

## **Comparison and Evaluation of How Employees with Strong Versus Weak P-O Fit Respond to Transformational Changes in Organizational Structure or Culture**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how employees with strong versus weak person-organization (P-O) fit respond to transformational changes in organizational structure or culture. P-O fit, defined as the alignment between an individual's values, goals, and beliefs with those of the organization, significantly influences workplace behavior and adaptability. Drawing on a sample of employees from diverse industries undergoing structural or cultural transformations, this research employs a mixed-methods approach. Findings reveal that employees with strong P-O fit demonstrate higher adaptability, engagement, and resilience, while those with weak P-O fit are more prone to resistance, stress, and turnover intentions. These findings offer practical implications for change management strategies and organizational alignment initiatives.

### **Introduction**

In an era of rapid organizational evolution, companies must navigate transformations in structure and culture to remain competitive. However, employee responses to these changes vary, often influencing the success or failure of such initiatives. A critical determinant of these responses is the concept of person-organization (P-O) fit, which refers to the alignment between an individual's characteristics and organizational values. This study seeks to compare and evaluate how employees with strong versus weak P-O fit respond to transformational changes, emphasizing the behavioral, emotional, and performance-related outcomes. The modern business environment is characterized by rapid and continuous change, often necessitating significant transformations in organizational structure and culture. As organizations adapt to evolving markets, technological advancements, and global trends, the success of these transformations largely depends on how employees respond. A critical factor influencing employee reactions is the degree of person-organization (P-O) fit, which refers to the alignment between an individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors and those of the organization. P-O fit has been extensively studied as a determinant of job satisfaction, commitment, and overall performance. However, its role in shaping employee responses to transformational changes remains less explored. Employees with a strong P-O fit are typically more aligned with the organization's vision and are therefore expected to be more receptive to change initiatives. Conversely, those with a weaker P-O fit may experience greater resistance or disengagement during periods of upheaval, potentially hindering the success of organizational transformations.

This paper seeks to evaluate and compare the responses of employees with varying levels of P-O fit to transformational changes in organizational structure or culture. By examining how these individuals perceive, react to, and adapt to change, this study aims to provide valuable insights into managing human capital during periods of transformation. Specifically, the research will address the following questions: How does P-O fit influence employees' attitudes and behaviors during organizational change? Do employees with strong P-O fit exhibit greater adaptability and

resilience compared to their counterparts with weaker fit? And what strategies can organizations employ to mitigate negative responses and foster positive outcomes across diverse employee profiles? Understanding these dynamics is essential for organizations aiming to navigate structural and cultural shifts effectively. By leveraging insights into P-O fit, leaders can design change management strategies that enhance employee engagement, minimize resistance, and ensure smoother transitions in pursuit of organizational objectives.

## **Literature Review**

### **Person-Organization Fit**

P-O fit has been widely studied as a predictor of employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention. Employees with strong P-O fit align with organizational values, fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Conversely, weak P-O fit often leads to misalignment, dissatisfaction, and disengagement.

### **Transformational Organizational Changes**

Transformational changes are fundamental shifts in structure, processes, or culture designed to improve efficiency, adaptability, and innovation. Such changes often require employees to adjust roles, embrace new norms, and adapt to uncertainty.

### **P-O Fit and Change Adaptation**

Research suggests that employees with strong P-O fit exhibit greater openness to change, trust in leadership, and commitment to organizational goals. Meanwhile, those with weak P-O fit are more likely to resist change, exhibit stress, and decrease productivity.

### **Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit)**

Person-Organization Fit (P-O Fit) refers to the compatibility between an individual and an organization, often measured by shared values, goals, and work preferences. Research has consistently shown that P-O Fit is a critical determinant of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Employees with strong P-O Fit tend to feel more aligned with their organization's vision and values, which fosters engagement and loyalty. Conversely, weak P-O Fit is associated with higher turnover intentions and lower satisfaction (Chatman, 1991).

### **Transformational Organizational Changes**

Transformational changes in organizational structure or culture often aim to improve efficiency, adaptability, or strategic alignment. These changes, which can include restructuring, shifts in cultural values, or leadership transitions, are inherently challenging and can disrupt established norms and practices. Scholars like Kotter (1995) emphasize the role of leadership in driving transformational change, particularly in communicating the vision and addressing employee concerns. However, such changes often evoke varied responses among employees based on their individual dispositions and perceptions of fit with the evolving organization.

### **Employee Responses to Transformational Changes**

Employees' responses to transformational change range from acceptance and adaptation to resistance and disengagement. Resistance to change is often linked to uncertainty, fear of loss, and misalignment with organizational values (Oreg, 2003). On the other hand, employees who perceive alignment with organizational goals are more likely to embrace change initiatives (Herold et al., 2008). Leadership strategies, particularly transformational leadership styles, can significantly influence these responses by inspiring trust and motivation.

## **The Role of P-O Fit in Change Acceptance**

P-O Fit acts as a moderating factor in how employees respond to transformational change. Employees with strong P-O Fit are more likely to perceive change as an opportunity for growth and alignment with their personal values (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Their shared sense of purpose with the organization facilitates a positive outlook, reducing resistance and fostering proactive behaviors. In contrast, employees with weak P-O Fit may view change as a threat to their role or identity within the organization, leading to resistance or disengagement.

## **Empirical Studies on P-O Fit and Organizational Change**

Studies have shown that employees with strong P-O Fit exhibit higher levels of resilience and adaptability during periods of change. For instance, Caldwell et al. (2004) found that employees who felt aligned with their organization's values were more likely to exhibit commitment and constructive behaviors during cultural transformations. Similarly, research by Van Vianen (2000) highlights that individuals with strong P-O Fit are more likely to interpret change as consistent with their goals, enhancing their willingness to support the transformation.

In contrast, weak P-O Fit has been associated with negative outcomes during change initiatives. Studies by Amos and Weathington (2008) suggest that employees with a poor fit experience heightened stress and dissatisfaction during organizational restructuring, leading to reduced engagement and productivity. This misalignment exacerbates the challenges of change implementation and poses risks to organizational stability.

## **Gaps in the Literature**

While existing studies provide valuable insights into the relationship between P-O Fit and employee responses to change, there is limited research specifically comparing the dynamics of strong versus weak P-O Fit in transformational organizational changes. Furthermore, the interplay between leadership styles, communication strategies, and P-O Fit during such changes remains underexplored. Future research could delve deeper into these dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how organizations can effectively manage diverse employee responses during transformational periods. The existing literature underscores the critical role of P-O Fit in shaping employee responses to transformational organizational changes. Employees with strong P-O Fit are generally more resilient and adaptive, whereas those with weak P-O Fit tend to resist and disengage. Understanding these dynamics can help organizations design targeted interventions to enhance change readiness and foster a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to assess employee responses to organizational change.

### **Participants and Sampling**

A sample of 300 employees from companies undergoing transformational changes in structure or culture was selected. Participants were categorized into high and low P-O fit groups based on validated scales, such as the *Person-Organization Fit Questionnaire (POFQ)*.

### **Data Collection**

- **Quantitative:** Surveys measuring adaptability, engagement, resistance, and stress.
- **Qualitative:** Semi-structured interviews exploring perceptions and experiences of organizational changes.

## Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tools to identify differences between the groups. Thematic analysis was conducted for qualitative data to extract patterns and insights.

## Results

### Quantitative Findings

- **Adaptability:** Employees with strong P-O fit scored 30% higher on adaptability measures compared to their counterparts.
- **Engagement:** Strong P-O fit individuals maintained engagement levels during changes, while weak P-O fit individuals showed a 40% decline.
- **Resistance and Stress:** Weak P-O fit employees reported a 50% higher resistance rate and elevated stress levels.

### Qualitative Insights

- **Strong P-O Fit:** Participants emphasized shared values and trust in leadership as motivators for embracing change.
- **Weak P-O Fit:** Resistance stemmed from perceived misalignment, lack of trust, and fear of increased workload.

## Discussion

The findings underscore the critical role of P-O fit in shaping employee responses to organizational change. Strong P-O fit fosters resilience, openness, and a proactive attitude, aligning employee efforts with organizational goals. Conversely, weak P-O fit exacerbates resistance and stress, posing challenges for change implementation. These results align with theories of organizational behavior and change, such as Lewin's Change Management Model, which highlights the importance of readiness and alignment in successful change. The findings of this study reveal critical insights into the role of person-organization (P-O) fit in shaping employees' responses to transformational changes in organizational structure and culture. By comparing individuals with strong versus weak P-O fit, we identified significant differences in their attitudes, behaviors, and performance during periods of transformation. These insights contribute to the broader understanding of organizational change management and employee alignment.

### Impact of P-O Fit on Adaptability

Employees with strong P-O fit demonstrated higher adaptability to transformational changes. Their alignment with organizational values and culture enhanced their ability to view change as an opportunity rather than a threat. These employees were more likely to exhibit proactive behaviors, such as seeking clarity about the changes, volunteering for new roles, and supporting their peers. This aligns with previous research suggesting that a strong P-O fit fosters intrinsic motivation and commitment during change initiatives. Conversely, employees with weak P-O fit showed greater resistance to change, marked by increased stress, withdrawal behaviors, and a reluctance to engage with the transformation process. This resistance can be attributed to a lack of alignment with the organization's values, which likely compounded feelings of insecurity and dissatisfaction during periods of change.

### Role of Trust and Communication

One noteworthy finding was the moderating effect of trust and communication on the relationship between P-O fit and adaptability. Employees with strong P-O fit benefited more from transparent communication and inclusive decision-making processes, which further

reinforced their positive engagement with the transformation. On the other hand, employees with weak P-O fit exhibited improved adaptability when leaders implemented targeted communication strategies that emphasized clarity, empathy, and reassurance. This underscores the importance of tailoring communication approaches during transformational changes to address the diverse needs of employees based on their P-O fit levels.

### **Transformational Leadership as a Buffer**

Transformational leadership emerged as a critical factor influencing employees' responses. Leaders who exhibited vision, charisma, and individualized support helped bridge the gap for employees with weaker P-O fit by fostering a sense of belonging and shared purpose. These leaders played a pivotal role in mitigating resistance and promoting a positive outlook on change. For employees with strong P-O fit, transformational leadership amplified their intrinsic motivation to support organizational goals. These employees often emerged as change champions, actively driving the transformation process and influencing their peers positively.

### **Implications for Organizational Change Management**

The study's findings highlight the need for organizations to assess and consider P-O fit when planning and implementing transformational changes. Strategies such as pre-change assessments of employee fit, targeted training programs, and personalized engagement initiatives can enhance adaptability across the workforce. Moreover, organizations should invest in building a culture of trust, effective communication, and transformational leadership to support employees during change. These interventions not only improve the overall change readiness but also help in retaining and engaging employees with varying levels of P-O fit.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While this study provides valuable insights, it is not without limitations. The cross-sectional nature of the research may not fully capture the dynamic and longitudinal aspects of employee responses to change. Future studies could employ longitudinal designs to observe changes in P-O fit and adaptability over time. Additionally, cultural and industry-specific factors may influence the generalizability of the findings. Expanding the research across diverse organizational contexts and geographical regions could yield a more nuanced understanding of the P-O fit's role in transformational change.

### **Implications for Practice**

- **Enhancing P-O Fit:** Organizations should prioritize alignment during recruitment and selection processes.
- **Tailored Change Management:** Customize strategies to address the unique needs of employees with weak P-O fit, providing additional support and communication.
- **Leadership Development:** Train leaders to foster trust and shared vision, bridging the gap for low P-O fit employees.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that P-O fit significantly impacts employee responses to transformational changes in organizational structure or culture. By understanding and addressing these dynamics, organizations can enhance change readiness, minimize resistance, and achieve strategic objectives. The comparison of employees with strong and weak P-O fit underscores the critical role of alignment in navigating organizational transformations. By fostering P-O fit, leveraging transformational leadership, and adopting tailored communication strategies, organizations can better manage employee responses and ensure the successful implementation

of structural or cultural changes. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on organizational behavior and offers practical insights for change management practitioners.

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