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# Work role stressors and employee outcomes

## Investigating the moderating role of subjective person-organization and person-job fit perceptions in Indian organizations

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of the present study was to explore the direct effects of work role stressors and subjective fit perceptions on the employee outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and turnover intentions. The study further aimed to investigate the moderating role of person-organization (P-O) fit, demands-abilities (D-A) fit and needs supplies (N-S) fit in the relationship between work role stressors and the aforementioned employee outcomes.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study was conducted using structured questionnaires for measuring the aforementioned variables. The sample of the study was 317 professionals from five sectors. Hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyze the data.

**Findings** – Hierarchical multiple regression showed that the work role stressors were negatively related to job satisfaction and OCB and positively related to turnover intentions. Subjective fit was seen to be positively related to job satisfaction and OCB and negatively related to turnover intentions. The analysis also found some support for the stress buffering effect of high subjective fit in the prediction of job satisfaction, OCB and turnover intentions.

**Research limitations/implications** – This study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by focusing on the fact that the negative effects of work role stressors on employee outcomes can be mitigated by identifying the variables which act as a buffer to weaken this effect. The results of the study highlight the importance of the concept of subjective fit for the managers and the employees to help them in coping up with the demands of the job. They provide support for the fact that matching employees to their organization and job can help in the mitigation of employees' stress, resulting in positive employee outcomes, hence benefiting the organization in the long run.

**Originality/value** – The study is the first of its kind to investigate the moderating role of P-O fit, D-A fit and N-S perceptions in the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes, especially in the Indian context.

**Keywords** Employee outcomes, Work role stressors, Demands-abilities fit, Needs-supplies fit, Person-organization fit

**Paper type** Research paper



### Introduction

The devastating effects of work and occupational stress on employee performance have been well documented in research, especially during the last three decades (Newton and Jimmieson, 2009; Siegrist, 1998). A large number of factors, ranging from technological changes, global competitive pressures, job insecurity and ever demanding customers to

hazardous work environments and overbearing bosses, contribute to this stress. Across a range of organizational contexts and cultures, research has consistently shown that experienced stress has deleterious effects on employees' mental and physical health, as well as on organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance and employee turnover (Ngo *et al.*, 2005; Kahn and Byosiere, 1992; Newton and Jimmieson, 2009; O'Driscoll and Beehr, 1994).

This menace of work stress is taking its toll on the working adults, and the evidence of its detrimental effects is building in India as in the USA and other developed countries. According to a survey by Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India in 2013, about 85 per cent of the employees in the private sector are afflicted to lifestyle chronic diseases and acute ailments because of the demanding schedules, high stress levels and performance-linked perquisites. The survey further points out that nearly 45 per cent of the corporate employees in the private sector sleep less than 6 h a day, leading to severe sleep disorders. A high-cost economy which has been in prolonged slump; shrinking incomes; and fear of layoffs are considered to be some of the causes. On-the-job stressors range from ambiguous job roles to deadline pressures, which are compounded by off-the-job stressors such as dual-worker families, responsibility of taking care of the children and addressing the concerns and medical issues of aged parents. This presents a completely unprecedented set of challenges for the growing number of sandwich generation Indians, who have to simultaneously take care of their elderly parents and young children. To promote employee physical and psychological health, positive job-related attitudes and performance, effective management of stress for employees has been a great challenge for the human resource practitioners.

Although the deleterious effects of work stress on employees' physical and mental health cannot be undermined, researchers have investigated a large number of factors that may moderate the negative effects of work role stressors on the organizational outcomes. This kind of research can be extremely beneficial to the human resource practitioners and other managers, as it can help in designing the strategies which can reduce the negative effect of work role stress. Researchers have investigated large number of factors that may moderate the negative effects of stressors or job demands on the employee outcomes. These include Type A behavior (Kushnir and Melamed, 1991), locus of control (Daniels and Guppy, 1994; Vahtera *et al.*, 1996), self-efficacy (Jimmieson, 2000), self-esteem (Makikangas and Kinnunen, 2003), proactivity (Parker and Sprigg, 1999), trust in management (Harvey *et al.*, 2003), perceptions of the balance between effort and rewards (Siegrist, 2002) and subjective fit with organizational culture (Newton and Jimmieson, 2009). Although many such tasks and individual variables have been identified, there is the need to identify additional variables that can buffer this negative effect. Identification of such variables can help in creating a healthy work environment without lowering the job demands. The present study aims to investigate the stress buffering effect of person-organization (P-O) fit and two elements of person-job fit, demands-abilities (D-A) and needs supplies (N-S) fits.

Further, the current understanding of the nature, antecedents and consequences of work role stress is based largely on the research conducted in Europe and the USA. The findings of these studies cannot be generalized to other cultures, as the individuals' perception and experience of stress may be affected by societal factors. For example, in the societies characterized by high power distance, the employees are used to getting

orders and scolding from their superiors than the employees working in cultures low on power distance. This lack of autonomy and discretion does not lead to stress in the employees from high-power-distance cultures but can be a source of continuous stress for the employees of low-power-distance societies.

To fill the aforementioned gaps, the present study aims to contribute to the existing body of literature by examining the direct effect of work role stressors on employee outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and turnover intention in the Indian organizations. The study further aims to investigate the moderating effect of P-O fit, D-A and N-S fits in the relationship between work role stressors and the aforementioned employee outcomes. The study is the first of its kind to investigate the moderating role of the aforementioned variables in the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes, especially in the Indian context.

### Objectives of the study

The objectives of this paper are:

- (1) to study the direct effect of work role stressors on the following employee outcomes:
  - job satisfaction;
  - OCB; and
  - turnover intention.
- (2) to study the direct effects of P-O, D-A and N-S fits on the aforementioned employee outcomes; and
- (3) to investigate the moderating effect of P-O, D-A and N-S fits in the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes.

### Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

For the purpose of meeting the aforementioned objectives, extensive review of literature was done, and hypotheses were developed.

#### *Work role stressors and employee outcomes*

Research in the field of stress has mainly focused on the stimulus response paradigm suggesting that the employees in an organization have to work in stressful working conditions (stressors), which can result in a response characterized by negative attitudes and behaviors (Netemeyer *et al.*, 2005; Walker *et al.*, 1975). Research on organizational stressors has focused mainly on role stress, comprising role ambiguity and role conflict (Kahn *et al.*, 1964). The excessive emphasis on role ambiguity and role conflict in the organizational stress research is undermining the importance of another critical stressor at workplace, namely, role overload. For this reason, the present study focuses on three types of work role stressors, role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload, that have been identified as the common sources of stress in the workplace (Boles *et al.*, 2003; Cooper *et al.*, 2001; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Mulki *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b; Onyemah, 2008).

Role ambiguity occurs when the employees do not have a clear understanding about their role in the organization (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970). Role conflict is the result of incompatible expectations faced by the employees in their jobs such that the compliance with one expectation makes it extremely difficult or impossible to

comply with another expectation (Kahn *et al.*, 1964). Role overload refers to the total amount of work and the time frame in which the work must be completed (Cooper *et al.*, 2001). It occurs when the employees feel that there are too many responsibilities or activities expected of them in the light of time available, their abilities and other constraints (Rizzo *et al.*, 1970).

Job satisfaction is one of the most researched attitudes and reflects how well people like or dislike various aspects of their jobs (Spector, 1985). Work role stress leads to emotional exhaustion in the employees leading to the feelings of helplessness, lowered self-esteem and lack of accomplishment (Cordes and Dougherty, 1993; Moore, 2000). The employees, thus, feel anxious and frustrated and develop negative attitudes toward their organizations and work and toward themselves. This, in turn, leads to job dissatisfaction. A large number of studies have shown a negative relationship between work role stressors and job satisfaction (Chang *et al.*, 2009; Mulki *et al.*, 2008a, 2008b; Ngo *et al.*, 2005; Örtqvist and Wincent, 2006).

However, the impact of work role stress has not been as widely studied on another work outcome, namely, OCB. Citizenship behaviors are defined as the discretionary behaviors on the part of an individual, not formally recognized by the organizational reward system, yet, they contribute to the effectiveness of the organization (Bateman and Organ, 1983; Smith *et al.*, 1983). These behaviors are often performed by the employees to support the interests of the organization, even though they may not directly lead to individual benefits (Moorman and Blakely, 1995). As OCBs are acts that typically go beyond an employee's roles and duties, it is likely that work role stress will discourage employees from indulging in such behaviors. When the stress at work becomes excessive and exceeds available resources, employees respond by reducing OCBs rather than compromising on their task performance. This is because of the fact that the negative consequences associated with lower OCBs are less than those associated with lower task performance (Organ, 1997). Further, the social exchange theory (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003), the effort–reward imbalance theory (Siegrist, 1996) and the resource allocation theory (Kanfer and Ackerman, 1989) propose that higher levels of work stress will lead to lower levels of OCBs. Recently, Jain and Cooper (2012) conducted a study on 402 operators working in business processing organizations (BPO) organizations in northern India to study the impact of stress on OCB. They found that stress was negatively related to most dimensions of OCB.

Working in a stressful work environment leads to lower job involvement and psychological withdrawal from the work group (Brief and Aldag, 1976), thus increasing the turnover intentions. Intentions to leave may be regarded as the last stage in the sequence of withdrawal cognitions, ranging from thinking of leaving to intending to search for alternative employment (Tett and Meyer, 1993). Work role stress is considered to be an important antecedent of withdrawal cognitions and turnover behavior (Hom and Griffeth, 1995). According to the theories of role stress, ambiguous or conflicting role demands evoking of role strain (Kahn *et al.*, 1964; Netemeyer *et al.*, 1990), which in turn leads to dissatisfaction and turnover behavior (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Ngo *et al.*, 2005).

The review of literature for this section demonstrates that role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload will have a negative impact on employee outcomes. However, to further explore the relationship between work role stressors and the important

employee outcomes of job satisfaction, OCB and turnover intentions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1.* Work role stressors will have a negative effect on job satisfaction of the employees (*H1a*) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) exhibited by the employees (*H1b*) and will have a positive effect on the employees' turnover intentions (*H1c*).

#### *Subjective fit and employee outcomes*

The concept of fit has been extensively studied in the organizational behavior literature (Cable and DeRue, 2002; Chang *et al.*, 2010; Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Guan *et al.*, 2011; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Schneider, 1987) and has been shown to influence job applicants' decision to choose certain organizations (Judge and Cable, 1997; Saks and Ashforth, 1997) and the recruiters decision to hire the participants (Cable and Judge, 1997; Kristof-Brown, 2000). The past fit research has distinguished between P-O and person-job (P-J) fits, which are statistically distinct constructs (Chatman, 1991).

P-O fit is referred to as the congruence between an employee's personal values and organization's culture, whereas P-J fit is defined as the fit between the individual characteristics (knowledge, skills, abilities and needs) and the demands of the job or the needs/desires of a person and the attributes of the job (Edwards, 1991; O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991). P-J fit can be further distilled into D-A and N-S fits (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). The D-A fit has been defined as the extent to which a person's knowledge, skills and abilities are congruent with the demands and requirements of their jobs (Edwards, 1996; Werbel and Johnson, 2001). On the other hand, N-S fit measures whether the attributes of a job fulfill employees' personal desires, values and needs (Edwards, 1996; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

Further, fit can be evaluated subjectively or objectively (French *et al.*, 1974). Subjective fit is defined as the match between the person and environment as it is perceived and reported by the person, and objective fit is defined as the match between the person as he or she really is and the environment as it exists "independently" of the person's perception of it (French *et al.*, 1974, p. 316). As objective reality must be filtered through individuals' perception, this kind of fit is a less proximal determinant of attitudes and behaviors compared to the subjective fit (Cable and DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). Thus, this study aims to study the effect of the perceptions of subjective fit on employees' attitudes and behaviors.

Employees are expected to be more energetic and persistent in accomplishing their job tasks when they perceive a similarity between their values and the values of the organization (Cable and DeRue, 2002). The attraction-selection-attrition theory states that the individuals are attracted to and seek employment in the organizations where they perceive a high P-O fit (Schneider, 1987). In addition, the employees whose values match with the values of the organization are also likely to stay in the organization for a longer period than the employees having lower levels of P-O fit. Recent meta-analysis by Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) confirmed that a high level of fit with the organization resulted in higher job satisfaction, organizational commitment and lower intentions to leave the organization. Subjective P-O fit has also been found to be positively related to organizational identification, job satisfaction, occupational commitment, perceived organizational support and OCBs (Cable and DeRue, 2002). Recently, P-O fit was found to be positively related to organizational commitment and citizenship behaviors (Boon



*et al.*, 2011; Guan *et al.*, 2011); job performance, job satisfaction and turnover intentions (Wang *et al.*, 2011; in-role performance and job satisfaction (Gregory *et al.*, 2010); OCB (Yaniv *et al.*, 2010); and task performance (Chi and Pan, 2012).

There is a general recognition that P-J fit has important implications for individual behaviors and work outcomes. Among job applicants in the USA, perceived P-J fit has been found to be related to career choice, perceived organizational attractiveness and subsequent choices of organizations for employment (Holland, 1985; Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Schein, 1978). Among employees working in organizations, both D-A and N-S fits were found to be related to job satisfaction (Boon *et al.*, 2011; Cable and DeRue, 2002; Edwards, 1996), organizational commitment (Boon *et al.*, 2011; Saks and Ashforth, 2002), the quality of work life (Edwards, 1996; Rice *et al.*, 1985), intent to leave (Boon *et al.*, 2011; Chang *et al.*, 2010; Saks and Ashforth, 2002), task performance (Chi and Pan, 2012), OCB (Boon *et al.*, 2011) and positive adjustment in new organizations (Spokane, 1985). In sum, there exists extensive theoretical and empirical evidence supporting both D-A and N-S fits as distinctive predictors for positive work-related attitudes. Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2005) concluded that P-J fit correlates positively with job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negatively with intent to quit. It also has a moderate positive relationship with co-worker satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction and organizational identification.

The review of literature for this section demonstrates that P-O, N-S and D-A fits will have a positive impact on employee outcomes. However, to further explore the relationship between the subjective fit and the important employee outcomes of job satisfaction, OCB and turnover intentions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H2. Person-organization fit will have a positive effect on job satisfaction of the employees (H2a) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) exhibited by the employees (H2b) and will have a negative effect on the employees' turnover intentions (H2c).
- H3. Needs-supplies fit will have a positive effect on job satisfaction of the employees (H3a) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) exhibited by the employees (H3b) and will have a negative effect on the employees' turnover intentions (H3c).
- H4. Demands-abilities fit will have a positive effect on job satisfaction of the employees (H4a) and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) exhibited by the employees (H4b) and will have a negative effect on the employees' turnover intentions (H4c).

#### *Moderating role of P-O and P-J fits in the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes*

As shown in the previous section, there has been a lot of research showing the direct effect of subjective fit on a large number of employee outcomes. However, very little work has been done with respect to the role of subjective fit in the stress-coping process. The concept of fit is especially prominent in the organizational stress research (Hecht and Allen, 2005; Kreiner, 2006; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). According to the person-environment approach (Lewin, 1935; Murray, 1938), person and environment work as joint determinants of employee well-being. How employees react to the work stressors or job demands might depend on how well the employees are matched with

their organization and their jobs. Work stress will have a minimal impact on negative employee outcomes when the employee works in a conducive environment. Employees with a high P-O fit will have a better understanding of the wants and needs of the organization, as their norms and values match with the norms and values of the organization (Erdogan and Bauer, 2005). Because of this fit between the values of the person and the organization, the employee will be better able to understand the “reasons for the presence of the stressor and their exposure to it” (Kahn and Byosiere, 1992, p. 662). This, in turn, will have a less impact on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, citizenship behaviors and turnover intentions, with high P-O fit acting as a buffer between the work stressors and negative employee outcomes. In contrast, with a low P-O fit, the employees will not be able to understand the need for the presence of the stressors in the organization, as their values do not match the values of the organization. For these employees, stress will directly impact the employee outcomes, and this will lead to job dissatisfaction, decrease in the citizenship behaviors and increased turnover intentions.

Further, when the abilities of the person are in line with the demands of the job (high D-A fit), the person will have little difficulty performing the roles and responsibilities of the job. A sales executive is required to interact with a large number of people, and if he or she has good social and persuasive skills to make these interactions fruitful, D-A fit is assumed to be there. For this person, excessive job demands such as long working hours are less likely to lead to negative work outcomes than for a person who does not possess the ability to deal with people. The negative effect of work stressors on employee outcomes is, thus, attenuated because of the ability of the person to deal with the challenges of the job.

A large number of studies have shown that the effect of stressors on work outcomes will increase, as what people prefer falls short of what they actually receive on the job and the well-being is increased as the actual characteristics increase to meet people’s preferences (Cummings and Cooper, 1979; French *et al.*, 1982; Hecht and Allen, 2005). When the organization looks well for its employees and it is ensured that their needs are met with, the person will be better able to cope up with the stressors arising from the organizational role. Thus the N-S fit also acts as a buffer and attenuates the negative effect of role stressors on organizational outcomes.

The review of literature for this section demonstrates that P-O, N-S and D-A fits will act as a buffer between work stressors and employee outcomes. However, to further explore the moderating role of subjective fit in the relationship between work role stressors and important employee outcomes of job satisfaction, OCB and turnover intentions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H5.* Person-organization fit will moderate the relationship between work role stressors and job satisfaction (*H5a*), OCBs (*H5b*) and turnover intentions (*H5c*) such that the relationship will be stronger for the employees having low P-O fit than for employees having high P-O fit.
- H6.* Needs-supplies fit will moderate the relationship between work role stressors and job satisfaction (*H6a*), OCBs (*H6b*) and turnover intentions (*H6c*) such that the relationship will be stronger for the employees having low N-S fit than for employees having high N-S fit.
- H7.* Demands-abilities fit will moderate the relationship between work role stressors and job satisfaction (*H7a*), OCBs (*H7b*) and turnover intentions (*H7c*) such that



the relationship will be stronger for the employees having low D-A fit than for employees having high D-A fit.

All the above mentioned hypotheses can be depicted with the help of the proposed model given below (Figure 1).

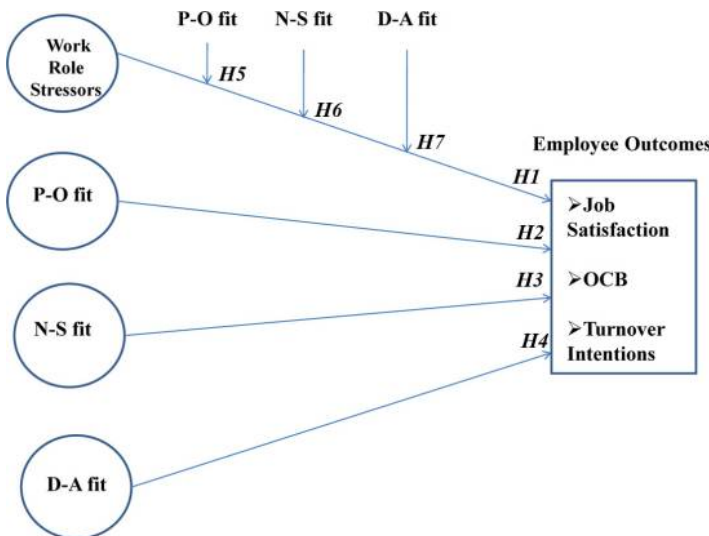
**Methodology**

*Sample*

Purposeful (maximum variation) sampling was used (Patton, 1990). To enable investigations of patterns relating work role stressors, subjective fit perceptions and employee outcomes, participants were contacted from a diverse range of organizations. In all, 350 professionals were contacted, but only 317 completed questionnaires were collected (response rate, 91 per cent). The sample consisted of the executives mainly from five sectors, education (39), service (100), information technology (105), manufacturing (41) and health care (12), working in Delhi and the National Capital region (NCR). However, 20 respondents were from other sectors. Respondents ranged in age from 21 to 62 years (mean age, 34.84 years; and SD, 9.94), and 232 of them were males and 85 were females. Also, 210 respondents were married and 107 were single. Maximum number of respondents fell in the age range of 31-40 (104), and the majority of them (198) had a tenure ranging from one to seven years in the organization.

*Procedure*

The employees of the various organizations were contacted and were asked to fill in the questionnaire. They were appraised regarding the academic purpose of the study, and confidentiality of their responses was ensured.



**Figure 1.**  
Proposed model

*Research instruments*

- *P-O fit*: The three-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) was used to measure the P-O fit. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). High scores imply high P-O fit and low scores imply low P-O fit. A sample item of the scale is “The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my organization values”.
- *N-S fit*: The three-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) was used to measure the N-S fit. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). High scores imply high N-S fit and low scores imply low N-S fit. A sample item of the scale is “There is a good fit between what my job offers me and what I am looking for in a job”.
- *D-A fit*: The three-item scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002) was used to measure the D-A fit. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). High scores imply high D-A fit and low scores imply low D-A fit. A sample item of the scale is “The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills”.
- *Role conflict*: The three-item scale developed by Peterson *et al.* (1995) was used to measure the role conflict. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). High scores imply high role conflict and low scores imply low role conflict. A sample item of the scale is “I often get involved in situations in which there are conflicting demands”.
- *Role ambiguity*: The five-item scale developed by Peterson *et al.* (1995) was used to measure the role ambiguity. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). However, the scores of all the five items were reversed. A sample item of the scale is “I have clear planned goals and objectives for my job”.
- *Role overload*: The five-item scale developed by Peterson *et al.* (1995) was used to measure the role overload. Responses to these items were on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). A sample item of the scale is “There is a need to reduce some parts of my role”.
- *Job satisfaction*: Facets of job satisfaction was measured using nine items chosen from Cellucci and DeVries’ (1978) questionnaire. There were two items for satisfaction with pay, three items for satisfaction with co-workers, two items for satisfaction with supervisor and two items for satisfaction with work itself. The sample items for measuring these four facets respectively are “My organization pays better than competitors”, “When I ask people to do things the job gets done”, “The managers I work for back me up” and “My job is interesting”. These nine items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). High scores imply satisfaction with the facets of job satisfaction and low scores imply dissatisfaction with the facets of job satisfaction.
- *OCB*: OCB was measured by adapting the Podsakoff *et al.*'s (1990) OCB scale. The three OCB factors included were sportsmanship, conscientiousness and civic virtue. Examples of these items are “is willing to risk disapproval in order to express individual beliefs about what is best for the company” and “turns in budgets, sales projections, expense reports, and other documents earlier than

required". These items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). Scores on the eight items were averaged to yield a summary score reflecting OCB.

- *Turnover intentions*: A three-item scale originally developed by Vigoda and Kapun (2005) was used. A sample item is "I will probably not stay with this organization for much longer". The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A higher score meant higher intentions to leave the organization or department.

### Control variables

Control variables in this study included gender, age, marital status, industry type and organizational tenure. Gender was assessed using a dichotomous scale: male (1) and female (2). Marital status was also assessed using a dichotomous scale: married (1) and single (2). Industry type was assessed using a nominal scale: education (1), service (2), information technology (IT) (3), manufacturing (4), health care (5) and any other (6). Age and organizational tenure was measured in years using a continuous scale. Gender, age, marital status, industry type and organizational tenure were controlled for all regression analyses to minimize their influence on the focal variables in the study.

### Data analysis overview

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to examine the potential main effects of work role stressors and subjective fit on employee outcomes. To minimize the potential problems associated with multi-collinearity, P-O, N-S and D-A fits were analyzed in different regression models.

Each employee outcome indicator, that is, job satisfaction, OCB and turnover intentions, was regressed on the antecedent sets in four steps. Control variables were entered in Step 1, work role stressors in Step 2, subjective fit indicators in Step 3 and interaction term (i.e. work role stressors  $\times$  subjective fit) on Step 4. The magnitude of  $R^2$  change at each step of hierarchical regression analysis was used to determine the variance explained by each set of antecedents. The beta values reported were used to determine the effect of each variable in the antecedent sets on employee outcomes.

### Results

#### *Preliminary data analyses and overview of analyses*

Descriptive data (means and standard deviations), correlations and Cronbach (1951) alpha coefficients are displayed in Table I. As can be seen, all scales demonstrated good internal consistency.

### Main effects

#### *Work role stressors and employee outcomes*

It was predicted that the work role stress will be negatively related to job satisfaction (*H1a*) and OCB (*H1b*) and will be positively related to employees' turnover intentions (*H1c*). As can be seen from Tables II-IV, entry of work role stressors in Step 2 accounted for a significant increment in variance on job satisfaction,  $R^2$  change = 0.23,  $F = 15.72$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (supporting *H1a*); OCB,  $R^2$  change = 0.16,  $F = 8.78$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (supporting *H1b*); and turnover intentions,  $R^2$  change = 0.11,  $F = 8.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (supporting *H1c*). With

**Table I.**  
Descriptive statistics  
and correlations for  
focal variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Role conflict	3.22	0.78	(0.71)										
2. Role ambiguity	2.20	0.60	0.067	(0.78)									
3. Role overload	2.85	0.82	0.154**	0.212**	(0.86)								
4. P-O fit	3.37	0.79	-0.147**	-0.358**	-0.259**	(0.85)							
5. N-S fit	3.37	0.78	-0.08	-0.383**	-0.133*	0.475**	(0.78)						
6. D-A fit	3.69	0.69	0.04	-0.430**	-0.167**	0.287**	0.461**	(0.70)					
7. Job satisfaction	3.37	0.52	-0.141*	-0.460**	-0.309**	0.482**	0.524**	0.401**	(0.74)				
8. OCB	3.67	0.42	-0.004	-0.388**	-0.192**	0.264**	0.217**	0.210**	0.283**	(0.72)			
9. Turnover intentions	2.74	1.02	0.117*	0.208**	0.302**	-0.354**	-0.349**	-0.198**	-0.315**	-0.205**	(0.87)		
10. Age	34.84	9.94	-0.063	-0.186**	0.005	0.200**	0.260**	0.288**	0.140*	0.152**	-0.179**		
11. Tenure	7.84	7.58	-0.121*	-0.199**	0.007	0.180**	0.273**	0.233**	0.108	0.139*	-0.238**	0.772**	

**Notes:** Cronbach's (1951) alpha reliability coefficients appear in the diagonal \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$

Independent variables	Job satisfaction				Organizational citizenship behavior				Turnover intentions			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
<i>Step 1 – control variables</i>												
Gender	-0.71	-0.54	-0.67	-0.69	-0.03	-0.07	-0.11	-0.10	-0.70*	-0.93**	-0.86**	-0.85**
Age	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.004	0.009	0.01	0.01
Marital status	-1.28**	-1.23**	-0.76	-0.71	0.40	0.43	0.58	0.53	-0.002	0.09	-0.16	-0.11
Industry type	-0.46**	-0.21	-0.13	-0.13	0.13	0.25*	0.28**	0.27*	0.074	-0.003	-0.04	-0.05
Tenure with organization	-0.003	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	0.02	0.004	0.003	0.001	-0.11**	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.09**
<i>Step 2 – job stressors</i>												
Role conflict	-0.13	-0.08	-0.08	0.20	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.02	0.07	0.05	0.05	-0.17
Role ambiguity	-0.60**	-0.48**	-0.48**	-0.65**	-0.40**	-0.40**	-0.36**	-0.22	0.10*	0.03	0.03	-0.02
Role overload	-0.25**	-0.18**	-0.18**	0.11	-0.097**	-0.097**	-0.07	-0.24	0.22**	0.18**	0.18**	0.58**
<i>Step 3–P-O fit</i>												
P-O fit			0.61**	1.09**			0.20**	0.09			-0.33**	-0.02**
<i>Step 4 – interaction terms</i>												
Role conflict × P-O fit				-0.03				0.003				0.03
Role ambiguity × P-O fit				0.02				-0.02				0.006
Role overload × P-O fit				-0.03				0.02				-0.04**
Adjusted $R^2$	0.04	0.27	0.35	0.35	0.01	0.17	0.18	0.17	0.05	0.16	0.20	0.22
$F^2$ change		0.23**	0.08**	0.005		0.16**	0.02**	0.003		0.11**	0.05**	0.02*
$F$ change ( $p$ -value)		3.72**	15.72**	14.91**	1.87*	8.78**	8.62**	6.53**	4.54**	8.35**	10.03**	8.3**

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table II.** Hierarchical multiple regression analyses employee outcomes (P-O fit as a moderator)

**Table III.**  
Hierarchical multiple  
regression analyses  
employee outcomes  
(N-S fit as a  
moderator)

Independent variables	Job satisfaction				Organizational citizenship behavior				Turnover intentions			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
<i>Step 1 – control variables</i>												
Gender	-0.70	-0.53	-0.53	-0.48	-0.03	-0.07	-0.07	-0.10	-0.70*	-0.93**	-0.94**	-0.89**
Age	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.009	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.004	0.009	0.03	0.01
Marital status	-1.25**	-1.21**	-0.72	-0.64	0.35	0.40	0.48	0.40	-0.005	0.09	-0.15	-0.04
Industry type	-0.45**	-0.20	-0.09	-0.15	0.13	0.26*	0.27*	0.29**	0.07	-0.006	-0.05	-0.06
Tenure with organization	0.003	-0.04	-0.07	-0.05	0.02	0.004	0.00	-0.008	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.08**	-0.07**
<i>Step 2 – job stressors</i>												
Role conflict	-0.13	-0.12	-0.12	0.28	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.29	0.07	0.07	0.07	-0.44
Role ambiguity	-0.60**	-0.42**	-0.42**	-1.11**	-0.41**	-0.38**	-0.30	-0.30	0.10*	0.10*	0.01	-0.05
Role overload	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.22**	0.20	-0.10**	-0.09**	-0.35*	-0.35*	0.22**	0.22**	0.20**	0.48**
<i>Step 3 – N-S fit</i>												
N-S fit			0.79**	0.97*			0.11	0.09			-0.35**	-0.54
<i>Step 4 – interaction terms</i>												
Role conflict × N-S fit				-0.04				-0.02				0.05
Role ambiguity × N-S fit				0.08**				-0.009				0.007
Role overload × N-S fit				-0.04				0.03				-0.03
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.04	0.27	0.39	0.41	0.01	0.17	0.17	0.17	0.05	0.16	0.21	0.22
R <sup>2</sup> change		0.23**	0.12**	0.02**		0.16**	0.005	0.006		0.11**	0.06**	0.01
F change (p-value)		3.71**	15.70**	23.66**	1.88*	8.79**	8.04**	6.21**	4.54**	8.35**	10.46**	8.33**

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$



Independent variables Steps	Job satisfaction				Organizational citizenship behavior				Turnover intentions			
	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
<i>Step 1 – control variables</i>												
Gender	-0.75	-0.58	-0.48	-0.43	-0.02	-0.05	-0.04	-0.09	-0.71*	-0.93**	-0.96**	-0.87**
Age	0.02	0.005	-0.02	-0.03	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.007	0.01	0.02	0.02
Marital status	-1.45**	-1.56**	-1.42**	-1.48**	0.35	0.32	0.32	0.28	0.078	0.19	0.16	0.21
Industry type	-0.47**	-0.21	-0.21	-0.22	0.14	0.27	0.27*	0.28**	0.07	-0.007	-0.007	-0.03
Tenure with organization	0.003	-0.04	-0.04	-0.02	0.02	0.005	0.005	0.00	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.10**	-0.09**
<i>Step 2 – job stressors</i>												
Role conflict	-0.13	-0.18*	-0.18*	0.63	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.28	0.07	0.07	0.08	-0.15
Role ambiguity	-0.61**	-0.48**	-0.48**	-0.48	-0.40**	-0.39**	-0.13	-0.13	0.10*	0.10*	0.06	-0.32
Role overload	-0.25**	-0.22**	-0.22**	0.55**	-0.098**	-0.097**	-0.16	-0.16	0.22**	0.22**	0.21**	0.47**
<i>Step 3 – D-A fit</i>												
D-A fit			0.52**	2.19**			0.03	0.43			-0.13	-0.39
<i>Step 4 – interaction terms</i>												
Role conflict × D-A fit				-0.07				-0.02				0.02
Role ambiguity × D-A fit				0.002				-0.03				0.04
Role overload × D-A fit				-0.07**				0.006				-0.03
Adjusted $R^2$	0.04	0.28	0.31	0.33	0.01	0.16	0.16	0.16	0.05	0.16	0.16	0.16
$R^2$ change		0.24**	0.04**	0.02**		0.16**	0.00	0.003		0.11**	0.006	0.01
$F$ change ( $p$ -value)		3.74**	15.95**	16.94**	13.97**	1.84*	7.73**	5.86**	4.54**	8.37**	7.70**	6.14**

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table IV.**  
Hierarchical multiple  
regression analyses  
employee outcomes  
(D-A fit as a  
moderator)

respect to the work role stressors, the analyses revealed that role ambiguity and role overload were negatively related to job satisfaction (role ambiguity,  $\beta = -0.60, p < 0.01$ ; and role overload,  $\beta = -0.25, p < 0.01$ ) and OCB (role ambiguity,  $\beta = -0.40, p < 0.01$ ; and role overload,  $\beta = -0.097, p < 0.05$ ). As expected, these two stressors were positively related to turnover intentions (role ambiguity,  $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.10$ ; and role overload,  $\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$ ). However, role conflict was not significantly related to any employee outcome.

#### *Subjective fit and employee outcomes*

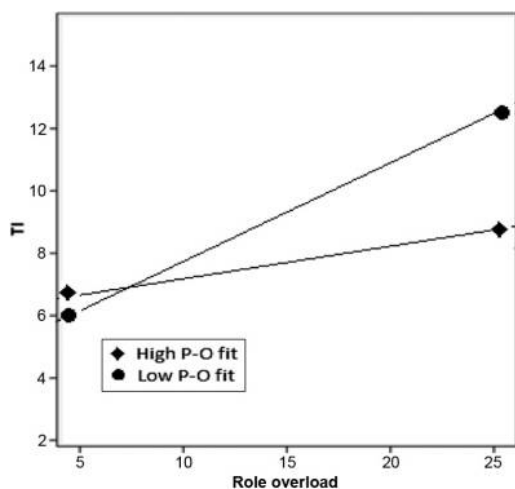
The hierarchical multiple analyses were continued to assess the effect of P-O, N-S and D-A fits on job satisfaction (*H2a, H3a and H4a*), OCB (*H2b, H3b and H4b*) and turnover intentions (*H2c, H3c and H4c*). P-O fit was entered in Step 3 (Table II) after the control variables (Step 1) and work role stressors (Step 2). Entry of P-O fit in Step 3 accounted for the significant increment of explained variance in job satisfaction,  $R^2$  change = 0.08,  $F = 19.61, p < 0.01$  (supporting *H2a*); OCB,  $R^2$  change = 0.02,  $F = 8.78, p < 0.05$  (supporting *H2b*); and turnover intentions,  $R^2$  change = 0.05,  $F = 10.03, p < 0.01$  (supporting *H2c*). The analyses revealed that P-O fit was positively related to job satisfaction,  $\beta = 0.61, p < 0.01$ , and OCB,  $\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$ , but negatively related to turnover intentions,  $\beta = -0.33, p < 0.01$ .

As can be seen from Table III, entry of N-S fit in Step 3 accounted for the significant increment of explained variance in job satisfaction,  $R^2$  change = 0.12,  $F = 23.66, p < 0.01$  (supporting *H3a*); and turnover intentions,  $R^2$  change = 0.06,  $F = 10.46, p < 0.01$  (supporting *H3c*). The analyses revealed that N-S fit was positively related to job satisfaction,  $\beta = 0.79, p < 0.01$ , and negatively related to turnover intentions,  $\beta = -0.35, p < 0.01$ . However, failing to support *H3b*, entry of N-S fit in Step 3 did not account for a significant increment of explained variance in OCB,  $R^2$  change = 0.005,  $F = 8.04$ , not significant (*ns*).

As can be seen from Table IV, entry of D-A fit in Step 3 accounted for the significant increment of explained variance in job satisfaction,  $R^2$  change = 0.04,  $F = 16.94, p < 0.01$  (supporting *H4a*). The analyses revealed that D-A fit was positively related to job satisfaction,  $\beta = 0.52, p < 0.01$ . However, the entry of D-A fit in Step 3 did not account for a significant increment of explained variance in OCB,  $R^2$  change = 0.00,  $F = 7.73, ns$ ; and turnover intentions,  $R^2$  change = 0.006,  $F = 7.70, ns$ , thus failing to support *H4b* and *H4c*.

#### *Subjective fit and work role stressors–employee outcomes relationship*

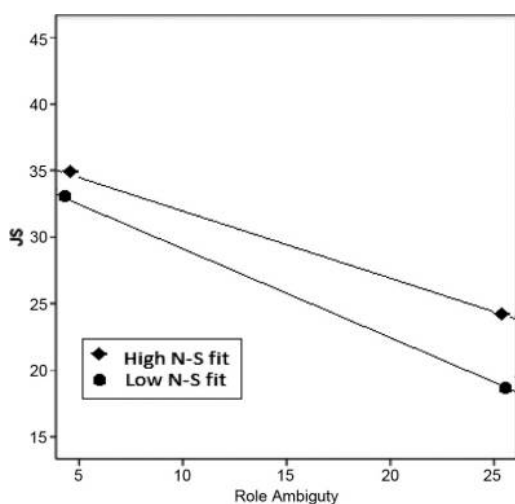
The hierarchical regression analyses were continued to investigate the impact of subjective fit on the work role stressors–employee outcomes relationship. As can be seen from Table II, the work role stressors  $\times$  P-O fit interaction was entered in Step 4. Entry of three interactions as a set in each regression analysis did not significantly explain further variance in the dependent variables. However, only the interaction of role overload  $\times$  P-O fit on turnover intentions was found to be significant,  $\beta = -0.04, p < 0.001$ . In line with *H5c*, the positive relationship between role overload and turnover intentions was stronger for employees reporting low P-O fit ( $\beta = 0.299, t = 5.29, p < 0.001$ ) than for those reporting high P-O fit ( $\beta = 0.073, t = 1.33, ns$ ). As can be seen from Figure 2, the positive effect of role overload on turnover intentions was reduced for the employees reporting high P-O fit.



**Figure 2.** Two-way interaction of role overload and P-O fit on turnover intentions

As can be seen from Table III, the interaction of role ambiguity  $\times$  N-S fit on job satisfaction was found to be significant,  $\beta = 0.08, p < 0.001$ . Partially supporting *H6a*, the negative relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction was stronger for the employees having low N-S fit ( $\beta = -0.639, t = -6.077, p < 0.001$ ) than for employees having high N-S fit ( $\beta = -0.499, t = -4.182, p < 0.001$ ). This proves that the negative effect of role ambiguity on job satisfaction is buffered for the employees having high N-S fit (Figure 3).

Further, the interaction of role overload  $\times$  D-A fit on job satisfaction was also found to be significant,  $\beta = 0.07, p < 0.001$ . In support of *H7a*, employees with high D-A fit were buffered from the negative effects of role overload on job satisfaction ( $\beta = -0.146, t = -1.268, p = 0.106$ ) so much that the effect failed to reach statistical significance.



**Figure 3.** Two-way interaction of role ambiguity and N-S fit on job satisfaction

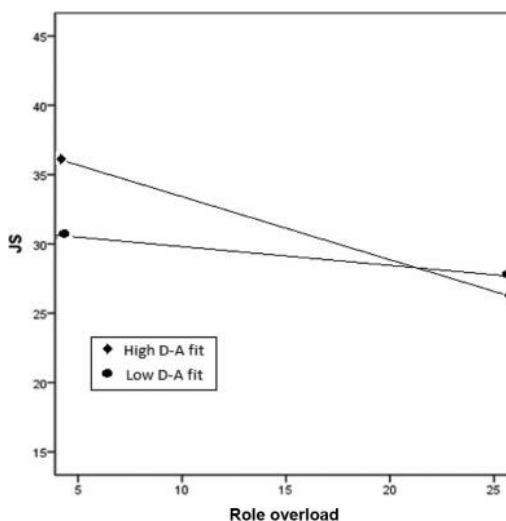
However, as can be seen from [Figure 4](#), the negative effects of role overload on job satisfaction were aggravated for the employees reporting low D-A fit ( $\beta = -0.445, t = -5.658, p < 0.001$ ).

## Discussion

This study attempted to contribute to the existing research literature by studying the moderating role of subjective fit perceptions (both P-O and P-J fit) in the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes, apart from studying the main effects. Based on the extensive review of literature, it was hypothesized that work role stressors would be negatively related to the employee outcomes of job satisfaction and OCB and would be positively related to turnover intentions. Additionally, the employees' perception of P-O and P-J fit were predicted to impact job satisfaction and OCB positively and turnover intentions negatively. Further, P-O and P-J fits were expected to act as a buffer and weaken the relationship between work role stressors and employee outcomes.

### *Work role stressors – employee outcomes*

In line with the previous research ([Chang et al., 2009](#); [Fisher and Gitelson, 1983](#); [Jackson and Schuler, 1985](#); [Jain and Cooper, 2012](#); [Mulki et al., 2008a, 2008b](#); [Ortqvist and Wincent, 2006](#)) and supporting *H1a*, *H1b* and *H1c*, the results demonstrated that work role stressors, as a set, were significantly related to less favorable employee outcomes. Role ambiguity and role overload were significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction and OCB and positively related to turnover intentions. However, the results with respect to role conflict were not significant but in expected direction. These results are in line with the study by [O'Driscoll and Beehr \(1994\)](#), which showed the direct impact of role ambiguity on job satisfaction, but no significant impact of role conflict was seen on job satisfaction.



**Figure 4.**  
Two-way interaction  
of role overload and  
D-A fit on job  
satisfaction

*Subjective person-organization and person-job fits*

In line with the existing literature (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005; Wang *et al.*, 2011), the results revealed that P-O fit was significantly related to positive employee outcomes, hence supporting *H2a*, *H2b* and *H2c*. This shows that when employees perceive a similarity between their values and the values of the organization, they are expected to be more satisfied with their job and organization and tend to remain with the organization for a longer period. They are also more likely to indulge in extra role behaviors. With respect to N-S fit, the results revealed that high N-S fit was significantly and positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions, thus supporting *H3a* and *H3c*. These results are in line with previous research (Cable and DeRue, 2002; Edwards, 1996). However, failing to support *H3b*, N-S fit was not seen to be significantly related to OCB. The analysis further revealed that D-A fit was positively and significantly related to job satisfaction, thus supporting *H4a*. However, no significant impact of D-A fit was seen on OCB and turnover intentions, thus rejecting *H4b* and *H4c*.

Although further research is needed in different contexts and organizations, the results of the study provide support for the possibility that high fit with the organizational culture and the job has the capability of reversing the attitudes and behaviors that are otherwise associated with work role stressors. It is interesting to note here that although P-O fit is significantly related to all three employee outcomes studied, both aspects of P-J fit, N-S and D-A fits, are not significantly related to OCB. This is because of the fact that OCBs are discretionary behaviors, and people perform these acts if their values match with the values of the organization and if employees identify with the organization. However, high P-J fit does not necessarily arouse those kinds of positive emotions toward the organization, as the person identifies more with the job and not with the organization. Therefore, the person does not feel the need to perform the behaviors which are discretionary and not a part of roles and responsibilities.

With respect to the moderating role of subjective fit in the relation between work role stressors and employee outcomes, several discussion points arise. In all, only three interactions between work role stressors and subjective fit were found to be significant in the prediction of employee outcomes. These interactions were in line with the stress buffering hypothesis such that the higher fit buffered the negative effect of stress on some aspects of employee outcomes. The first interaction highlighted the role of P-O fit in buffering the negative effects of role overload on turnover intentions such that for the employees perceiving high P-O fit, the positive relationship between role overload and turnover intentions was weakened to the extent of becoming insignificant. In line with the previous research (Kahn and Byosiere, 1992) and supporting *H5c*, the results indicate that the employees perceiving high fit between their values and the values of the organization intend to stay with the organization even in the face of high role overload. These results provide some support for an organizational identification approach according to which strong identification with the organization can lead to reframing of the stressors to the point that they can actually become a source of eustress (Branscombe *et al.*, 1999). In the context of job satisfaction, N-S and D-A fits acted as a buffer to attenuate the negative effect of role ambiguity and role overload, respectively, such that the employee perceiving high fit reported high job satisfaction in the face of these stressors than employees perceiving low fit. Hence, these results find some support for

*H6a* and *H7a* and are in line with the prediction that if a person perceives a fit with his job, the negative effect of stressors is mitigated, leading to higher job satisfaction.

It is worth noting here that though some interactions were found significant, there were many interactions which were not found significant. The reasons for these non-significant results are unclear, but some explanations can be offered. Some stressors might be so deleterious that ensuring job fit and identification with the organization might not offer enough protection from their harmful and negative effects. Alternatively, there can be other factors, such as certain personality attributes, which can have a stronger influence on this relationship between stressors and employee outcomes than the perception of fit. Further, these results may be specific to the sample used in this study. However, the importance of these results should not be understated.

### Implications

Previous findings on the relations between work role stressors, subjective fit and employee outcomes have been established mainly among the employees from Western cultures (e.g. USA, Europe); this study provides significant findings from the Indian culture, which suggest the universality of the impact of these variables on employee outcomes.

This study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by focusing on the fact that the negative effects of work role stressors on employee outcomes can be mitigated by identifying the variables which act as a buffer to weaken this effect. The results of the study highlight the importance of the concept of subjective fit for the managers and the employees to help them in coping up with the demands of the job. The finding that the high perception of fit with the organization and the job can mitigate the negative effect of the work role stressors on employee outcomes has strong positive implications for the organizations and the managers. As it is not always possible to reduce stressors from the workplace, increasing the employees' perception of fit with the organizational values can lead to a less strained workforce which is satisfied and willing to continue its membership with the organization. Additionally, providing employees with proper training and taking care of their needs increase their perception of P-J fit and can improve their capability of handling various stressors, hence benefiting the organization in the long run. When the employees' perceive a high fit between their values and organizational values and when their abilities match with the demands of the job, the work role stressors are interpreted in the way which is not demanding and damaging for the employee and the organization. On the contrary, these stressors become a source of eustress.

Practical implications of the study include the importance of fit concept for both the employees and organizations. For employees, P-O and P-J fits are crucial for improving job satisfaction, reducing work stress and enhancing personal growth. For organization, fit becomes essential for attracting and retaining talented workforce, utilizing their skills effectively and, in general, leveraging human potential most critically. It will be useful for the organizations to develop fit scales and standards. During the process of recruitment and selection, these fit scales can be used to assess the fit of the candidates which can be matched with the organizational fit standards, resulting in high P-O and P-J fits. The concept of fit can be further applied after organizational entry, that is, during training and socialization.



### Limitations and scope for future research

As the design of the present study was cross-sectional, causal conclusions concerning the impact of work role stressors and subjective fit perceptions on employee outcomes cannot be drawn. For example, the present study suggested that work role stressors lead to negative job outcomes such as job satisfaction. However, it can be possible that dissatisfaction with the job might lead to the employees viewing their role more conflicting or ambiguous. Similarly, alternate job opportunities might be the reason for high turnover intentions, but the employee reasons it out by perceiving a low subjective fit. With the cross-sectional design, there is no way of teasing out the relative contribution of these effects. A longitudinal study where the work role stressors and subjective fit perceptions are related to employee outcomes at a later point in time would provide a more rigorous test of relationships.

This study uses self-report measures to assess work role stressors, subjective fit perceptions and employee outcomes. Although the measures used were reliable, the very fact that the independent, dependent and moderating variables were assessed using self-report measures could lead to the problems of common method variance. Further, with self-report measures, social desirability biases become a cause of concern. Future studies can also use qualitative techniques to identify emergent themes in this area.

Other organizational and dispositional factors (e.g. personality) that were not included in the study may have been important and might account for some relationships that were found in the study. Future studies can focus on such variables to get a more comprehensive explanation of the results.

The present study does not distinguish between the directions of employees' misfit. For example, low D-A fit may be because of the fact that the employee does not have the skill and ability to perform the job or because he or she is over-skilled to perform the job. The outcomes of the misfit might be different for the people who are over-skilled versus those who are under-skilled. Future research can delve into this area by maintaining the direction of misfit.

The sample of the study was only limited to the Indian employees from Delhi and NCR. There might be some culture-specific issues which were overlooked. Future studies may benefit from an exploration of a wider range of employees at different organizational levels, cultures and sectors.

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