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**Fit Perceptions, Work Engagement, Satisfaction and Commitment**

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## Fit Perceptions, Work Engagement, Satisfaction and Commitment

### Abstract

**Purpose:** This study explores the relationship between fit (organization and job) perceptions and work engagement.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** We deployed a two-wave survey among 377 clerical employees of the specialist lending division of a large UK bank, with the waves separated by 12 months.

**Findings:** The results show a positive relationship between person-organization and person-job fit perceptions (at Time 1) and work engagement (at Time 2). Job satisfaction and affective commitment dual-mediate these relationships. The effect of person-organization fit on work engagement manifests primarily via affective commitment, while the effect of person-job fit manifests primarily via job satisfaction.

**Practical Implications** - The study indicates that organizations should consider the fit of employees to their jobs and the organization when designing interventions intended to increase work engagement. Also, potential synergies exist between organizational interventions designed to influence employee attitudes focused on similar units of analysis: e.g., person-job fit with job satisfaction or person-organization fit with affective commitment.

**Originality/Value:** This study provides the first investigation of the dual-mediation, via job satisfaction and affective commitment, of the effects of both person-job and person-organization fit on work engagement. Furthermore, the use of a time-lagged design strengthens the evidence for the novel hypotheses of this study and enables verification of findings in the extant literature.

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5 Engagement research has flourished since Kahn (1990), but the antecedents of engagement  
6 remain a key area of interest. In today's fast-changing and competitive environment,  
7 organizations desire an engaged workforce as engaged employees: (a) have high motivation to  
8 perform better, produce more and succeed in their jobs (Christian *et al.*, 2011; Leiter and  
9 Bakker, 2010); and (b) are indicators of workforce well-being (Warr and Inceoglu, 2012). The  
10 responsibility for creating an engaged workforce has typically been attributed to organizational  
11 factors such as design, leadership and culture. However, this view underestimates the role  
12 played by employees in controlling their work and work environment (Parke and Weinhardt,  
13 2018). According to fit theory, employees have an inner drive to exercise control, and they  
14 consequently seek jobs and organizations to which they fit well (Yu, 2013). Therefore,  
15 organizational level factors can only partially explain employees' engagement, as they cannot  
16 reflect the intrinsic needs of individuals. Hence, this study aims to deepen our understanding  
17 by examining the roles that employees' perceptions of job fit and organization fit play in  
18 shaping their work engagement as well as investigating potential mediators of these  
19 relationships.

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40 Before being hired, individuals consider what working at an organization might be like.  
41 Such considerations shape individuals' "fit" perceptions and contribute to the formation of their  
42 attitudes and behaviors. Fit is the "similarity" employees and organizations experience (Kristof,  
43 1996). According to fit theory, employees' desire to 'fit' comes from a desire for needs  
44 fulfillment and from similarity attraction (Edwards and Shipp, 2007). Put differently, while  
45 developing and experiencing fit perceptions, employees fulfill some innate human needs (Yu,  
46 2013). When employees perceive that they fit, there is congruence between their needs,  
47 abilities, values, and work environment (e.g. job supplies, job demands, organizational values)  
48 (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). In return, fit perceptions shape employees' attitudes and behaviors  
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6 (Verquer *et al.*, 2003) such as engagement. Hence, a failure to understand ‘fit’ perceptions  
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8 deriving from individuals’ innate needs could compromise organizational interventions  
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10 intended to generate an engaged workforce.

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12 While the engagement literature has grown dramatically since Kahn’s (1990) seminal  
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14 work, investigations of the link between fit perceptions and engagement are comparatively  
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16 recent despite Kahn’s suggestion of a relationship between person-organization fit and  
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18 engagement. This study addresses the calls from Bakker *et al.* (2011) and Christian *et al.* (2011)  
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20 to develop our understanding of the links between employees’ fit perceptions and employee  
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22 engagement. We identified only eleven studies focusing on fit-engagement relationships, all  
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24 published since 2011. There is substantial variety on display in these studies, with no consensus  
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26 surrounding (a) the definition and types of employee engagement; (b) types of fit and the  
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28 inclusion of fit type; and (c) research context. Eight of these eleven studies deploy cross-  
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30 sectional designs evidencing a positive relationship between fit (either person-organization or  
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32 person-job fit) and a variety of different employee engagement constructs (i.e. job engagement,  
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34 work engagement and organizational engagement, newcomer engagement, and student  
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36 engagement) (Alfes *et al.*, 2016; Biswas and Bhatnagar, 2013; Chen *et al.*, 2014; Kimura, 2011;  
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38 Maden-Eyiusta, 2016; Saks and Gruman, 2011; Viljevac *et al.*, 2012; Warr and Inceoglu, 2012).  
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40 Only three of these studies exploit a longitudinal dimension to explore the fit perceptions-  
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42 engagement link (Ho and Astakhova, 2018; Lu *et al.*, 2014; Sortheix *et al.*, 2013), leaving a  
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44 need for additional research.  
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51 This study verifies and extends these eleven recent studies in three ways. First, it focuses  
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53 on work engagement (WE) as the measure of engagement. WE has strengths and weaknesses  
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55 as a measure, but it has been widely validated, and it features in the majority of engagement  
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57 studies to date (Byrne *et al.*, 2016: 1202). Furthermore, WE was used in seven of the 11 previous  
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5 studies on the fit-engagement relationship (Alfes *et al.*, 2016; Kimura, 2011; Lu *et al.*, 2014;  
6 Maden-Eyiusta, 2016; Sortheix *et al.*, 2013; Viljevac *et al.*, 2012; Warr and Inceoglu, 2012).

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9 Our selection of WE ensures the greatest possible comparability with prior work.

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12 The second contribution of this study arises from the inclusion of person-organization fit  
13 (PO fit) and person-job fit (PJ fit) in the same study. The notion that person-organization and  
14 person-job fit are unique and separate cognitions is well-established (Cable and DeRue, 2002;  
15 Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). Thus, it is important to measure both types of fit perceptions since  
16 they simultaneously shape employee attitudes (Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001). The omission  
17 of either would invite concerns about omitted variable bias. Only three previous engagement  
18 studies consider perceptions of both person-organization fit and at least one dimension of  
19 person-job fit in the same study [Ho and Astakhova (2018); Saks and Gruman (2011); Viljevac  
20 *et al.*, (2012)]. These studies display variety in their definitions of employee engagement and  
21 their research contexts (healthcare professionals in the USA, undergraduate students in Canada,  
22 and New Zealand call-center employees). While linkages between fit perceptions and  
23 engagement have been studied before, the small volume of quite diverse prior studies means  
24 that further efforts to verify and extend these studies represent a contribution to knowledge.

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42 Third, this study is the first to hypothesize and empirically investigate the mediating  
43 roles of job satisfaction (JS) and affective commitment (AC) in the fit perceptions-WE  
44 relationship. None of the previous eleven studies have considered the potential impact of these  
45 employee attitudes on the fit-engagement relationship. Most previous studies investigate a  
46 direct relationship between fit perceptions and engagement, with the exception of Lu *et al.*  
47 (2014) which focuses on the mediating role of job crafting in the relationship from WE to PJ  
48 fit. JS and AC are widely researched work attitudes in relation to both person-organization and  
49 person-job fit perceptions (Cable and De Rue, 2002; Greguras and Diefendorff, 2009; Leung  
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5 and Chaturvedi, 2011). However, the relative magnitudes of the relationships among fit  
6 perceptions, JS and AC remain unclear (Verquer *et al.*, 2003). Some studies argue that person-  
7 organization fit is more strongly linked to organizational level attitudes, such as AC, while  
8 person-job fit is more likely to be related to job-level work attitudes, such as JS (e.g. Cable and  
9 De Rue, 2002; Kristof, 1996), but other studies remain silent on the issue of relative magnitudes  
10 (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Leung and  
11 Chaturvedi, 2011; Piasentin and Chapman, 2007). A recent study by Yu (2016) indicates that  
12 the research on links between fit and JS is fragmented and needs further empirical testing. By  
13 considering JS and AC as mediators in the fit perceptions-WE relationship, this study deepens  
14 our understanding of the set of direct relationships discussed by the eleven recent studies  
15 identified above. Finally, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about which fit type is  
16 more strongly linked to JS and/or to AC.

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33 This study uses a two-wave study design in which measurements of WE occur 12  
34 months after measurements of PO fit and PJ fit. This research design mitigates possible  
35 concerns regarding the effect of common method variance on measurements of the fit  
36 perceptions-WE relationship. The design provides opportunities to verify and extend some of  
37 the findings of previous studies regarding links between fit perceptions and engagement, as  
38 well as making unique contributions to our understanding of potential mediation of these  
39 relationships.

## 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 **Theoretical background**

### 51 52 *Fit perceptions*

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54 Cable and DeRue (2002) provide strong support for the existence of a three-factor model of fit:  
55 person-organization fit, and person-job fit with two dimensions (i.e. demands-abilities and  
56 needs-supplies). Person-organization (PO) fit refers to the perception of there being a general  
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5 similarity between employees' and their organization's values (Cable and DeRue, 2002).  
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7 Kristof (1996: 4-5) defines PO fit as "the compatibility between people and organizations that  
8 occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share fundamental  
9 characteristics [together], or (c) both". Employees might perceive similarity in terms of their  
10 'goals, values, beliefs, interests and dispositional traits' with organizational characteristics,  
11 such as 'goals, values, norms, culture and climate' (Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Kristof, 1996). Such  
12 perceived value similarity or PO fit enhances our understanding of how employees feel about  
13 their organization and how they will behave within it (Chatman, 1989).  
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24 Person-job (PJ) fit refers to the compatibility between an employee and his/her job  
25 (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996), for which there are two dimensions: demands-abilities and  
26 needs-supplies. Employees need to have positive fit perceptions about both the demands and  
27 supplies of a job for a high level of PJ fit to exist (Edwards, 1991). Demands-abilities fit refers  
28 to what a job requires and the capacity of an employee to meet these demands. Conversely,  
29 needs-supplies fit relates individual motives and needs with what a job provides or supplies in  
30 return for fulfilment (Cable and DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996). Employees with high PJ fit are  
31 likely to be motivated to master challenging tasks due to their belief that they have the necessary  
32 skills and abilities to perform their job (Greguras and Diefendorff, 2009). Moreover, when the  
33 organization provides the necessary resources (e.g. promotion, recognition, working  
34 conditions) to satisfy the needs of employees, employees perceive higher PJ fit (Cable and  
35 DeRue, 2002).  
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#### 51 *Fit perceptions and work engagement*

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53 WE is a positive fulfilling work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication,  
54 and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006). Employees with high vigor are energetic, mentally  
55 resilient and determined, being willing to invest consistent effort in their job. Employees with  
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5 high dedication are inspired, enthusiastic, and highly involved in their job. Moreover, those  
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7 with high absorption cannot easily detach from their surroundings, have a high degree of  
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9 concentration and a general lack of conscious awareness of the amount of time they spend on  
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11 their job.  
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14 The ability of employees to balance the demands of their jobs with available job resources  
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16 is central for employees to become engaged in their work (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).  
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18 Engaged employees are continuously motivated to acquire, protect and replace resources they  
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20 need to meet the demands of their work and work environment (Hobfoll, 2002). For employees  
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22 to have the motivation to acquire, protect and replace the resources they need to meet the  
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24 demands of their jobs, they first need to go through a ‘cognitive comparison,’ as discussed by  
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26 Cable and Edwards (2004: 823). Cable and Edwards (2004) explain that when an employee  
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28 makes a ‘cognitive comparison’ between his/her needs and what the job supplies (i.e.,  
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30 resources) as well as the abilities s/he has relative to the demands of the job, his/her fit  
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32 perceptions emerge. Such fit perceptions, in return, shape employees’ attitudes towards their  
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34 work and organization (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012). We argue that one such attitude is engagement.  
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40 Employees who perceive good fit are more willing to invest in their work and become  
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42 engaged (Crawford *et al.*, 2010). Kahn (1990) argues that employees who perceive a good fit  
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44 with their environment find more meaning in work and subsequently become more engaged.  
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46 We argue that finding such meaning requires that employees with strong fit perceptions  
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48 perceive that sufficient resources are available to meet the demands of their work and work  
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50 environment. Moreover, high perceptions of fit facilitate employee identification with the  
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52 organization as these employees better understand the expectations they face (Cable and  
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54 DeRue, 2002). Such identification and understanding facilitates employee contributions to and  
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56 engagement with work (Leiter and Bakker, 2010). Such willingness to invest in work is quite  
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5 naturally captured within the WE concept as engaged employees are characterized as having  
6 high energy capacity, enthusiasm and intense involvement in their work (Leiter and Bakker,  
7 2010). Therefore, in line with previous studies, we hypothesize that:

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15 **Hypothesis 1:** Employees' fit perceptions (both organization and job – time 1) are positively  
16 related to their WE (time 2).

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21 *Job satisfaction and affective commitment*

22 JS and AC constitute the primary attitudes demonstrating employees' perceptions about their  
23 work and work environment (Thompson, 2011). JS is an employee's subjective evaluation of  
24 his/her job, occurring as a result of the comparison of what is perceived and what is desired  
25 from a job (Locke, 1976). AC is the psychological attachment an employee has to his/her  
26 organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990).

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Prior research demonstrates that employees need to feel they possess the competencies  
their job requires and hold values congruent with the values of the organization to feel  
satisfaction and organizational attachment (O'Reilly *et al.*, 1991). Employees with strong fit  
perceptions better understand job and organizational expectations (Bretz and Judge, 1994).  
When employees understand and share expectations of their work environment they are more  
likely to respond with positive work-related attitudes (Gregory *et al.*, 2010). Meta-analytic  
reviews demonstrate that employees who experience organizational 'fit' feel more satisfied  
with their jobs and become emotionally attached (e.g., AC) to their organizations (Kristof-  
Brown *et al.*, 2005; Verquer *et al.*, 2003).

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*Dual mediation of fit perceptions-work engagement relationship*

WE is distinct from JS and AC (Macey and Schneider, 2008; Yalabik *et al.*, 2013), but  
there is debate about the causal relationships between these concepts. Some studies view JS and

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5 AC as outcomes of engagement (Saks, 2006), while other studies view them as antecedents  
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7 (Yalabik *et al.*, 2013). We conceptualize JS and AC as antecedents of WE for several reasons.  
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9 First, JS and AC, as attitudes directed at targets without specification of actions (Harrison *et*  
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11 *al.*, 2006), are both about *satiation* (i.e., fulfilled personal presence), while engagement is about  
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13 *activation* (i.e., active personal presence) (Macey and Schneider 2008: 8). Unlike JS and AC,  
14  
15 WE is a motivational concept which requires the active involvement of employees in their work  
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17 (Sonnentag *et al.*, 2010). Second, we note that burnout, as an antipode of WE, is a well-  
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19 established outcome of JS, and a similar directional relationship between JS and WE is  
20  
21 reasonably expected. Finally, Yalabik *et al.* (2013) report longitudinal evidence demonstrating  
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23 that ‘antecedent models’ fit significantly better than ‘outcome’ models. These three reasons  
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25 support the conceptualization of JS and AC as antecedents of WE.  
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31 Furthermore, similarities in the natures of the discussions in both the fit and engagement  
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33 literatures indicate that JS and AC may mediate the relationship between fit perceptions and  
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35 WE. As discussed above, fit perceptions drive JS and AC (Verquer *et al.*, 2003). We also note  
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37 our reading of the WE literature placing JS and AC as antecedents of WE (Yalabik *et al.*, 2013).  
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39 Taken together, these literatures imply that when employees feel their job fits their capabilities  
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41 and expectations, and when employee values fit with company values, employees are likely to  
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43 experience job satisfaction and emotional attachment to the organization. These feelings of  
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45 satisfaction and commitment will, in turn, inspire resilience, involvement, dedication and high  
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47 levels of work activity. In other words, when employees understand the expectations (i.e.  
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49 values, demands and supplies) of their work environment and believe that they have the  
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51 necessary attributes (i.e. abilities, needs and values) to manage these expectations, they  
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53 experience satisfaction and commitment which increases their willingness to invest in their  
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55 work. Therefore, we hypothesize that:  
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6 **Hypothesis 2:** The relationship between PO fit and WE is dual-mediated by JS and AC.  
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9 **Hypothesis 3:** The relationship between PJ fit and WE is dual-mediated by JS and AC.  
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12 *Relative strength of fit perceptions effects*  
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14 Having hypothesized that relationships between fit perceptions and WE will be dual-mediated  
15 by JS and AC, we now consider the relative magnitudes of these effects. This information will  
16 help clarify the theoretical underpinnings of the relationship and may inform the design of  
17 practical interventions targeted on engagement.  
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23 In the current literature, the relationships between PO fit, PJ fit, JS and AC are discussed  
24 in two ways. One set of studies posits that both PO and PJ fit perceptions are positively related  
25 to JS and AC while remaining silent regarding the relative magnitudes of these effects (Chen *et*  
26 *al.*, 2016; Gregory *et al.*, 2010; Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Leung and Chaturvedi, 2011;  
27 Piasentin and Chapman, 2007). A second set of studies notes differences in the ‘units of  
28 analysis’ of the constructs, with both AC and PO fit focused on the organization as the focal  
29 unit of analysis while JS and PJ fit focus at job-level. Attitudes focused on the same unit of  
30 analysis are expected to be more strongly linked with each other (Cable and DeRue, 2002;  
31 Kristof, 1996; Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Verquer *et al.*, 2003). Empirical evidence  
32 demonstrates that PO fit is a positive predictor of AC (e.g. Greguras and Diefendorff, 2009;  
33 O’Reilly *et al.*, 1991; Piasentin and Chapman, 2007). There is support for PJ fit as a positive  
34 predictor of JS (Leung and Chaturvedi, 2011), with some authors arguing that PJ fit is related  
35 to JS, but not AC, while PO fit is related to AC, but not JS (Giauque *et al.*, 2014). This study  
36 provides an opportunity to extend this discussion through comparison of the strength of the  
37 relationships of both types of fit perception to JS and AC.  
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57 We argue that employees who feel satisfied with their job are those who experience higher  
58 levels of fit between their jobs and their personal needs and values. Employees who feel that  
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5 their job satisfies their personal values are more likely to make positive job evaluations.  
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8 However, those whose values are in line with their company's values (PO fit) might not  
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10 necessarily experience JS. For example, an employee may perceive value arising from  
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12 organizational justice, but this does not mean that he/she will like his/her job simply because  
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14 fair procedures exist. Indeed, employees may be willing to compromise on some levels of  
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16 organizational justice in favor of beneficial job characteristics (and *vice versa*). In contrast, if  
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18 there is justice in the organization, an individual who values justice is more likely to develop  
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20 an emotional attachment to the organization and be more willing to retain membership. Hence,  
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22 we argue that PJ fit is more strongly related to job-related attitudes such as JS, while PO fit is  
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24 more strongly related to organization-level attitudes, such as AC. Accordingly, we hypothesize  
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26 that:  
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33 **Hypothesis 4:** Employees' perceptions of their fit with their organization are more strongly  
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35 related to their AC than to their JS.  
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39 **Hypothesis 5:** Employees' perceptions of their fit with their jobs are more strongly related to  
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41 their JS than to their AC.  
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## 46 **Method**

### 47 *Sample and procedure*

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50 The data for the current study come from a UK bank. They were collected from employees  
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52 performing administrative duties in a division focused on the sale of a variety of mortgage and  
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54 mortgage-linked products. One key function of these employees was the processing of  
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56 applications for self-certification mortgages gathered throughout the branch network, rather  
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58 than activities involving direct contact with customers. All 520 employees in the division  
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5 received the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 73% (377 responses). A second wave,  
6 distributed one year later, yielded 199 employees whose responses could be matched with the  
7 first wave. The mean age of those in the final sample is 34.4 years, women comprise 56 percent  
8 of the sample, 29 percent of respondents have a university degree and the average length of  
9 company service is 5.2 years. Errors and omissions in responses generated some missing data  
10 in the final sample, but analyses of missing values revealed no pattern.  
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19 We provided a pre-paid envelope to enable the confidential direct return of  
20 questionnaires. The instrument asked employees to provide their employee number to enable  
21 matching of responses from the two survey waves. Given the importance of repeat responses,  
22 we provided a modest cash award to three randomly selected employees at the end of the second  
23 wave. Such incentives have been shown to facilitate participation and data quality without  
24 leading to bias (Newby *et al.*, 2003: 166). Consistent with this literature, our analyses suggest  
25 that the profiles of the responses from those who declined to provide an employee number  
26 (4.5%) were similar to those who complied.  
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### 37 *Measures*

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39 The analyses included in this study made use of five latent variables constructed from the survey  
40 data. PO fit, PJ fit, JS and AC were measured at time 1, whilst WE was measured at time 2.  
41 This structure allowed exploration of the correlates of WE absent this source of common  
42 method variance.  
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49 *WE.* WE was measured by the nine-item Utrecht WE Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli *et al.*,  
50 2006). Each dimension, i.e. vigor, dedication and absorption, was measured by three items on  
51 a seven-point Likert scale. These items constitute a single latent factor in our analyses and the  
52 Cronbach's alpha for the overall WE scale was 0.94.  
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58 *PO fit.* The degree of fit between employees and their organizations was measured using  
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5 three survey items developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). This measure has been used in  
6 multiple studies and consistently been associated with the other attitudinal measures employed  
7 in this study. It exhibited strong reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91). A sample item is, "The  
8 things that I value in life are very similar to the things that <the organization> values."  
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14 *PJ fit.* We deployed six questions, also from Cable and DeRue (2002), to measure the  
15 degree of fit between employees and their jobs. The items reflect both needs-supplies and  
16 demands-abilities dimensions of PJ fit. Sample items include, "The attributes that I look for in  
17 a job are fulfilled very well by my present job" and "The match is very good between the  
18 demands of my job and my personal skills." This measure of overall PJ-fit exhibited high  
19 reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.92).  
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29 *JS.* JS was measured with a three-item scale designed to measure overall JS which  
30 appears in the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann *et al.*, 1983). A  
31 seven-point Likert scale was used for the responses. An example question is "All in all, I am  
32 satisfied with my job." Reliability was strong (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89).  
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38 *AC.* Allen and Meyer's (1990) six-item scale of AC was adopted to evaluate the  
39 commitment of employees to their organization. Similar to WE and JS, a seven-point Likert  
40 scale was used. Two sample questions are: "The company has a great deal of personal meaning  
41 for me"; and "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with the company".  
42 Reliability was strong (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88).  
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## 50 **Results**

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52 Table 1 shows descriptive statistics for the variables in the study. The correlation between WE  
53 and PJ fit is 0.57 and that between WE and PO fit is 0.51. These results suggest value in deeper  
54 analysis. Table 2 presents fit statistics based on confirmatory factor analysis of nine non-nested  
55 measurement models to aid assessment of the factor structure of the data collected. These  
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5 models, and the structural equation models that follow, were all fit using the MLM estimator in  
6 MPlus as this estimator is robust to the lack of multivariate normality evident in our data.  
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10 Model 1 in Table 2 is a simple three-factor model including PO fit, PJ fit and WE. This  
11 model displays an RMSEA of 0.044, a CFI of 0.984 and an SRMR of 0.051. Comparison of  
12 these values with relevant benchmarks indicates that this model fits well, and it provides a  
13 foundation for further exploration. We test Hypothesis 1 by estimating a structural model based  
14 on this measurement model in which PO fit and PJ fit have direct pathways to WE. We find  
15 significant standardized links to WE from PO fit (0.194,  $p < 0.01$ ) and from PJ fit (0.538,  $p <$   
16 0.01). These results confirm, for the first time in a single study, the existence of links to WE  
17 from both PO fit and PJ fit, and support Hypothesis 1.  
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30 \*\*\*Table 1\*\*\*  
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32 \*\*\*Table 2\*\*\*  
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36 Models 2 and 3 focus on the assumed antecedent and mediator variables. Model 2, a  
37 single-factor approach, fits substantially worse than the four-factor solution posited in Model  
38 3. Model 4 extends the analysis to include WE. This five-factor model establishes the baseline  
39 for evaluation of alternatives. Model 5 forces the measures of PO fit and PJ fit into a single  
40 factor, whereas Model 6 forces JS and AC into a single factor. Model 7 forces the measures of  
41 PJ fit and JS into a single factor, while Model 8 forces all of the mediator and outcome variables  
42 into a single factor. Finally, Model 9 forces a single factor for all of the studied constructs.  
43 Model 4 displays the lowest values of AIC, BIC, Satorra-Bentler  $\chi^2$ , RMSEA and SRMR as  
44 well as the highest value of CFI. These values are indicative of good fit. Direct comparison of  
45 the BIC values for non-nested models is possible, and we note that the difference between the  
46 BIC of Model 4 and its nearest rival (Model 7) is 75.814 exceeds the threshold value of 10  
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5 identified in Raftery (1995: 139). These comparisons demonstrate that Model 4 is the most  
6 appropriate target for further analysis.  
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10 Table 2 also presents the fit statistics for a series of nine structural equation models  
11 (Models 10–18). Each of these uses the five-factor structure of Model 4, but they differ in the  
12 restrictions imposed on the pathways between these five factors to produce diagnostic  
13 comparisons of the fit of nested models. Model 10, shown diagrammatically in Figure 1, reflects  
14 the hypotheses of the paper and is used as the benchmark for comparison with the nested models  
15 that follow (Models 11–18) using Satorra-Bentler  $\Delta\chi^2$  statistics, as indicated by the nature of  
16 our data and subsequent use of the MLM estimator.  
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26 The fit of Model 10 is consistent with established norms of good fit, with an RMSEA of  
27 0.047, CFI of 0.967 and SRMR of 0.053. Figure 1 presents the standardized coefficients of  
28 Model 10. The six pathways linking the factors of Model 10 are positive and significant ( $p <$   
29 0.01), thus providing a solid foundation for further analysis.  
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37 \*\*\*Figure 1\*\*\*  
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39 Model 10 includes no direct effects from PO fit and PJ fit to WE, and we test Hypotheses  
40 2 and 3 by evaluating the impact of including these direct effects. We fail to reject the null  
41 hypothesis that Model 10 fits as well as a model allowing a direct effect from PO fit to WE  
42 (Model 11) as the Satorra-Bentler scaled  $\Delta\chi^2$  statistic is only 1.031 (relative to a  $p < 0.05$  critical  
43 value of 3.84). We also fail to reject the null hypothesis that Model 10 fits as well as a model  
44 allowing a direct effect from PJ fit to WE (Model 12) as the Satorra-Bentler scaled  $\Delta\chi^2$  statistic  
45 comparing these two models is only 2.000. We also test a model including both of these direct  
46 effects (Model 13), and the insignificant Satorra-Bentler scaled  $\Delta\chi^2$  statistic (2.474) completes  
47 our demonstration that the model embodying the dual-mediation hypothesized in this paper fits  
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5 as well as models allowing direct effects to WE from one or both of PO fit and PJ fit. The  
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7 insignificance of these inferential statistics supports the selection of the most parsimonious of  
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9 these four models, Model 10. We also note the significance of each of the path coefficients  
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11 evident in Figure 1 as well as the significance ( $p < 0.01$ ) of the indirect effects to WE via AC  
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13 (0.214 for PO fit and 0.241 for PJ fit) and the indirect effects to WE via JS (0.067 for PO fit  
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15 and 0.227 for PJ fit). The standardized total effect of PO fit on WE via both AC and JS is 0.281  
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17 and the analogous total effect of PJ fit on WE is 0.469. Both of these effects are significantly  
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19 different from zero ( $p < 0.01$ ). None of the path coefficients directly linking PO fit or PJ fit to  
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21 WE are significantly different from zero in Models 10-12. These results support Hypotheses 2  
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23 and 3.

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28 While all of the path coefficients displayed in Figure 1 are positive and significantly  
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30 different from zero, they differ in magnitude. We test the significance of these differences  
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32 relative to Hypothesis 4 by comparing the fit of our benchmark (Model 10) with a model in  
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34 which the effects of PJ fit on AC and JS are constrained to be equal (Model 14). Model 14 fits  
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36 significantly less well than Model 10, allowing us to reject the null hypothesis that these effects  
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38 are the same size and leading us to conclude that the link from PJ fit to AC is weaker than that  
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40 from PJ fit to JS ( $p < 0.05$ ). Similarly, we can conclude that the link from PO fit to AC is  
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42 stronger than the link from PO fit to JS by comparison of the fit of Model 10 with the fit of  
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44 Model 15, where we constrain the effects from PJ fit to AC and JS to be equal ( $p < 0.01$ ). We  
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46 also checked whether there was evidence that the effect of PO fit on WE operated exclusively  
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48 through AC and whether the effect of PJ fit on WE operated exclusively through JS, and Models  
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50 16-18 address these issues. We note that these models all fit significantly worse than Model 10,  
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52 allowing us to discount the conjecture that PO fit operates entirely via AC, or that PJ fit operates  
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54 entirely via JS. These results give strong support for Hypotheses 4 and 5.  
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## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine links between fit perceptions and work engagement, as well as whether levels of employees' satisfaction and commitment play a role in these fit-engagement links. Our findings indicate that the hypothesized relationships are all positive and significant. We found that employees experiencing high levels of PO and PJ fit are more likely to feel satisfied with their job and feel affectively committed to their organization. Furthermore, employees with high levels of satisfaction and commitment are actively engaged in their work.

Our findings also indicate that relationships with fit perceptions differ substantially in magnitude. We find that the link from PJ fit to JS is stronger than the link from PJ fit to AC while the link from PO fit to AC is stronger than the relationship from PO fit to JS. These findings support opinions in the current literature indicating that the relationship between attitudes focused on the same unit of analysis will be more strongly linked with each other (Cable and DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996; Lauver and Kristof-Brown, 2001; Verquer *et al.*, 2003).

Our study deepens our understanding of the fit perceptions-WE relationship in several ways. Our study demonstrates the existence of links to WE from both PO fit and PJ fit, and finds that these links from PO fit and PJ fit to WE are dual-mediated by JS and AC. We find that this dual-mediation is full rather than partial, as we see no evidence supporting the significance of the direct effects on WE of either PO fit or PJ fit once the mediators are included in the analysis.

### *Theoretical and practical implications*

The contributions of this study build on a small body of recent evidence accumulated on the fit perceptions-WE relationship. Fit perceptions concern the employees' constant evaluation of the availability of resources existing in their work environment (Wheeler *et al.*, 2012). Fit

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6 perceptions get stronger if employees believe that they possess sufficient resources to deal with  
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8 their job demands. The WE literature also shows that WE occurs when employees balance  
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10 resources and demands of their work environment. However, before being able to balance the  
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12 resources and demands of a work environment, it is important that employees believe that they  
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14 possess the necessary abilities and values and that they experience needs fulfillment. When  
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16 employees perceive that they fit, they are more likely to invest in their work, thus becoming  
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18 more engaged.  
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21 This study shows that perceptions of fit engender positive work-related attitudes in the  
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23 form of satisfaction and commitment that eventually manifest in employees who feel more  
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25 engaged with their work. Given that employee engagement is positively linked to individual  
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27 and organizational performance (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Christian *et al.*, 2011),  
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29 organizations should consider the fit of employees to their jobs and to the organization.  
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31 According to Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001), employees who fit the organization well, but  
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33 do not fit the job, will not contribute to organizational performance. In line with their argument,  
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35 selection and recruitment practices should aim to employ individuals experiencing both types  
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37 of fit. Moreover, organizations should offer realistic job previews that will shape the fit  
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39 perceptions of the employees. For employees continuing their employment, organizations need  
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41 to create and maintain high levels of fit to both the organization and the job. Available tools  
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43 include job design, organization specific training programs, listening to employees' voice and  
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45 providing employees with feedback and performance appraisal.  
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51 Finally, the significant differences in the magnitudes of the coefficients identified in this  
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53 study suggest synergies between fit-based interventions and other company strategies. For  
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55 example, interventions based on PJ fit are likely to positively interact with organizational  
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57 strategies designed to enhance job satisfaction (e.g., increased autonomy, improvements to  
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work environments and efforts to reduce deadline-related stress). Conversely, interventions based on PO fit are likely to interact positively with organizational strategies designed to enhance AC (e.g., promotion opportunities, team building and investments in strong organizational branding and culture). It would be unfortunate if an organization were to make significant investments in a program designed to increase one dimension of fit only to find that these efforts were nullified by other organizational policies that undermined job satisfaction or affective commitment.

### *Limitations*

This study has limitations that suggest opportunities for further work. This study uses self-reported measures that raise the prospect of common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). The potential effects of common method variance on the hypothesized relationships with WE were minimized by our design, but future work could similarly separate the mediators from the measures of fit perceptions. Additionally, this study uses data collected from a UK bank, and replication of in different contexts is warranted. Finally, we encourage researchers to identify opportunities to implement longitudinal designs to facilitate conceptualization and to test dynamic mediated relationships. Costly investments in longitudinal designs carry risks, but these appear warranted as these investments would allow assessment of more nuanced hypotheses regarding the dynamic relationships between a number of recognized employee attitudes and WE.

### **Conclusion**

This study expands our knowledge of the ways fit perceptions shape WE by including JS and AC as mediators. This investigation of the ways in which employee-level factors influence WE improves our understanding of the antecedents of WE, augmenting previous efforts focused on

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5 organization-level explanations of WE. We encourage further exploration of employee-level  
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7 antecedents of engagement as a way of understanding why sets of practices that are common  
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9 across any given organization lead to the evident variety of engagement levels amongst  
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11 employees.  
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**Table 1**  
Descriptive statistics.

| Variables                    | Mean | SD   | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       | 5      |
|------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. PO Fit (T1)               | 3.94 | 1.21 | (0.91)  |         |         |         |        |
| 2. PJ Fit (T1)               | 4.25 | 1.31 | 0.55 ** | (0.93)  |         |         |        |
| 3. Affective Commitment (T1) | 3.95 | 1.12 | 0.65 ** | 0.62 ** | (0.85)  |         |        |
| 4. Job Satisfaction (T1)     | 4.91 | 1.30 | 0.61 *  | 0.77 ** | 0.70 ** | (0.89)  |        |
| 5. Work Engagement (T2)      | 4.32 | 1.28 | 0.51 ** | 0.57 ** | 0.64 ** | 0.61 ** | (0.94) |

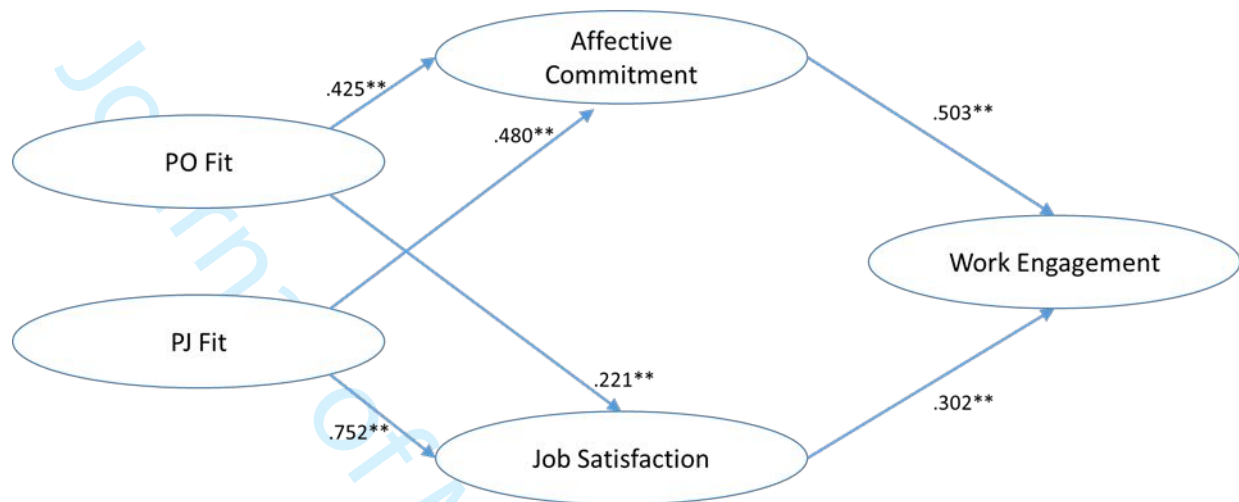
SD = standard deviation. Cronbach's Alpha in parentheses. Pearson correlations and significance levels reported off the main diagonal. \*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 2**  
Model fit statistics associated with measurement and structural models.

| Model                     | Factor structure                          | AIC       | BIC       | Satorra-Bentler $\chi^2$ | df  | Satorra-Bentler scaled $\Delta\chi^2$ | RMSEA | 90 LO | 90 HIGH | CFI   | SRMR  |
|---------------------------|---|-----------|-----------|--------------------------|-----|---------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|-------|-------|
| <i>Measurement models</i> |   |           |           |                          |     |                                       |       |       |         |       |       |
| 1                         | POfit   PJfit   WE                        | 9194.451  | 9416.655  | 162.213                  | 123 |                                       | 0.044 | 0.024 | 0.060   | 0.984 | 0.051 |
| 2                         | POfit PJfit JS AC                         | 9978.559  | 10162.119 | 597.603                  | 135 |                                       | 0.138 | 0.127 | 0.149   | 0.789 | 0.079 |
| 3                         | POfit   PJfit   JS   AC                   | 9506.082  | 9708.964  | 183.040                  | 129 |                                       | 0.049 | 0.033 | 0.065   | 0.974 | 0.051 |
| 4                         | POfit   PJfit   JS   AC   WE              | 14088.747 | 14420.444 | 419.279                  | 314 |                                       | 0.046 | 0.035 | 0.056   | 0.969 | 0.051 |
| 5                         | POfit PJfit   JS   AC   WE                | 14414.894 | 14733.709 | 713.037                  | 318 |                                       | 0.085 | 0.077 | 0.093   | 0.892 | 0.066 |
| 6                         | POfit   PJfit   JS AC   WE                | 14181.247 | 14500.062 | 507.208                  | 318 |                                       | 0.060 | 0.050 | 0.069   | 0.947 | 0.057 |
| 7                         | POfit   PJfit JS   AC   WE                | 14163.896 | 14482.711 | 492.725                  | 318 |                                       | 0.057 | 0.048 | 0.067   | 0.951 | 0.054 |
| 8                         | POfit   PJfit   JS AC WE                  | 14334.754 | 14643.909 | 648.985                  | 321 |                                       | 0.077 | 0.069 | 0.085   | 0.910 | 0.076 |
| 9                         | POfit PJfit JS AC WE                      | 14734.332 | 15033.825 | 1006.909                 | 324 |                                       | 0.110 | 0.102 | 0.117   | 0.816 | 0.089 |
| <i>Structural models</i>  |   |           |           |                          |     |                                       |       |       |         |       |       |
| 10                        | Full mediation                            | 14095.400 | 14417.435 | 430.915                  | 317 | -                                     | 0.047 | 0.036 | 0.057   | 0.967 | 0.053 |
| 11                        | Allowing direct effect from POfit to WE   | 14096.404 | 14421.660 | 429.833                  | 316 | 1.031                                 | 0.047 | 0.037 | 0.057   | 0.967 | 0.054 |
| 12                        | Allowing direct effect from PJfit to WE   | 14095.692 | 14420.948 | 429.057                  | 316 | 2.000                                 | 0.047 | 0.036 | 0.057   | 0.967 | 0.053 |
| 13                        | Unconstrained model (both direct effects) | 14097.148 | 14425.624 | 428.370                  | 315 | 2.474                                 | 0.047 | 0.036 | 0.057   | 0.967 | 0.054 |
| 14                        | Equality of POfit paths to AC and JS      | 14097.603 | 14416.418 | 434.787                  | 318 | 4.253 *                               | 0.048 | 0.037 | 0.058   | 0.966 | 0.056 |
| 15                        | Equality of PJfit paths to AC and JS      | 14104.908 | 14423.723 | 440.858                  | 318 | 8.934 **                              | 0.049 | 0.038 | 0.059   | 0.964 | 0.058 |
| 16                        | POfit to AC only and PJfit to JS only     | 14136.975 | 14452.570 | 470.900                  | 319 | 38.547 **                             | 0.054 | 0.044 | 0.063   | 0.957 | 0.072 |
| 17                        | POfit to AC only. PJfit to both JS and AC | 14135.536 | 14454.351 | 469.837                  | 318 | 174.960 **                            | 0.054 | 0.044 | 0.063   | 0.957 | 0.096 |
| 18                        | POfit to both JS and AC. PJfit to JS only | 14108.432 | 14427.247 | 443.930                  | 318 | 11.643 **                             | 0.049 | 0.039 | 0.059   | 0.964 | 0.059 |

POfit = Person Organization Fit. PJfit = Person Job Fit. JS = Job Satisfaction. AC = Affective commitment. WE = Work Engagement. Factor structures assumed are indicated using | symbol. For example, Model 2 is a one-factor model while Model 3 is a four-factor model. Structural models based on factor structure of Model 4. Path references relate to Figure 1. Models 16–18 impose restrictions on the impacts of the antecedent variables (PJfit and POfit) on the mediating variables (AC and JS). All models were fit using the MLM estimator in MPlus.

**Figure 1.**  
Standardized regression weights associated with Model 10 of Table 2 (full mediation)



\*  $p < 0.05$ . \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .