



ISSN: 0975-833X

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# A TEMPORATE MODEL DEVELOPMENT FOR JOB SATISFACTION AND TRAITS OF CREATIVITY AMONG ARCHITECTS IN TAMILNADU: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF PERCEPTIONS OF FIT AND SOCIAL CLIMATE IN THE THEORY OF WORK

<sup>1</sup>Saikala, L. and <sup>2</sup>Selvarani, A.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Architecture, National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli

<sup>2</sup>Jamal Institute of Management, Jamal Mohamed College Tiruchirappalli

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2013

Received in revised form

04<sup>th</sup> August, 2013

Accepted 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2013

Published online 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2013

#### Key words:

Job satisfaction, Perceptions of fit,  
Social climate, Work adjustments.

### ABSTRACT

The work lives of architects in Tamil Nadu are under-studied. The purpose of present study is to address this dearth in the literature in three ways: (i) providing descriptive data related to the work experiences of architects as employees, (ii) incorporating social climate into the theory of work adjustment, a theoretically based model that predicts employees job satisfaction and creative traits of the architects, and (iii) attempting to address methodological limitations raised in this body of literature. Self-report data were collected from architects in Tamil Nadu as employees (n=206), accessing their levels of perceptions of fit, sense of social climate, job satisfaction and creative traits. However, social climate emerged as a moderator, as hypothesized. Implications for practical and research as well as limitations are addressed.

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## INTRODUCTION

To a certain extent, every newcomer must adjust to his / her job responsibilities and work environment. In explaining work adjustment process, individuals are seen to dynamically and continuously working towards maintaining his/her suitability to the work environment. Similar to any other new employees, architects also need to adjust to functional, hierarchical and inclusionary changes. The job is perceived to provide more opportunities for them to practice the knowledge and skills that they have. They would enjoy and be more willing to carry out the job responsibilities. New employees must learn the skills to fit themselves into formal as well as an informal communication network. So a survey has been conducted to determine the work adjustment and person-job fit perception levels of architects in their job satisfaction in Tamil Nadu region. This study is based on the model of architect employees Work Adjustment. The theoretical framework is derived from the underlying principles of the theory of work adjustment (Davis and Lofquist, 1984) and Person-Environment (P.E) perspective which emphasized on the correspondence of individuals with the job demands and rewards in their work environment. However, instead of looking into the physical interaction these perspectives concentrated more on the psychological and subjective aspects of such correspondence. Hence, the model of new architect employees work adjustment proposed the influence person-job fit perceptions on their ability to adjust to the job demands and rewards into the work

environment. The job is perceived to provide more opportunities for them to develop their creativity and to practice the knowledge and skills they have. Those have positive attitude would experience better work adjustment. The opportunities provide them platform to practice skills and enhance the knowledge, which is carried out with less pressure and uncertainties. On contrary, the new architect employees to some extent would experience tougher work adjustment periods.

### Review of Literature

#### Person-job fit perception

The fit perception involves a cognitive process, in which an individual compares his needs, aspirations, and abilities to the work environment (Cable and Judge 1997), usually formed during individuals work experience, such perception is influenced by several sources such as job characteristics, organizational characteristics and the individuals interactions with other persons with the organization (Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart, 1991). Initially, no serious attention was paid to this concept in the studies of organizational behaviour. It however has been subsequently accepted when researchers found that individuals who could fit into their job are more able to solve various work-related work behaviour issues (Forbes and Barret, 1978). Though earlier conception of person-job fit perception covered several aspects, Kristof (1996) has later simplified it as the evaluation of congruence between an employee's abilities and his/her job demands. Usually a more

\*Corresponding author: Saikala, L., Department of Architecture,  
National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli.

experienced and capable employees are more able to adopt suitable strategies as to perform effectively compared to less experienced employees (Schuler, 1980). It is believed that those who fit with their jobs would be more successful in their career journey (Cable and Judge, 1997) a correct form of fit perception helps a new employee to uphold right status of mind and strategies when caught with uncertainties at work. It makes the employee comfortable and confident in meeting new job requirements and organizational objectives (Kristof, 1996). Saks and Ashforth (2002) measured the concept as the perception of suitability between an individual's knowledge, skills and abilities with his/her job requirements; of jobs ability to fulfill an individual's needs; suitability of the jobs; and last but not the least, individuals perception on the freedom in carrying out ones job. Quite close to the definition, Cable and DdRue (2002) have focused on three levels of fitness or sustainability in their effort to explain this concept such as fitness between individual personal skills with job demands, training needs and educational level.

Again, all these definitions have highlighted the concept as a subjective evaluation related to one's job competency and work effectiveness. Even though it is a subjective concept, acknowledgement has been made in accepting an individual's self-report on his/her level of capability (Artwater, Ostroff, Yammarino and Fleenov, 1998). Recent studies have shown the importance of person – job fit perception to new comer's competency. Carl, Pearson, Vest and Boyar (2006) have found that the level of such perception mediates the relationship between previous work experience and their length of service in the new organization. This study has positive relationships between fit-perception to competency (Cable and Judge, 1997; Kristof, 1996), commitment and efficiency (Schuler, 1980). Whether experienced or new, this could lesson an employee level of commitment (Cable and DeRue, 2002). Up to this date, the significance of this concept has been acknowledged in the organizational studies and believed that it influences the success rate also. To fit in the work environment, an employee should have right status of mind, positive strategies and confident (Kristof, 1996). In comparison a more experienced are well suitable than less experienced ones (Schuler, 1980). In general, those who fit with their jobs would be more successful in their career journey (Cable and Judge, 1997).

### **Theory of Work Adjustments (TWA)**

Most widely used theories to explain job satisfaction and fit is Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA: Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). TWA describes the ways that personal environmental factors interact to predict employees satisfaction with their jobs and workplaces. Satisfaction with employee the interaction between person and environmental factors is conceptualized in terms of person –environment fit. In the TWA research, this fit is called as 'correspondence' and is describing along two dimensions skills and needs. According to this theory, the greater the correspondence between the skills that employees possess and those required by the work environment, the more satisfied the workplace is with their workers. The TWA researchers also hypothesized that employees are satisfied with their work environment when the needs that they possess related to work correspond with the reinforcement offered with their work environment. Therefore, when employees are satisfied with their workplaces and

workplaces are satisfied with their employees, they will remain in the workplace thus satisfaction is hypothesized to their attachment to workplace.

### **Creativity in Architecture**

Architecture is the art and technique of designing the enclosure of space for human use as distinguished from skills associated with construction. As with some other arts, the development and practice of architecture embraces both aesthetic and utilitarian ends; Creative and highly sophisticated state-of-the-art architectural projects call for the engagement of the most specialized talent and highest form of technological achievement available. Therefore the architect must be capable of thinking, feeling, evaluating and arriving at critical decisions with value judgment (Geoffrey Broadbent, Design in Architecture, London; John Wiley and sons, 1975). Creativity is often thought of as the ability to generate ideas that are both innovative and functional (Management; Concept, Practice and Skills, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., p.16). Creativity, put most simply, 'to create is to combine existing elements in new ways' (Eugene K. Vontage, Professional Creativity, P.13). To be creative, employees must feel confident and not have to worry about their professional security. It is important therefore that organizations must be highly sensitive to greatly valuing and subsequently rewarding creativity irrespective of the organization echelon from whence it came.

### **Purpose of Study**

#### **Architects nature of job and social climate in the regional context (Tamil Nadu)**

This study exhibits a descriptive data related to the work experience of architects as employees. It also predicts the job satisfaction of an employee and creative traits of the architects. The regions selected for this study includes Chennai, Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy. Therefore the first purpose is to collect descriptive data that provides information about architect employees work experiences. In an attempt to gain better understanding of architects perception of fit and job satisfaction, the present study provides means, ranges and standard deviations of these variables in the study samples. The little data that exists on architects work behavior and work lives has been largely descriptive and focused on simplistic, nominal conceptualizations of creativity. In light of this fact, the second purpose of the present study is to build on past research and theory to advance knowledge regarding the perception of the job satisfaction of architect employees. Unlike past studies that are either a theoretical or use between-group designs (i.e., comparing architects of south India and north India) to examine vocational outcome variables with architect employees, the present study utilizes a theoretical model, the 'Theory of Work Adjustments' (TWA ; Dawis and Lofquist, 1984). Within the framework of TWA, the role of within group variables, specifically perceptions of fit and creativity are used to predict the results of job satisfaction.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Sample and Data Collection**

The sample consisted of architects working as employees in architectural firms randomly selected from four major cities of Tamil Nadu region particularly in major cities like Chennai,

Coimbatore, Trichy and Madurai. Of the 305 distributed questionnaires 223(76%) were returned. The relatively high return rate can perhaps be attributed to the fact that respondents were keen in participating in the survey. In 233 returned questionnaires 17 were incomplete and 10 of the questionnaires were returned too late to be included in the study. Thereby finally 206 respondents were considered for the survey. Eighty five of the respondents were female and 121 were male. All of them were appointed between the years 2005 and 2010. From the total number, 53% were classified as architects with several years of work experience, 29% were classified as moderate experience. Only 18% of them were with no work experience at all. The mean and mode for the respondents age was 34.74 and 32. The youngest was 22 years old and the oldest was 52.

### Instruments

As a part of larger survey, the instruments of work adjustments and person-job fit perception were included in a 20-page questionnaire. A cover letter informed the nature, significance and the objective of the study. Confidentiality of their information was emphasized. As the dependent variable of the study, Work Adjustment was defined as employees subjective evaluation on their ability to adjust to job demands, performance standard and rewards in the work place. It was measured using Work Adjustment Scale adapted from the work adjustment scale developed by and friends (Black and Stephen, 1989) which consists of three items. Conducted factor analysis also confirmed one dimension and subscale. The KMO (.797) and Bartlett (.000) values indicated the validity of factor analysis. The alpha cronbach of this scale is .873

a. As the independent variable of this study, person-job fit perception was defined as subjective evaluation of architect employees suitability of their knowledge, creativity skills and ability to the job responsibilities. It was measured using the person-job fit scale which consists of four items. Conducted factor analysis also confirmed one dimension and sub scale of the scale. The KMO (.797) and Bartlett (.000) values indicated the validity of the factor analysis. The alphacronbach of this scale is .786.

b. Demographic data such as age, gender and duration of work experience before joining the architectural firm as architects was also measured.

### Analysis of data

In the test of hypothesis, perception of fit was the independent variable and job satisfaction ( $M=66.9$ ,  $SD=14.5$ ) was the dependent variable as shown in Table 1. The results of the regression analysis revealed a positive relationship between perception of fit and job satisfaction, where fit accounted for 43.5% of the variance in the job satisfaction ( $F(1,128)=95.81$ ,  $p<.01$ ), thus hypothesis was supported.

#### Regions selected for study

	Male	Female
Chennai	58%	42%
Coimbatore	67%	33%
Trichy	69%	31%
Madurai	73%	27%
	N= 48	

#### Assessing the levels of 4 Parameters in percentage

Regions	Perception of Fit	Social Climate	Job Satisfaction	Creative Traits	N
Chennai	53%	41%	57%	64%	62
Coimbatore	49%	52%	60%	66%	46
Trichy	46%	51%	63%	61%	50
Madurai	60%	59%	62%	61%	43

#### Summary of the Multiple Regression Analysis Testing Social Climate as a moderator of fit and job satisfaction

Variable	R	P	F	Fch	R2	R2ch	P
Perception of Fit	.68	.00	96.75		.45		.00
Social Climate	.69	.00		2.82	.46	.01	.10
Interaction; Perceptions of Fit X Social Climate	.69	.00		.27	.48	.00	.63

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the descriptive analysis showed that most of the new academics were equipped with at least one year of work experience (80.2%). Only (19.8%) of these new academics were not having any experience of working in any organizations (Table 1). As job, organizational characteristics and interactions in one's previous work experience contribute to the shaping of individual's person-job fit perception (Rynes, Bretz and Gerhart,1991), previous work experience of most subjects may explain why majority of them (135 new academics) possessed high level of person-job fit perception. New academic's beliefs in their ability to adjust to new job demands and work environment might be initiated by their confidence formed throughout the past work experience. Twenty – eight of them exhibited moderate level of person-job fit perception. Only four of them were with low level of person-job fit perception. Most of the subjects (113) also exhibited high level of work adjustment. Only 16 of them were classified as new academics with low level of work adjustment. The rest (38) exhibited moderate level of work adjustment. The percentages are as shown in Table 2. Hence the results of this study indicated the most of the Architect employees perceived and believed that they are well adjusted to job demands. Still they have to undergo in process of adapting themselves to new job demands and work environment.

Table 1. Architect Employees Years of Work Experience

Work Experience	Percentage(%)
Less than 2 years	34.8
Between 2 to 5 years	21.7
Five years and above	43.5
Total	100

Table 2. Levels of work adjustment and person-job fit perception of architect employees

	N	High	Moderate	Low	Mean
Work Adjustment	167	67.7%	22.8%	9.6%	2.58
Person-Job Fit Perception	167	80.8%	16.8%	2.4%	2.78

The correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between person-job fit perception and work adjustment of the new architects. A significant relationship was found between the two variables ( $r=.144$ ,  $p<.05$ ). This

means new academics who believe that their knowledge, skills and training match with the job demand perceive that they could easily adjust to their job responsibilities. On the other hand those who do not think that their current level of knowledge, skills and abilities are at par with academia requirements feel that they had encountered tougher period of work adjustment. Results of partial correlation analysis again suggested the essence of work experience. The new Architects work experience, age, gender and departments were found to influence the person-job fit and work adjustment relationship ( $r(161) = .151, p < 0.05$ ). The experience gained during the industrial practice will not help Architects to learn the practical aspects related to their field of disciplines. It also serves as a maturing platform as they deal with work life situations at the organizations.

### Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it is very obvious that the findings of this study have supported the principles of Work Adjustment Theory (Dawis and Lofquist, 1984) and Person-Environment (P-E) Perspective. Work adjustment will be purported when a harmonious fit of an individual and work environment is perceived. An employee who feels that he or she fits to the new job is usually happier with the job. The positive evaluation of such fit could create higher level of self-confidence, professionalism and initiatives in one's job delivery (Cable and Gilovich, 1998). Looking at the result, it is believed that the both architect employees and their organization fairly play important roles to ensure smooth work adjustment experience. As Architects are responsible to plan and be more strategic in their career development, employers are also have equal accountability in providing sufficient development resources and tools for their new employers.

### Future Direction of Research

Future researchers might collect social climate data with more variance and form a variety of zones within the region. Also to alleviate the possible influence of creative traits on social climate scores, researchers should attempt to collect information from the past work environment and their creative works. Finally to avoid the possible effects of cognitive dissonance, the future research might focus on applications of perceptions of social climate rather than asking those already in the waste environment who might be using cognitive dissonance to cope with their work environment.

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