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Interactive Effects of Fit Mean, Fit Dispersion, and Team-Member Exchange on Team Performance

Jee Young Seong[1], Linyuan Zhang[2], Doo-Seung Hong[3], and Hye Jung Yoon[4]

Abstract

This paper posits that person-group (PG) fit can be conceptualized into two distinctive subdimensions: PG fit mean and PG fit dispersion. Specifically, this study investigates how person-group (PG) fit mean, PG fit dispersion, and team-member exchange interact conceptually to influence team performance, examining the interactive effects of fit perceptions and exchange behaviors within teams at the group level in predicting team performance. The results based on a survey with full-time employees in Korea showed that the three-way interaction between PG fit, its dispersion, and team-member exchange predicts team performance. These findings highlight the importance of considering both contextual and relational factors when designing organizational strategies to enhance team effectiveness and sustainability.

Keywords: *Person-group (PG) Fit, Team-member Exchange, Team Performance, Three-way Interaction*

Introduction

Person-organization (PO) fit emphasizes the alignment between employees' personality traits, needs, work values, and organizational values and cultures (Christophe-Brown et al., 2023). PO fit has significant implications for both individual-level organizational behaviors and organizational-level job performance. This is because employees are more likely to adapt to the organization's goals and expectations when they perceive a good fit. Therefore, a higher awareness of PO fit is more likely to produce positive job-related outcomes. This awareness further fosters commitment and motivates employees to strive for higher performance, especially when they feel their values align with those of the organization (Sudibjo & Prameswari, 2021).

Person-group (PG) fit is a subdimension of person-organization fit (Herkes et al., 2020). It reflects the extent to which an individual perceives alignment with their team. PG fit has been linked with various organizational behaviors, including employee creativity, job performance, organizational commitment, political behaviors, and even counter-productive work behaviors (Seong, 2022). Most studies have explored fit primarily at the individual level. However, considering the distinctive nature of PG fit embedded within team contexts, this study examines it at the group level. Group-level PG fit is conceptualized as a collective perception among team members regarding how well they align with one another and their tasks, shaped by shared experiences within the team (Li et al., 2019). This study specifically focuses on PG value fit, which captures the development of shared values emerging through team interactions in daily work contexts.

This research has two primary objectives. First, it aims to expand the literature by examining PG fit in two forms—mean and dispersion—and their effects on team performance. Previous studies have primarily relied on mean values to assess PG fit, aggregating individual perceptions without accounting for variability within teams (Lindell & Brandt, 2000). However, mean values alone may not fully capture group dynamics. Even teams with high average PG fit may experience high dispersion, indicating differences in individual perceptions about alignment. Such dispersion may influence team performance independently of mean PG fit. This study, therefore, incorporates both mean and dispersion dimensions to offer a more integrative framework for understanding PG fit.

Second, the study examines the moderating role of team-member exchange in the relationship between PG fit and team performance. team-member exchange represents social interactions and resource-sharing between team members, reflecting the quality of working relationships within teams (Banks et al., 2014). While team-member exchange is generally believed to enhance team performance, its interaction with PG fit and dispersion remains underexplored (Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). This study proposes that team-member exchange moderates the impact of PG fit on team performance, offering contextual insights into team dynamics.

[1]College of Business and Economics, Jeonbuk National University, South Korea; E-mail: sjylyk@jbnu.ac.kr
[2]Society and Law School, Shandong Women's University, China; E-mail: wanwan27@sdwu.edu.cn
[3]Department of Sociology, Seoul National University, South Korea; E-mail: dshong@snu.ac.kr
[4]Department of Business Administration, Sejong University, South Korea; E-mail: hjyoon@sejong.ac.kr (Corresponding Author)

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This research develops a framework that incorporates PG fit mean, PG fit dispersion, and team-member exchange to analyze their interactive effects on team performance. The model is empirically tested using survey data collected from full-time employees and team leaders in a Korean local bank, providing new insights into the broader implications of perceived fit in team contexts.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

PG Fit and Its Dispersion

Building on self-categorization theory, individuals classify themselves and others based on salient traits, which foster favorability toward similar individuals and strengthens group cohesion (Reynolds, 2017). Consequently, higher perceived alignment in personality traits, work values, and goals among team members is expected to enhance both individual and team performance (Reynolds, 2017). However, empirical findings remain inconsistent, highlighting the need to examine PG fit variability at the group level.

PG fit reflects the extent to which individuals perceive compatibility with their workgroups (Li et al., 2019). Many prior studies have followed composition models, commonly calculating mean values to assess team-level PG fit (Chan, 1998). While mean values provide insights into the average level of fit, recent research emphasizes the importance of dispersion models, which account for variability or inconsistency among team members' perceptions (Cole et al., 2011). Dispersion, or variance, offers an additional dimension distinct from the mean value. High dispersion suggests significant discrepancies in PG fit perceptions, signaling lower alignment, whereas low dispersion implies greater agreement regardless of the mean level of fit.

This study investigates how PG fit dispersion interacts with PG fit mean to influence team performance. The mean PG fit reflects an overall sense of compatibility among team members, but this study proposes that variability in perceptions may serve as a separate indicator, depending on the degree and pattern of alignment within the group. Similar patterns of variability in other constructs, such as job satisfaction, have been associated with turnover rates (Liu et al., 2012). The impact of variance in team-level constructs, however, remains inconclusive, with studies reporting both positive and negative effects (Loignon et al., 2019). These mixed findings suggest that examining both mean and dispersion values provides a more comprehensive understanding of team dynamics.

Even in cases where the mean PG fit is high, performance gains may be limited if dispersion is also high, reflecting misalignment among team members. Conversely, teams with high PG fit mean and low dispersion are more likely to share common values and goals, leading to enhanced performance outcomes. Based on this premise, the present study evaluates the interactive effects of PG fit mean and dispersion on team performance.

PG Fit, Its Dispersion, Team-member Exchange, and Team Performance

This study focuses on supplementary fit, which assesses whether individuals and their teams share similar values and characteristics. Supplementary PG fit has been shown to influence both task and contextual performance (Zhu et al., 2022). Such alignment promotes effective communication, coordination, and collaboration among team members (Sørlie et al., 2022). It also improves knowledge sharing, role clarity, and behavioral predictability, helping individuals adapt to task demands and enhancing team performance (Zhu et al., 2022).

The PG fit framework generally posits that congruence improves job attitudes, behaviors, and performance outcomes. Individuals prefer interacting with team members who share similar values, and through these interactions, they reinforce their beliefs and build positive relationships. Extensive research has established that PG fit correlates with positive work attitudes and behaviors (Seong et al., 2015). Empirical evidence further suggests that value congruence between supervisors and subordinates improves satisfaction, commitment, and performance outcomes (Meglino et al., 1989).

Despite these findings, research addressing group-level PG fit and its effects on team performance remains relatively sparse (Seong et al., 2015). Self-categorization theory highlights that individuals distinguish between in-group and out-group members based on shared characteristics, strengthening interpersonal bonds and fostering a sense of belonging (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Higher PG fit among team members may thus lead to stronger

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intra-team cohesion and performance. However, rather than replicating a direct effect of PG fit on group outcomes, this study posits that PG fit effects depend on boundary conditions, such as dispersion and team-member exchange.

Team-member exchange refers to the perceptions that individual team members hold about the quality of their social and exchange relationships with colleagues. Team-member exchange has been identified as an important factor influencing positive organizational outcomes, such as increased cooperation, team cohesion, and performance (Liu et al., 2011). High-quality team-member exchange relationships are characterized by mutual respect, information sharing, and resource exchange, which facilitate collaborative work environments and strengthen team dynamics. However, the effects of team-member exchange can vary depending on team context, particularly in cases where dissatisfaction or conflict arises at the team level.

Individuals with similar traits often behave consistently, but particular situational factors can provoke behavioral changes. Trait activation theory provides insight into these phenomena, positing that individual dispositions and tendencies are only expressed as behavioral outcomes when triggered by relevant environmental or contextual cues (Tett & Guterman, 2000). This implies that for an individual to recognize the degree of similarity within a group and to produce positive behavioral outcomes, specific situational triggers must be present.

Teams characterized by similar value traits among their members, with low dispersion (high PG fit mean and low PG fit dispersion), are more likely to experience satisfaction with their colleagues and their work groups. PG fit functions as an enhanced organizational environment because high PG fit is recognized through both high mean values and low dispersion. Consequently, employees feel attached to their team members and are motivated to achieve team goals collaboratively (Janssen & Huang, 2008). According to trait activation theory, employees in highly supportive organizational contexts do not feel the need to seek additional resources or support (Lee et al., 2017). The combination of high PG fit mean and low dispersion inherently provides favorable work contexts for employees. Team-member exchange activities can consume resources and tire individuals. Employees operating in a high PG fit environment feel they possess sufficient psychological, relational, and physical resources, enabling them to contribute effectively to individual and team performance without frequently engaging in exchange behaviors to boost job performance.

In contrast, high PG fit dispersion implies disagreement and discrepancies among members' perceptions of their value similarities within teams. High fit dispersion can lead to distrust among members or psychological tension within teams. In such situations, frequent team-member exchanges are likely to signal and highlight informational discrepancies and differences (high fit dispersion), which may lead to discord, dissonance, or conflict. This dynamic can dampen the positive effects of PG fit mean on team performance. Considering the theoretical relationships among PG fit mean, PG fit dispersion, and team-member exchange collectively, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a three-way interaction among PG fit, its dispersion, and team-member exchange in predicting team performance. The positive relationship between PG fit and team performance will be strongest for team members exhibiting low fit dispersion and low team-member exchange, compared to all other combinations.

Methods

Procedures

Data were collected from employees at a local bank in South Korea, including headquarters and branch teams. Employees working in the bank's headquarters and branches and their team leaders were invited to a survey to study the relationship between job attitudes and performance. Employees were asked to log in to the bank's website and respond to an online questionnaire. Prior to conducting the survey, survey participants were informed that all responses were provided with security and anonymity and that they could voluntarily quit the survey at any time. Among the main research variables, individual employees responded to questionnaire items about PG fit (mean and dispersion values were calculated from the responses accordingly) and team-member exchange. Team leaders responded to questionnaire items about team performance. After removing the cases where the data did not match between the team members and the team leader, the final sample was obtained with 721 employees and

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93 teams, The average number of team members within a team included in the final sample was 6.68 (SD = 3.08).

Measures

All main study variables were measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Group-level PG fit was assessed with three items based on the referent shift consensus model (Chan, 1998), (a = .98). To measure Group-level PG fit and its dispersion, this study operationalized value congruence fit dispersion as the within-team standard deviations, following Chan (1998). Team-member exchange was measured with ten items developed by Seers (1989). A sample item of team-member exchange includes: "Other team members let me know when I affect their work." (a = .91). Team performance was evaluated with four items, adapted from Kearney and Gebert (2009). Specifically, team performance was rated by team managers (a = .84).

This study included team size, members' mean tenure, and demographic variables—such as team members' mean age, gender, and education level—as control variables, following the practices suggested by Harrison et al. (2002). For instance, Yuan and van Knippenberg (2022) examined team size as a moderator in the relationship between leader centrality and team performance. Gonzalez-Mulé et al. (2020) reported that team tenure positively affects team performance.

Results

The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1, which includes means, standard deviations, and correlations of the main study variables and control variables in the current research framework.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Team age	37.19	2.96	-							
2	Team gender	1.41	.19	-.64**	-						
3	Team education	2.87	.27	.18	-.31**	-					
4	Team size	6.68	3.08	-.04	-.02	.01	-				
5	Team tenure	2.44	1.96	.19	.10	.08	.02	-			
6	PG fit	5.41	.59	.16	-.23*	.09	-.14	-.02			
7	PG fit dispersion	.76	.27	-.17	.10	-.02	.40**	-.02	-.37**		
8	TMX	5.35	.42	-.04	-.10	.09	-.11	-.07	.72**	-.23*	
9	Team performance	5.90	.76	-.01	-.12	.26*	.12	.11	.04	.01	.04

PG fit= Person-group fit. TMX= Team-member exchange. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Next, we calculated the within-group agreement index (rwg), ICC(1), and ICC(2) (Chen & Bliese, 2002). These values for PG fit were rwg = .91, ICC1 = .20, ICC2 = .62, and α = .98. For team-member exchange, the values were rwg = .98, ICC1 = .10, ICC2 = .43, and α = .92. The test statistics (F ratios) associated with the ICC(1) values for all variables were statistically significant at $p < .05$. These findings confirmed that aggregating responses to the team level was a valid approach enabling us to proceed with hypothesis testing (Bliese, 2000).

To test our hypothesis, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses to examine the effects of the interaction among group-level PG fit, its dispersion, and team-member exchange on team performance. In the first step, we entered all the control variables listed above. In the second step, we added group-level PG fit, its dispersion, and team-member exchange. In the third step, we added all two-way interactions between the independent variables. In the final, fourth step, we included the three-way interaction among the three independent variables.

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Table 2 presents the results, which provide statistical support for the hypothesis. Specifically, we found that the three-way interaction between group-level PG fit, its dispersion, and team-member exchange was significantly associated with team performance ($b = -.09$, $p < .05$), confirming our hypothesis.

Figure 1 illustrates the statistically significant interaction pattern predicted by the research model. The strongest positive relationship between PG fit and team performance occurred under conditions of low fit dispersion and low team-member exchange.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis

		Model 1		**Model 2**		**Model 3**		**Model 4**	
	Independent Variables	**b**	**SE**	**b**	**SE**	**b**	**SE**	**b**	**SE**
Step 1:	Constant	5.27	2.49	5.49	3.00	6.69	3.9	5.55	3.85
	Team age	-.03	.04	-.04	.04	-.04	.05	-.05	.04
	Team gender	-.50	.66	-.43	.68	-.43	.71	-.31	.70
	Team education	.63	.40	.61	.41	.65	.43	.65	.42
	Team size	.05	.03	.07	.04	.07	.04	.07	.04
	Team tenure	.07	.07	.05	.07	.06	.08	.08	.08
Step2:	PG fit			.19	.23	.07	.64	.22	.63
	PG fit dispersion			-.21	.38	-1.44	4.49	-.48	4.60
	TMX			-.19	.33	-.29	.76	-.23	.74
Step3:	PG fit × PG fit dispersion					.12	1.65	-.11	1.62
	PG fit × TMX					.02	.18	.03	.17
	PG fit dispersion × TMX					.03	.06	.47*	.23
Step4:	PG fit × PG fit dispersion × TMX							-.09*	.04
	R^2	.10		.12		.12		.18	
	ΔR^2	.10		.02		.01		.06*	
	F	1.51		1.07		.79		1.11	

Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported (with standard errors in parentheses). * $p < .05$.

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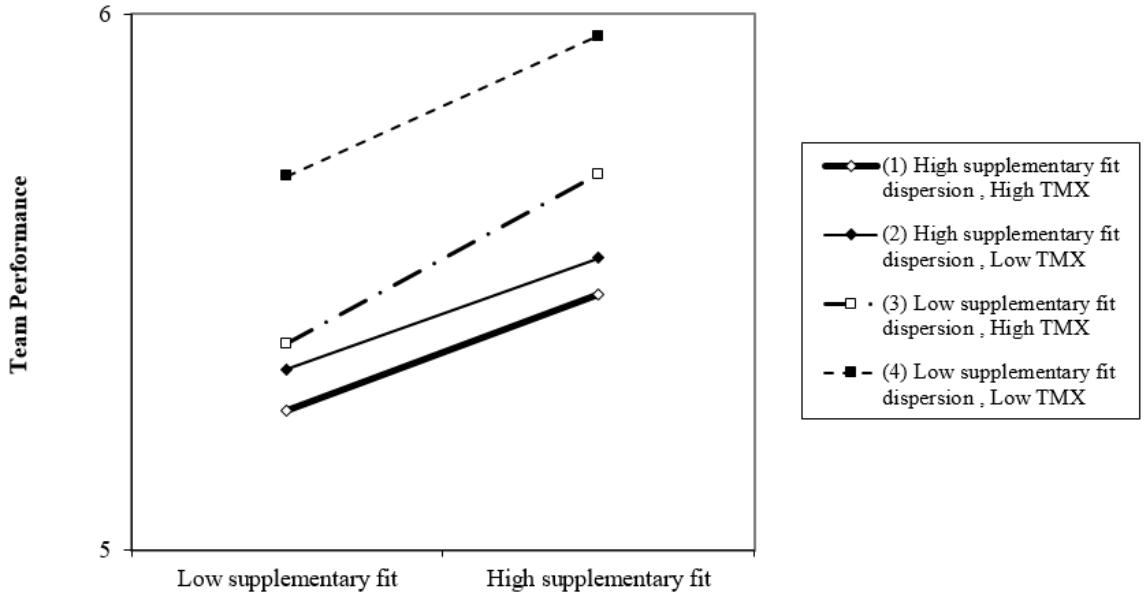

Figure 1. Three-way interaction

Discussion

This study investigated the relationships between group-level PG fit, fit dispersion, team-member exchange, and team performance. Through statistical analysis, the three-way interaction hypothesis, which predicted a specific patterned interplay among group-level PG fit, dispersion, and team-member exchange on team performance, was supported. This study theoretically and empirically verified the organizational phenomena wherein the relationship between PG fit mean and team performance is most reinforced under low dispersion and low team-member exchange conditions. These findings enhance our understanding of the complex relationships between PG fit and team performance within group contexts.

Theoretical Implications

This study aimed to explore in-depth how perceived fit between individuals and their teams affects team performance. The degree to which an individual aligns with a team or other team members functions as a crucial resource both relationally and organizationally. We included both the mean and variance of PG fit in our research model to evaluate whether individuals within a team collectively perceive fit with their colleagues. The distinct effects of each type of fit were validated through interaction patterns. These results suggest that in addition to considering the overall average value of PG fit, it is necessary to separately evaluate how widely fit is distributed among team members. Understanding these distinct patterns provides a more accurate perspective on organizational phenomena.

The results of this study can be interpreted based on trait activation theory. According to this theory, organizational environment and situational factors are important for members of an organization to express their traits and execute specific actions (Lee et al., 2017). In supportive organizational environments, employees do not feel the need to request additional resources and can achieve high-quality job performance without additional support. Employees who perceive high PG fit and low dispersion feel that the organizational environment provides sufficient resources, enabling them to enhance team performance without frequent interactions with team members. Conversely, employees in environments characterized by high PG fit dispersion may experience psychological conflict or tension. In such cases, high team-member exchange may amplify perceptions of discrepancies and organizational discord, limiting its positive impact on team performance. Thus, low PG fit dispersion emerges as an important situational variable that can improve team performance

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Practical Implications

Corporate performance for sustainable development is a key concern for practitioners seeking to achieve sustainable organizational goals. This study explored corporate sustainability by analyzing organizational factors that improve performance in groups or teams, distinct from the individual level, through multiple perspectives. In practice, the findings suggest that to increase team performance, simultaneous interaction patterns of situational and contextual organizational factors should be considered rather than focusing on a single positive organizational factor. This insight emphasizes the need for corporate sustainability strategies to adopt integrated systems. Instead of isolated initiatives aimed at improving PG fit or enhancing team-member exchange, practitioners should assess whether various parallel practices and training programs can generate synergies through their interplay.

Limitations and Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. First, the data (excluding performance metrics) were collected at a single point in time. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine how employees' perceptions of PG fit influence team performance over time. Second, we acknowledge the relatively low ICC(2) values for our study variables. While slight variations between groups may be attributable to organizational context, alternative aggregation statistics, such as group-level reliability (rwg) and ICC(1), sufficiently support the group-level aggregation of the current variables (Seong & Choi, 2014).

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