statistical, was set at a value of 95% ($p \leq 0.05$).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to determine the model fit of the measurement model. There were six items that measured POSSU, four items that measured person-job fit and four items that measure organisational commitment. The measurement model showed an acceptable fit (CFI = 0.93; TLI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.11; SRMR = 0.048). These values indicate a good model fit for the measurement model as it is above 0.90 (Hoyle, 1995) with the RMSEA value 0.11 which is above the recommended value of 0.08 (Hu & Bentler, 1996). However, research shows that small samples can result in a higher RMSEA value and no clear cut-off values should stringently be accepted (cf. Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby & Paxton, 2008). It was therefore deemed appropriate to continue with the analysis and interpretation of the results due to the acceptability of the other fit indices. The factor loadings of the latent variables in the measurement model are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Standardised factor loadings of the Latent Variables

Latent Variable	Item	Loading	S.E.	P
Strengths	POSSU1	0.83	0.04	0.01
	POSSU2	0.90	0.02	0.01
	POSSU3	0.93	0.02	0.01
	POSSU4	0.92	0.02	0.01
	POSSU5	0.89	0.03	0.01
	POSSU6	0.89	0.04	0.01
Person-job fit	PJFIT1	0.79	0.05	0.01
	PJFIT2	0.69	0.08	0.01
	PJFIT3	0.82	0.04	0.01
	PJFIT4	0.76	0.06	0.01

Commitment	COMMIT1	0.79	0.04	0.01
	COMMIT2	0.91	0.03	0.01
	COMMIT3	0.85	0.03	0.01
	COMMIT4	0.87	0.03	0.01

Notes: * = $p < 0.01$

As indicated in Table 2 it was shown that all items loaded sufficiently on all of the corresponding factors and the standard errors were also relatively small indicating that the values were accurately estimated. Item POSSU3 (0.93; “This organisation ensures that my strengths are aligned with my job tasks.”) from the table had the highest factor loading on strengths use while item POSSU1 (0.83; “This organisation allows me to do my job in a manner that suits my strong points.”) was the lowest. The highest factor loading for person-job fit was item PJFIT3 (0.82; “My personality fits with the type of work that I do.”) and the lowest item was PJFIT2 (0.69; “My personal likes and dislikes match perfectly with what my job demands of me.”). Lastly the highest factor loading for commitment was item COMMIT2 (0.91; ‘I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organisation’) and the lowest item was item COMMIT1 (0.79; “I feel as if this organisation’s problems are my own.”).

Next, the relationships between the variables were examined. The results of the correlations of the latent variables in the total sample are reported in Table 3 below.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix of the study variables ($N=176$).

Variables	Mean	SD	α	PJFIT	POSSU	Commitment
PJFIT	19.00	3.38	0.85	1.00		
POSSU	25.39	8.22	0.96	0.74**	1.00	
Commitment	19.49	3.94	0.92	0.62**	0.68**	1.00

Notes: * = statistically significant ($p \leq 0.05$); ** = large practical significance

Table 3 reveals that strengths use had a statistically and practically significantly positive correlation with person-job fit ($r = 0.74$; large effect) and with organisational commitment ($r = 0.68$; large effect). Also, a statistically and practically significant positive correlation was found between person-job fit and organisational commitment ($r = 0.62$; large effect). The Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for all variables in the study were larger than 0.70 (Struwig & Stead, 2010) - confirming that the measuring instruments used in the study were reliable.

In the next step of the statistical analysis regressions were added to the measurement model to constitute the structural model, and acceptable fit indices were shown (TLI = 0.92; CFI = 0.93; RMSEA = 0.11; SRMR = 0.048) .

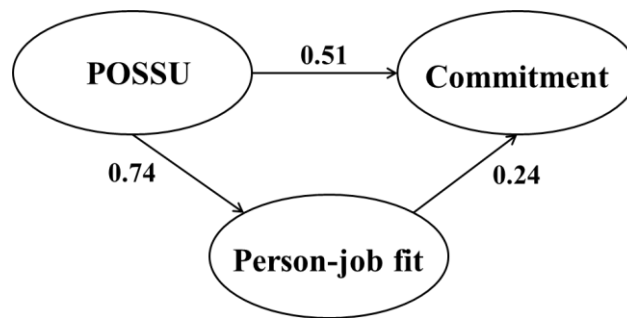


Figure 3: The structural model of the relationship between perceived organisational support for strengths use, organisational commitment and person-job fit as the mediator.

Table 4 below shows the results of the structural model, the standardised path coefficients and the statistical significance of each relationship.

Table 4

Path Coefficients of the Structural Model

Structural path	β	S.E.	p	Result
Strengths → Commitment	0.51	0.11	0.01	Significant
Person-job fit → Commitment	0.24	0.12	0.04	Significant
Strengths → Person-job fit	0.74	0.05	0.01	Significant

Notes: β = Beta coefficient; S.E. = Standard error; $p \leq 0.05$

With regard to the path investigated in Hypothesis 1, the results indicated that POSSU significantly predicts organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.51$; $p < 0.01$). The path investigated in hypothesis 2 was also found, i.e. the result indicated that POSSU significantly predicts person-job fit ($\beta = 0.74$; $p < 0.04$). Finally the results indicate that person-job fit significantly predicts organisational commitment ($\beta = 0.24$; $p < 0.01$), which provided support to hypothesis 3 of this study.

The results further reveal that person-job fit mediated the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment with a significant indirect effect of 0.09 ($p < 0.04$; 95% CI = [0.01; 0.37] – did not cross zero). As the direct relationship from strengths use to organisational commitment was also significant, this model could be classified as a complimentary mediation model (previously known as partial mediation model) (Chen et al., 2008).

Discussion

Outline of the results

The primary objective of this research was to establish and analyse the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment and to determine whether person-job fit has a mediating effect on this relationship.

The first hypothesis of the study stated that POSSU is positively related to person-job fit. The current study found that a positive relationship exists between POSSU and person-job fit; therefore the results support this hypothesis. This result is consistent with the findings of previous research that argues that POSSU as a job resource stimulates growth, learning and development (Van Woerkom et al., 2016). According to the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 1998; 2001) employees may be positively stimulated when they are offered an opportunity to use their strengths. When employees are keen to learn more about their strengths they will turn to mastering the skills and abilities needed to perform their job, especially when the organisation provides the necessary environment.

Further to this, the skills acquired by employees encourage further learning which may lead employees to experience higher positive interaction between the job and themselves. In this manner employees may perceive a good fit (Voydanoff, 2004) between their work abilities and the job itself. By actively engaging with the environment through opportunities such as using strengths, employees strengthen their abilities and acquire new skills which will help them and organisations when changing the challenging situation (Fritz & Sonnentag, 2007). The right skills and abilities together with the right attitude of the employee towards their job and environment lead to a good fit (Edwards, 1991).

In light of the above arguments it is therefore probable that when organisations allow employees to use their strengths while doing their job, it allows them the opportunity to be aware of how their personalities fit with their job. Furthermore employees who feel that their personal strengths are aligned or matched with their job turn to feel more in control, confident and are willing to go the extra mile for the organisation in overcoming whatever challenges they may face in the workplace as they believe they possess the relevant resources and skills to accomplish their work goal

The second hypothesis stated that person-job fit is positively related to organisational commitment. The current study further confirms that a positive relationship exists between person-job fit and organisational commitment; thus confirming the third hypothesis. This is in line with findings of previous researchers, namely that when employees perceive more of a fit between themselves and their job, they are more likely to attach personal meaning to their job and as such tend to feel the need to stay in their organisation (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). Therefore this result implies that when employees feel that their job expectations are clear, they possess the relevant skills to do the job and they feel satisfied with the job they are doing they will see no reason for leaving the organisation they are working for. Furthermore, the results imply that employees will somehow feel the need to help the organisation reach their goals (Aamodt, 2007) no matter the challenges they are facing because when they experience a balance between their job and their personal skills they become determined to work harder

The third hypothesis of the study stated that perceived organisational support for strengths use is positively related to organisational commitment. The current study found that a positive relationship does indeed exist between POSSU and organisational commitment. Thus the second hypothesis is confirmed. This result corresponds with previous research conducted that also argued that organisational support as a job resource is essential to motivate employees to achieve their work goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011; Jackson, Rothmann & Van der Vijver, 2006; Karatepe, 2009; Van Woerkom et al., 2013;). When employees are able to achieve their work goals it means that they are more committed to their work, and attached to the organisation (Mark & Nancy, 1991). Research further reveals that employees who often experience high levels of perceived organisational support in their workplaces are more committed to the organisation (Rhoades & Eisenberger,

2002). Similarly, one can expect that the specific type of organisational support, namely POSSU, examined in our study, may also stimulate an increased commitment to the organisation. This result therefore implies that when employees feel that the organisation grants them opportunities to use their strengths they may feel appreciated and therefore feel the need to stay on in such an organisation. Furthermore, once the employees perceive support from the organisation they will feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate towards the organisation by going the extra mile. Such employees are as George and Brief (1992) found, likely to go “above and beyond” formal assigned work duties and this, as observed by Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002), assists the organisation in reaching its goals and objectives.

The fourth research hypothesis stated that person-job fit mediates the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment. The results of the current study confirmed the fourth hypothesis to be a complementary mediation, which means that person-job fit mediated the relationship between POSSU and organisation commitment with a significant indirect effect, as well as a significant direct relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment (Chen et al., 2010,). This, in practical, means that when employees believe that their organisation supports them in using their strengths, they are likely to experience a good fit between themselves and the organisation. This fit, in turn, may lead to increased commitment the employee demonstrates towards the organisation.

Practical Implications

From an applied organisational perspective managers are challenged by the current study to ensure that they stimulate employees’ uniqueness by developing their strengths and coaching them to use these strengths within a preferred learning style which will allow the employee to flourish (Buckingham, 2005). This can be done by developing a learning environment that allows employees to know their strengths since not all are aware of their strengths and the process can be carried out by means of validated assessments.

Once there is an established vehicle for developmental intervention within the organisation’s human resource management, the employees will receive feedback on their strengths and granted the opportunity of using these strengths in their workplace. This statement is also supported by a conclusion drawn by Van Woerkom et al.(2013), which encourages

organisations to invest in HR practices that allow employees to learn and use their strengths in the workplace.

Supported employees seem to display high levels of commitment and are observed to make greater effort to perform and invest their resources in the organisation they work for (Saal & Knight, 1987). Therefore, when employees have access to learning opportunities, resources and support, their organisation can experience higher levels of job satisfaction and retention (Baker, 2010).

Limitations and recommendations

This current study is not without limitations. A cross-sectional research approach was used and this does not allow the measurement of variables that change over time – the method is prone to potential common method variance bias (Jap & Anderson, 2004). It is therefore recommended that future research should conduct longitudinal studies as a solution which will reduce the likelihood of such bias. A longitudinal design will also allow the researcher to draw more accurate conclusions regarding causality between the variables (Koys, 2001). Also, the sample size of the current study was small since a convenient sampling strategy was used. Recommendations are therefore made that future researchers make use of a larger sample such as a probability sampling technique which increases the generalisability of the results (Becker, 1991).

The study was conducted in an industrial organisation in the North West Province and as a result the unit of analysis was limited. Even though there were enough literature contexts to direct the researcher in the development of theory, the results cannot be generalised to the majority of the working population. Suggestion for further research strongly encourages the need to include other different organisations in order to compare the results and be able to confidently generalise the predictive model of the study. The research variables were measured using self-reporting scales which, as Sy, Tram and O'Hara (2006) put it, may pose social desirability bias and response distortions. For this current study it was important to understand the employees' perceptions of what they feel, think or do (Wood et al., 2011). Hence it is recommended that future researchers make use of measurement methods that include more objective indicators of proactive behaviours.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In this chapter, conclusions regarding the study are given in accordance with the general and specific objectives. The limitations of this study are discussed, followed by the recommendations for organisations and future research.

3.1 CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this study was to test a structural model that comprises perceived organisational support for strengths use (POSSU), person-job fit and organisational commitment and to also determine whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment.

The first specific objective of this research was to conceptualise POSSU, person-job fit, organisational commitment and the relationships between the aforementioned constructs according to the literature. Van Woerkom et al. (2016) defined POSSU as the extent to which an employer actively supports the employees in applying their personal strengths at work. It is therefore conceptualised as a job resource that helps employees perceive that their organisation supports them to use their strengths in the workplace (Van Woerkom et al., 2016). Job resources stimulate advancement in the employee's job, reduce job demands, and harness growth among different employees and organisational levels (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Scaufeli, 2009). This means that POSSU as a job resource may enable employees to attain goals, reduce work demands and stimulate growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). A job resource also empowers employees with traits such as motivation and well-being (Hakanen, Perhoniemi & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008). This may contribute to the organisational effectiveness and employees' general well-being, since employees who are generally content with their job are said to perform their work better (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

Organisational support theory states that in return for a higher level of support offered by organisations, employees put more effort in their work to help the organisation reach its objectives (Aselagae & Eisenberger, 2003). This seems to confirm that POSSU is established on the principles of how much the organisation values employees' contributions and cares

about them or appreciates them (Allen, Armstrong, Reid & Riemenschneider, 2008). Past research shows that strengths use leads to greater self-esteem and well-being (Wood, Linley, Maltby, Kashdan & Hurling, 2011) and is also energising to an individual (Linley & Harrington, 2006). This seems to imply that support to use strengths in the workplace strengthens employees' efforts in the organisation (Eisenberger, 1986).

Person-job fit is defined, according to the literature, as the compatibility between employees' attributes and the job's characteristics (Cable & DeRue, 2002). How employees perceive their work environment and skills in their possession to complete the task seems to be of utmost importance. Researchers such as Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2003) state that it is a central human tendency to adapt to the work environment. Therefore when employees feel more compatible with the job, they will want to become and remain an employee in that organisation (Carless, 2005; Erdogan & Bauer, 2005). Research has also shown that the existence of a good fit between employees and their jobs has a number of positive outcomes; amongst others job satisfaction (Sekiguchi, 2003; Edwards, 1991). This will further ensure long-term effectiveness in an organisation (Boon, Boselie, Paauwe & den Hartog 2007) higher motivation and better performance and attendance (Edwards, 1991).

The third variable relevant to this study is organisational commitment, which is conceptualised as a psychological bond that exists between an employee and the organisation (Joo & Shim, 2010). It further explains the degree to which an employee identifies with organisational goals and values and how willing an employee is to exert effort to help the organisation to succeed (Bishop, Scott & Burrough, 2000). Organisational commitment thus manifests into a psychological state that brings both the employee and organisation together (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Cole, Schaninger & Harris (2002) found that this relationship seems to bring about a series of social exchanges, such as willingness by organisations to support their employees' interests (Gould-Williams, 2007), turnover and job performance (Klein, Becker, & Meyer, 2009).

The second objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between POSSU, person-job fit and organisational commitment. Pati and Kumar (2010) maintain that when organisations support their employees they show commitment to spend extra time on training and stimulating their employees' potential. Using one's potential in a form of strengths at work brings about positive emotions (Govindji & Linley, 2007), such as intrinsic motivation

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004). This enables employees' knowledge, skills and abilities to improve (Ballout, 2007; Dawley, Houghton & Bucklew, 2010), thereby fitting with their personal perceptions (Ehrhart, 2006).

Kim, Leong and Lee (2005) in reporting their findings describe that if employees view their organisation as being supportive, they are likely to feel a strong desire to continue working in that organisation. The support perceived by employees, as Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli and Lynch (1997) describe it, creates a sense of indebtedness within the employee towards the organisation. Furthermore, research indicated that organisational support may increase the employees' emotional bond with the organisation (Shore & Wayne, 1993). Researchers therefore confirm a significant effect by organisational support on organisational commitment (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002; Aube, Rousseau, Morin, 2007; Riggle, Edmondson & Hansen, 2009).

Empirical studies confirmed a positive relationship between person-job fit and turnover intention (Christensen & Wright, 2011; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). This observation is supported by Luksyte, Spitzmueller and Maynard's (2011) view that employees who perceive a good person-job fit are able to explore solutions in an attempt to overcome the challenges at work because by exploring they acquire the required knowledge and abilities to meet the work challenges. It thus seems natural for employees to want to stay in such an organisation in order to apply the skills they have acquired. Based on the above arguments, it was then hypothesised that POSSU may influence person-job fit, which in turn may influence organisational commitment.

To examine the relationship between POSSU, person-job fit and organisational commitment in a sample within an industrial setting, a correlation matrix was also computed to ascertain the possibilities of statistically significant relationships between these variables. The results indicated that POSSU and person-job fit were practically and significantly correlated at $r = 0.74$; POSSU and organisational commitment were practically and significantly correlated at $r = 0.68$ and finally person-job fit and organisational commitment were practically and significantly correlated at $r = 0.62$. Furthermore, all relationships were in a positive direction and correlated to a larger degree since Cronbach's alpha coefficients for all study variables were larger than 0.70 (Struwig & Stead, 2010).

The final objective of this study was to assess whether person-job fit mediates the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment. The results indicated that when employees feel supported to use their strengths (i.e. POSSU), their person-job fit increases since their mastery level on their job increases. The results further indicated that employees who can master their job tend to be loyal and love the job they are doing. This indicates that the hypothesised mediating effect of person-job fit could not be established as a full mediator. A partial mediating effect was established since person-job fit had a positive relationship with both POSSU and organisational commitment.

A Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used in order to determine the model fit of the measurement model. The model fit indicated a good fit since it was above 0.90 (Hoyle, 1995). The results further confirmed that person-job fit mediated the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment with a significant indirect effect. A direct significant relationship was also found between POSSU and organisational commitment, thereby changing our hypothesised statement. Person-job fit therefore partially mediated the relationship between POSSU and organisational commitment.

Hence this study seems to bring about a possible relief to challenges faced by many organisations of attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). Emphasising the use of employees' strengths seems to lead to the attainment of favourable positive outcomes such as organisational profitability and increased productivity (Cameron, Mora, Leutscher & Calarco, 2011).

The study has also demonstrated the importance of acquiring personal resources through strengths use. It has also shown that POSSU of all the variables introduced in this study has proved to be the strongest predictor of person-job fit. Therefore if employees are granted the opportunity of utilising their strengths, they may develop a sense of mastery towards finding workable solutions to the challenges at work. This statement is supported by Van der Heuvel, Demerouti, Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) who proved that personal resources will enable individuals to reach their goals. When employees are able to reach their goals they contribute to the organisational bottom line since they drive the organisational objectives (Lawrence & Lawrence, 2009).

3.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

This research studied employees from a manufacturing organisation in the North West Province, thereby making it very imperative to extend the findings by performing more studies in different industries and contexts.

This research was faced by several limitations. The first limitation relates to the small sample size of the participants. A small sample makes it more difficult to understand how the variables manifest since it is not a representative of the average population.

Another limitation to this study is a cross-sectional research design. This kind of research design is used to gather data at one timestamp and allows no chance for a longitudinal view of variables. Koys (2001) explains that a longitudinal research will be more rewarding since it allows the researcher to draw more accurate conclusions among the variable relationships. Furthermore, since the study tests a new model, a longitudinal study will be beneficial in future.

Another limitation to this study relates to the data collection method. Data was gathered by means of self-reporting questionnaires. The drawback of this data collection method is that it increases the common method variance (Jap & Anderson, 2004). Even though this might be the case, Kristof-Brown (2005) examined the effect of common method variance on the fit attitude relationships between employees and the job. They found little to no difference between the studies. For this current study it was important for the researcher to recognise the employees' perceptions of what they feel, think or do (Wood et al. 2011).

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the limitations mentioned above, various recommendations could be made to the field of organisation and future research.

3.3.1 Recommendations for the future research

Although certain limitations exist in this study, the results may have some important implications for future research. The recommendations in this study include exploring the use of a longitudinal research design. A longitudinal design will be beneficial for this study since

it will shed light in determining the positive outcomes brought by the mediating effect of person-job fit on POSSU and organisational commitment over a long period.

It is also recommended that a larger and diverse (in terms of gender, racial, age) sample needs to be considered so that it can be generalised to all South African employees. The language should also be looked into, since South Africa has eleven official languages. This study researched employees' perceptions. It is personal and it therefore seems natural for people to be able to explain themselves honestly in their own language. It is thereby recommended that future research adapt the used questionnaire into other South African languages.

A clearer understanding is also needed in terms of how organisations can retain a committed and skilled workforce. It is also recommended that future studies are needed in order to explore and expand the literature on aspects relating to the application of positive psychology in the workplace. Peterson and Seligman (2004) argue that introducing positive psychology does not mean overlooking negative aspects; equilibrium must exist. This study only focused on the positive aspects in the field of psychology; therefore it is important to look at the other aspects such as mindfulness, Absenteeism, job crafting and job demands.

3.3.2 Recommendations for the organisation

The outcomes of this study can help organisations establish a strength-based organisation that will allow management to retain talent and developmental strategies that ensure employee optimal well-being and organisational effectiveness.

Results confirmed that POSSU and commitment are both positively related to person-job fit. Therefore HR policies which are related to person-job fit; development and training can be crafted to optimise employee well-being. Van Woerkom et al. (2016) also encourage organisations to invest in HR practices that allow employees to learn and use their strengths in the workplace. This will ensure maximum benefit to both the organisational and employees' bottom line.

It is important to understand the development of employees within the organisation. The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 aims at developing the skills and improving the quality of life of workers and their prospects of work, and it further aims at increasing productivity and competitiveness in the workplace. Once all organisations are willing and ready to incorporate

this act fully and to look at the results of this study it is probable that most South African employees will look no further beyond their borders for employment. An existing gap of skills shortage in the country can then be filled by employees who enjoy using their skills to an extent that they eventually volunteer their time to coach or mentor newcomers and unskilled employees in the organisation. Skills development programmes such as learnership programmes could also benefit from such an endeavour.

Finally creating a strength based organisation according to the result can be of utmost importance. A strengths-based organisation holds the potential of attracting and retaining suitable employees, which brings with it an enormous relief on the organisation's finances. This kind of an organisation selects its employees based on employee talents, acquired skills and gained experience. These aforementioned qualities that build a strengths based organisation hold the potential of committing current and job applicants to the organisation, since it combines employees' strengths with the requirements of the job; thereby optimising job performance.

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