

# The Role of Person-Organization Value Fit in Employees' Experience of Meaningful Work, Use of Strengths and Work Engagement

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## Abstract

Research in the field of management, in particular human resource management (HRM), increasingly highlights the importance of person-organization value fit. Adding to this growing body of research, this study examines the complex relation between person-organization value fit, employees' perceptions of work, employees' behavior at work and their well-being. More precisely, we hypothesize that person-organization value fit has a positive relationship with employees' work engagement (well-being) via both the experience of meaningful work (perceptions) and the use of their strengths at work (behavior). We conducted a structural equation modeling on a sample of 1050 employees working in various occupations, organizations, and industries in The Netherlands. The results provided support for the proposed model, indicating an important role for person-organization value fit in the

on-going pursuit of meaningful work and well-being at work. The insights provided in this study do not only contribute theoretically; they are also helpful for managers and HR professionals in optimizing human resource management policies and practices.

**Keywords:** Person-Organization value fit, Meaningful work, Strengths use, Work engagement, Structural equation modeling

## 1. Introduction

A common practice in recruitment and selection is assessing a candidate's job-person fit, based on the idea that the person with the best fit will perform the best. Attention to the fit between a person and the organization itself during recruitment processes is shown to be relevant for applicant perceptions and attitudes as well (Swider, Zimmerman & Barrick, 2014), yet is less emphasized in recruitment procedures (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). Person-organization fit is an important factor in how employees feel and behave in organizations (e.g. Kilroy, Flood, Bosak, & Chênevert, 2017; Ünal & Turgut, 2015; Verquer et al., 2003) and how they perform (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof et al., 2005). Person-organization fit is commonly defined as the degree to which organizations fulfill the needs of, and share fundamental characteristics with, individual employees (Kristof, 1996). It is important for organizations to attract and employ people who have matching values and goals: research has shown that such employees have a lower intention to leave (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006) – which is especially relevant in tight labor market conditions - and demonstrate higher work engagement (Kilroy et al., 2017; Ünal & Turgut, 2015). This is becoming more relevant especially as jobs and the way in which people work change rapidly, due to for instance digitalization, globalization, and the development towards sustainability and the circular economy (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Person organization fit is shown to impact several attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kilroy, Flood, Bosak, & Chênevert, 2017; Kristof et al., 2005; Ünal & Turgut, 2015; Verquer et al., 2003). Though the outcomes of person-organization fit, in particular work engagement, have been studied quite extensively already, we know relatively little about how person-organization fit impacts employees' work behavior and well-being. The aim of this study therefore is to gain a better understanding of this relationship. Specifically, we explore how person-organization value fit (when an employee holds the same values as the organization) is related to the degree to which employees perceive their work as meaningful and employ their own talents and strengths, which in turn impacts the degree to which they feel engaged in their jobs. In the following chapter we elaborate on the theoretical underpinnings of this study, and then go into the methodology and findings. We finish with a discussion of the main theoretical, methodological and practical implications of the study.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Person-Organization (Value) Fit

The conceptualization of person-organization (P-O) fit that is most often used in research is value congruence, which is the degree to which organizations' and employees' values match with one another, i.e. whether an employee holds the same values as the organization he or she works for (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). For example, a policy officer with a passion for sustainability working for a municipality, may attribute the same values to and feel a good value fit with her organization, when the municipality has

sustainable energy policies in place. Studies have shown that value fit is strongly related to attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Kristof et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003). In this study we therefore look specifically at P-O value fit.

Several outcomes of P-O fit have been established through a variety of quantitative reviews. These studies have shown that P-O fit has a moderate positive relationship with job satisfaction, organizational commitment (Kristof et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003), task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof et al., 2005), and a moderate negative relationship with turnover intentions (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003) and strain (Kristof et al., 2005). Indicators of employee well-being such as work engagement and burnout have also been related to P-O fit positively and negatively, respectively (e.g., Kilroy, Flood, Bosak, & Chênevert, 2017; Ünal & Turgut, 2015). Based on these findings, P-O fit seems to significantly predict various aspects of employee behavior, well-being, and performance. Specifically, we anticipate a strong relationship between value fit and employees' perceptions of meaningful work and use of their own strengths, which will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

## *2.2 Value Fit and Meaningful Work*

Consider the policy officer mentioned above: working in an organization that aspires to be sustainable in its operations and implementation of policies, we expect the employee to feel she is doing work that is meaningful to her as well as others. Meaningful work is work that is experienced as particularly significant and holding positive meaning for an individual (Rosso et al., 2010, p. 95). Work is meaningful when the purpose to work exceeds extrinsic outcomes alone (e.g., Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). Meaningful work can be either social (fulfilling needs of others) or personal (fulfilling needs of the self) (Anuradha et al., 2014).

Meaningful work is important for both individual employees and their organizations. Studies have shown that the perception of meaningful work is negatively related to intention to leave (Fouché et al., 2017; Janik & Rothmann, 2015), and positively related to employees' creativity (Akgunduz et al., 2018), job performance (Frieder et al., 2018; Kosfeld et al., 2017; Fouché et al., 2017; Chadi et al., 2016) and job satisfaction (Duffy, Autin & Bott, 2015). An employee's perception of a job as meaningful has also been shown to be (directly or indirectly) positively related to how engaged he or she feels in the job (Van Wingerden, Van der Stoep & Poell, 2018; Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2017; Demirtas et al., 2017; Bailey et al, 2017a; Fouché et al., 2017; Jung & Yoon, 2016; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; Geldenhuys, Laba & Venter, 2014; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004) and to their happiness (Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2017).

The relationship between P-O value fit and experiencing meaningful work is not well-researched yet. Meaningful work and P-O value fit have been linked to well-being as independent mediators (e.g., Duffy, Autin, & Bott, 2015); to our knowledge, however, no research has investigated the possibility that P-O fit directly predicts meaningfulness of work.

We expect such a relationship to exist because research has shown that other ‘fits’ – between organizational demands and employee abilities, and between needs and supplies (Tims, Derks & Bakker, 2016), person - environment fit (Duffy et al., 2015), and work-role fit (Janik & Rothmann, 2015) – also relate to employees’ perceptions of meaningfulness in work. Moreover, P-O fit refers to a collective identity, a concept which has been shown to contribute to meaningfulness (Yu, 2014). Spinelli-De-Sá, Lemos and Cavazotte (2017) found that, among others, belongingness results in a sense of meaning. The policy officer working for a municipality sees sustainability as a priority in life and feels her organization does so as well, which gives her a feeling of belonging to a community of like-minded people. Seibert, Wang and Courtright (2011) stated that the experience of meaningful work indeed depends on the personal connection between an employee and his or her work. Following this, we assume that when an employee perceives a good fit between his or her own values and those of the organization, he or she will also perceive his or her work as meaningful.

### *2.3 Value Fit and Employees’ Use of Talents and Strengths*

Whereas the perception of meaningful work is an attitude, we also expect P-O value fit to positively relate to employee behavior. Specifically, we hypothesize that sharing values with the organization will encourage employees to use their own strengths and talents in their job. The policy officer, for instance, may employ her personal strengths more, because she is committed to the organization due to their shared values.

Personal strengths are, according to Wood et al. (2011), characteristics, traits, and abilities of a person that energize and allow them to perform well or at their personal best. The use of strengths has been shown in previous studies to positively relate to work engagement (Van Woerkom, Oerlemans, & Bakker, 2016; Botha & Mostert, 2014; Stander, Mostert, & de Beer, 2014) and to well-being (Wood, et al., 2011). This may be because being able to use one’s own strengths plays into one’s feelings of authenticity (Bakker & Van Woerkom 2018; Botha & Mostert 2014), intrinsic motivation (Botha & Mostert 2014), and bringing in one’s own unique input that leads to work engagement (Van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2016).

Little research has been done up to now on the relationship between P-O value fit and strengths use. On the organizational level, studies have looked at perceived support for strengths use (e.g. Botha & Mostert, 2014; Van Woerkom et al., 2016) but not at P-O fit in relation to strengths use. We expect a direct relationship between these concepts, because when the values of an employee match those of the organization, an employee will be able to live up to his or her authentic self, and behave accordingly. Moreover, an underlying mechanism could be intrinsic motivation: when an employee’s values are aligned with those of the organization, an employee may be more motivated to use his/her own strengths based on intrinsic values.

Moreover, we expect a relationship between the degree of meaningfulness employees ascribe to their job and their use of their own talents and strengths. This would mean that because the policy officer feels her job is meaningful, she is also inclined to use more of her talents in her

job. Perhaps it urges her to use her ability to inspire other colleagues to bring sustainability into their decision-making. Several studies have found relationships between the perception of meaningful work and employee behavior: meaningful work increases work effort (Kosfeld et al., 2017), positively affects people's performance and emotions (Chadi et al., 2016) and contributes to creativity (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). Though previous research has found a direct relationship between the perception of meaningful work and strengths use (Van Wingerden & Van der Stoep, 2018), further research into this relationship is still needed to test this finding. Again we argue that authenticity plays an important role: when employees experience their job as meaningful and have personal goals and values that match the organization's, they are likely to be more intrinsically motivated to behave like their authentic self and hence employ their own strengths. Additionally, meaningful work has been shown to impact other and related behavioral outcomes, such as job crafting (Van Wingerden, Van der Stoep & Poell, 2018).

#### *2.4 Employee Well-Being: Work Engagement*

Our final assumption in this study is that perceiving a fit based on shared values, feeling a sense of meaningfulness and being able to use personal talents ultimately leads to employees' work engagement. Work engagement is defined as "the positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p.295). Vigor means that employees experience high levels of energy and mental resilience at work. Dedication is characterized by high involvement and a sense of significance and joy. Absorption, lastly, implies full concentration and immersion into work. Hence, because the policy officer shares the value of sustainability with the organization, she sees her job as meaningful and employs her talents, which means she will be more vigorous, dedicated, and absorbed in her job. Work engagement has been found to be positively related to P-O fit (e.g., Kilroy, Flood, Bosak, & Chênevert, 2017; Ünal & Turgut, 2015). Our study contributes to these findings by unpacking this relationship, as summarized below.

#### *2.5 Hypothesis and Proposed Model*

In short, based on our argumentation we hypothesize: Person - organization value fit is positively related to the perception of meaningful work and the use of strengths by employees, both of which are (individually and interrelatedly) positively related to employees' work engagement. Figure 1 visualizes the proposed model tested in this study:

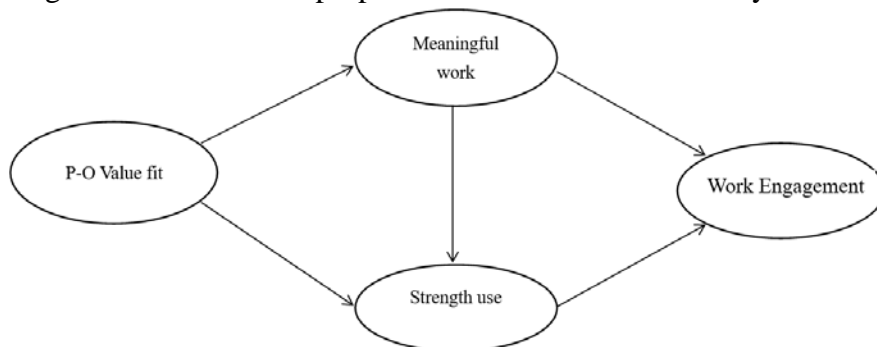


Figure 1. The Proposed Model

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Participants and Procedure

In this quantitative, cross-sectional study we collected data using an online survey, which was announced on a well-known Dutch career development website. In addition, the online link to the survey was shared via various social media channels, such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The survey was in Dutch and available for two weeks.

Data for this study were collected in line with the ethical guidelines of the Dutch Association of Psychologists and the American Psychological Association. Following the ethical guidelines, participation was voluntary, data collection through a self-report survey was exempted from an institutional ethics committee's approval, and the respondents did not receive any compensation for their contribution. By clicking on the "Finish" button at the end of the survey, informed consent was given by all participants of the study.

For this study, data was collected from a heterogeneous population, which facilitates generalization of the research findings (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). In total, 1050 people working in different Dutch organizations filled out the survey. The baseline characteristics of the study sample are presented in Table 1. A majority of the sample (58%) was male and a majority of the participants (72%) reported to possess at least a bachelor's degree. Various sectors were represented, with participants working in the public sector (23%), health care (14%), financial services (12%), education (8%), industry (8%), professional services (7%), information technology (6%), energy and infrastructure (15%), and wholesale and retail (7%).

Table 1. Baseline characteristics of the study population (N = 1050)

Characteristic	n	(%)	Characteristic	n	(%)
<i>Sex</i>			<i>Supervisory position</i>		
Women	441	42	Yes	325	31
Men	609	58	No	725	69
<i>Age</i>			<i>Education</i>		
20-35 years	179	17	High school or primary school	105	10
36-45 years	263	25	Secondary vocational education	189	18
46-55 years	378	36	Higher professional education	462	44
56-71 years	231	22	University	294	28
<i>Professional sector</i>			<i>Job tenure</i>		
Public sector	241	23	0-3 years	357	34
Healthcare	147	14	4-6 years	220	20
Finances	126	12	7-10 years	179	17
Education	84	8	11-15 years	126	12
Industry	84	8	> 15 years	168	16
Professional services	74	7			
Energy and infrastructure	157	15			
Wholesale and retail	74	7			
IT	63	6			

### *3.2 Measures*

Person-organization fit was assessed using three items (Cable & DeRue, 2002). All items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (absolutely untrue) to 5 (absolutely true). An example item is: “My personal values match my organization’s value culture”. The internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .93$ ). This scale assesses a subjective person-organization fit, specifically focused on value congruence.

Meaningful work was measured using the Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). All items were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (absolutely untrue) to 5 (absolutely true). Meaningful work was assessed with four items, including “I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning”. The internal consistency of the scale was good ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

Strength use was measured using four items of the strength use scale by Keenan and Mostert (2013), of which an example item is: “In my work I benefit from my strengths”. The scale had a seven-point response format, ranging from 1 (almost never) to 7 (almost always). The reliability analysis showed a strong internal consistency of the scale ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

Work engagement was measured using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). The instrument consists of nine items and has three subscales to assess vigor, dedication, and absorption. Examples for each subscale are “At work, I am bursting with energy” (vigor), “I am enthusiastic about my job” (dedication), and “I am immersed in my work” (absorption). Participants could respond to these items using a seven-point frequency scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always). The internal consistencies of all three components of the UWES were adequate; vigor:  $\alpha = .85$ , dedication:  $\alpha = .89$ , absorption:  $\alpha = .75$ .

### *3.3 Strategy of Analysis*

The P-O value fit and work engagement model was tested with structural equation modelling (SEM) analyses using the AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 2005). To assess the fit of the measurement model and the alternative models to the data, the traditional chi-square, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were tested. In addition, the incremental fit index (IFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI) were assessed. The values of GFI, IFI, CFI  $> .90$  and RMSEA  $< .08$  indicate a reasonable fit of the model to the data (Browne, & Cudeck, 1993; Hoyle, 1995). The using of parcels in testing structural equation modelling results in more reliable measurement models (Borsboom, Mellenbergh, & Van Heerden, 2003; Little, Cunningham, Shahar & Widaman, 2002; Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013). Therefore, we conducted the SEM analysis on a partial disaggregation model (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998) by creating parcels of items (Hall, Snell & Foust, 1999). We created parcels of items for the variables ‘Person-Organization value fit’, ‘Meaningful work’, and ‘Strengths use’, which were included in the model as latent factors with two indicators. The latent factor ‘Work engagement’ was included with the three abovementioned subscales as the indicators.



## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

An overview of the relations among all research variables and their reliabilities can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of the Means, Standard Deviations, Inter-Relations and Reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha, Diagonal), N = 1050

		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Person-Organization Value fit	4.59	1.36	(.93)					
2	Meaningful work	3.60	0.72	.56**	(.85)				
3	Strength use	3.29	0.82	.60**	.57**	(.93)			
4	Vigor	4.13	1.08	.43**	.54**	.53**	(.85)		
5	Dedication	4.46	1.19	.53**	.69**	.63**	.77**	(.89)	
6	Absorption	4.38	1.08	.31**	.44**	.40**	.66**	.68**	(.75)

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### 4.2 Hypothesis Testing

Prior to testing our proposed model, we first set out to verify the degree to which the latent variables of our model were accurately measured by their parcels. To do so we tested a measurement model using SPSS AMOS. The results showed that the measurement model had a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(21) = 125.757$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .986; TLI = .976; IFI = .986; RMSEA = .069 (see Table 3 for an overview of all tested models). In addition, all parcels had significant loadings on the intended factors (range  $\lambda = .71 - .96$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Table 3. Results for the Various Models Investigated During Hypothesis Testing.

Model	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	CFI	TLI	IFI	RMSEA
Measurement	125.757	21	< .001	.986	.976	.986	.069
Proposed	127.551	22	< .001	.986	.977	.986	.067
Alternative 1	217.489	23	< .001	.974	.959	.974	.089
Alternative 2	182.101	22	< .001	.978	.964	.978	.083
Direct effects	1154.965	24	< .001	.846	.770	.847	.211

Next, to determine the fit of the proposed model, we used SPSS AMOS again to conduct a path analysis. The results showed that the proposed model had a good fit to the data,  $\chi^2(22) = 127.551$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .986; TLI = .977; IFI = .986; RMSEA = .067. The standardized coefficients of the relations are displayed in Figure 1. Value fit positively predicted both meaningful work ( $\beta = .64$ , SE = .02,  $p < .001$ ) and strengths use ( $\beta = .44$ , SE = .02,  $p < .001$ ). Meaningful work then positively predicted both strengths use ( $\beta = .35$ , SE = .04,  $p < .001$ ) and work engagement ( $\beta = .54$ , SE = .04,  $p < .001$ ), and strengths use positively predicted work engagement ( $\beta = .33$ , SE = .03,  $p < .001$ ). We also tested the indirect effects of this model by using bootstrapping with bias-corrected confidence intervals (200 samples, 95% CI). For value fit, there was an indirect effect on strengths use ( $\beta = .22$ ; 95% CI [.17, .29]; SE = .03;  $p = .007$ ), and work engagement ( $\beta = .56$ ; 95% CI [.51, .60]; SE = .02;  $p = .026$ ). For

meaningful work, there was an indirect effect on work engagement ( $\beta = .11$ ; 95% CI [.09, .16]; SE = .02;  $p = .003$ ).

We then tested a full mediation model as an alternative to our proposed model, thus removing the direct relation between meaningful work and strengths use. This alternative model showed a mediocre fit to the data,  $\chi^2(23) = 217.489$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .974; TLI = .959; IFI = .974; RMSEA = .089. The proposed model also had a significantly better fit than the alternative model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 89.938$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Next, we tested an alternative model that used the proposed model as a basis, but swapped the positions of work engagement and meaningful work with one another. In other words, meaningful work had now become the outcome variable and work engagement had become a mediator also predicting strengths use. This alternative model showed a mediocre fit to the data,  $\chi^2(22) = 182.101$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .978; TLI = .964; IFI = .978; RMSEA = .083. Because the number of degrees of freedom for this alternative model matched those of the proposed model, a Chi-square difference test could not be used. Instead, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) was calculated to determine the relative model quality of both models, whereby a lower value indicates a higher model quality. In this case, the proposed model had a lower value (AIC = 173.551) than the second alternative model (AIC = 228.101), which means the proposed model was considered to be the preferred model.

Lastly, we also tested a direct effects model in which engagement was directly predicted by value fit, meaningful work, and strengths use simultaneously. This model showed a poor fit to the data,  $\chi^2(24) = 1154.965$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .974; TLI = .959; IFI = .974; RMSEA = .089, which was significantly worse than that of the proposed model,  $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1027.414$ ,  $p < .001$ . All these findings provide strong support for our proposed model.

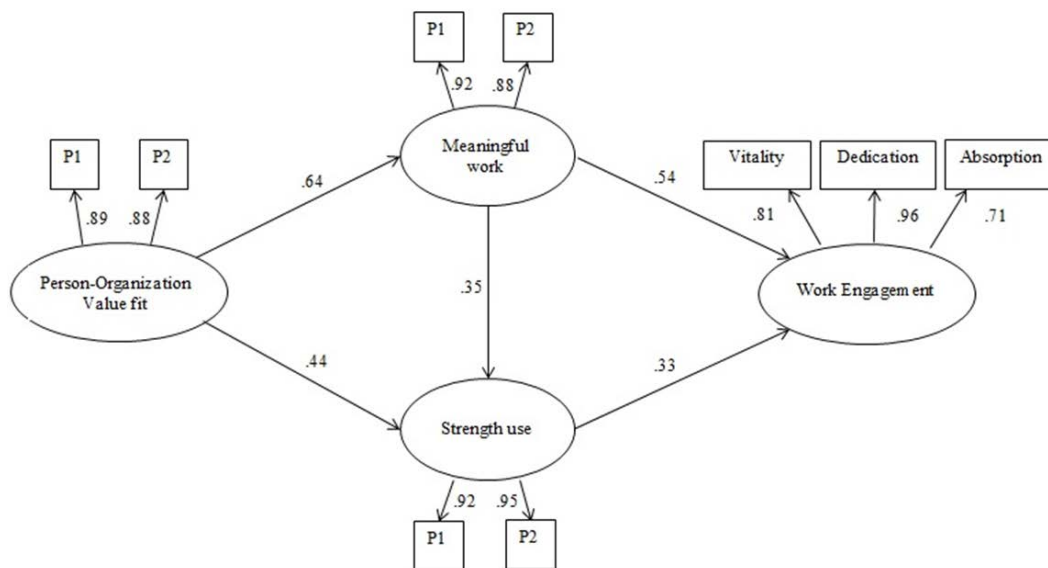


Figure 2. Results of Path Analysis for the Proposed Model. Note.  $N = 1050$ . All factor loadings and path coefficients are significant at the  $p < .001$  level

## 5. Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that P-O value fit is related to employee perceptions (experience of meaningful work), behavior (use of personal strengths), as well as well-being (work engagement). These results highlight the impact of P-O value fit within contemporary organizations: when employees hold the same values as the organization they work for, this has a positive impact on their work experience.

The outcomes of this study shed new light on the way through which P-O value fit actually affects work engagement within contemporary organizations. Although P-O fit has been studied often before (see for instance the reviews by Verquer et al., 2003; and Kristof et al., 2005), few studies examined the specific link between P-O fit and work engagement. We showed that this is not a direct relationship, but that it is mediated by meaningful work and strengths use. This means that when employees experience a fit based on shared values, they are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful, to use their personal talents, and subsequently, to be engaged in their job.

With this study we contribute to knowledge on strengths use: earlier research seems to have focused more on perceived support for strengths use than on the actual use of strengths. Although strengths use was shown to be a mediating variable in this study, its effect on work engagement was less strong than the effect of meaningful work. The reason for this finding may be that perceived support for strengths use moderates the relationship between P-O fit and strengths use. Previous studies have shown how perceived support affects the actual use of strengths (Van Woerkom, Bakker & Nishii, 2016; Van Woerkom, Oerlemans & Bakker, 2016; Stander, Mostert & De Beer, 2014). Future research is needed to better understand the relationships between P-O fit, perceived support for strengths use and actual strengths use. Additionally, the study confirmed the relationship between meaningful work and work engagement, and between strength use and work engagement.

This study provides new insights into the influence of P-O value fit on employees' perceptions, behavior and well-being. Yet, more research is needed to gain a better understanding of mechanisms underlying these relationships, for instance through the increase of intrinsic motivation (Botha & Mostert 2014) or a stronger sense of being included in the organization (Nishii, 2013) . Furthermore, future research may also examine other factors in the workplace that may influence the experience of P-O value fit, such as a climate for work engagement or perceived organizational support.

Although this study provides ample evidence for the hypothesized P-O value fit – work engagement model, there are also limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the design of the study was non-experimental and cross-sectional. Although the proposed model revealed the best fit compared to alternative models, we cannot prove causality between the constructs under study because of the cross-sectional design. To determine the causality between the variables, longitudinal research and/or diary study designs are needed. This study relied on self-report measures susceptible to self-report bias, which is a second

limitation. Although self-reports might be the best way to accurately capture the subjective measures of P-O value fit, meaningful work and work engagement (Sousa-Poza & Sousa-Poza, 2000), the results of this study should be interpreted with care. Future research might explore additional ways to measure the variables of the proposed model. For example, strengths use may be measured by the ratings of supervisors, customers or colleagues. Third, the sample consisted of Dutch employees working in different industries, which may restrict the generalizability of our findings. Future studies may examine our model among employees working in different countries and/or cultures. Finally, the survey was distributed under the name “Meaningful work and Work engagement”. This might have led to a self-selection bias as employees who do not feel a strong fit or engagement were less likely to fill out the questionnaire.

The results of this study showed that a fit between the values of an employee and those of the organization is important for an employee to experience meaningful work, use of strengths and work engagement. This has several implications for management and HR(Development) practices. First, the findings imply the importance of systematically establishing the P-O fit in recruitment and selection processes, besides assessing a candidate’s job-person fit. A common practice in recruitment and selection is assessing a candidate’s person-job fit, based on the idea that the person with an optimal fit will perform best. Attention to the fit between a person and the organization during recruitment processes has been shown to be relevant for applicant perceptions and attitudes (Swider, Zimmerman & Barrick, 2014), yet it is less emphasized in recruitment procedures (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991). Although research has found proof for an increasing congruence of perceived and actual P-O fit over time (Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004), our study suggests that having similar values from the start stimulates an employee to employ their strengths in a meaningful and engaged way.

Second, socialization processes can help to strengthen perceived P-O fit, both by new and longer-tenured employees (Cooper-Thomas, van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004). In the light of our present study, this means that management and HR can have an active role in influencing perceptions of meaningful work, strengths use and work engagement. For example, emphasizing shared values in internal on-boarding programs, in managerial communication and during interpersonal job evaluations can influence employees’ socialization and strengthen their P-O fit. Third, the findings of this study suggest that allowing employees to use their strengths will support their work engagement. From an HR perspective, this implies the importance of allocation of tasks based on individual strengths, complementary partnering with colleagues, and letting employees choose how to perform their tasks (Van Woerkom, Oerlemans, & Bakker 2016).

Research in the field of (human resource) management increasingly highlights the importance of P-O value fit. This study examined the complex linkage between P-O value fit and work engagement. We found that P-O value fit has a positive relationship with work engagement via strengths use, meaningful work, and meaningful work affecting strengths use. This

highlights the importance of P-O fit for how employees experience their work and their own contribution to the organization.

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