

The Impact of Social Learning on Constructing Person – Organization Fit

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Abstract

The extend to which individuals adapt to the new social environment offered to them by their organization is depended on how far they can adapt their self perceptions through the process of social learning. An individual being employed with a relatively high person–job fit can develop and strengthen person-organization fit through the time span he spends in the organization. In accordance with the definition of social learning, presence of the ability of using the perception of culture through the behaviors and attitudes of others in shaping an individual’s own behavior has developed the idea of viewing self-monitoring level as an important variable in creating a difference in terms of the person-organization fit. Consequently, due to the difference in the self-monitoring level of the individuals and through social learning, both the employees and the organization will benefit the outcome of the person-organization fit process with a diverse range of results.

The main purpose of this study is to explain the learning model which will increase the employees’ job satisfaction and commitment through enhancing a balance between the person-job fit level of the individuals while they are accepted to work in the organization and the person-organization fit level created after the individual becomes a member of the organization. On the assumption that an acceptable level of person-job fit is ensured in the course of the decision making process of employment (Chatman, 1989; Carless, 2005; Chuang and Sackett, 2005), it is aimed to design an explanatory model of how social learning effects the provision of person-organization fit along the time the employee spends in the organization.

Social learning explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral and environmental influences (Bandura, 1977). Davis and Luthans (1980: 282) suggests that “...the person and the environment do not function as independent units but instead determine each other in a reciprocal manner.” Consistent with this view, social learning depends on reshaping one’s own behaviors, values and attitudes, in other words generating a change in the present type of behaving, through gathering information about the behavior of other individuals (Bandura, 1977; 1978; Crittenden 2005). In assessing the compatible individual type for the social learning process to occur, self-monitoring is assumed to be an important variable to consider. Those individuals with a low self-monitoring level, focusing on the information oriented towards them, and having a tendency to conserve their present behavior, values, beliefs and attitudes are resistant to social learning while the individuals with a high level of self-monitoring observe the behaviors, experiences and attitudes of the others and create a substantial and diversified spectrum of role models for themselves realizing social learning (Davis and Luthans, 1980; Day and Schleicher, 2006; Ickes et al., 2006; Leone, 2006; Mehra, Kilduff and Brass, 2001). On the basis of this theoretical framework, we will develop propositions aiming to explain the effect of social learning on the construction of person-organization fit.

Introduction

It is important to select and employ the appropriate people for the organization since they will become a member of the organization and their performance and input will vary according to the level of adaptation and fit to be maintained. Following Chatman's argument (1989:333), we can state that the two dimensions effective in the fit behavior of individuals involved in organizations are person-job fit and person-organization fit. Chatman measures the person-job fit with a knowledge-skill-ability profile while gauging the person-organization fit via organizational culture profile (1989: 339). Accordingly, person-job fit means that the individuals' knowledge, skills and abilities are in accordance with the job's specifications. On the other hand, person-organization fit is reflected through the fit among the norms and values of the organization and the individual's own values.

Similar to Chatman (1989), Kristof (1996) defines person-organization fit as the concordance and the compatibility among the individuals and the organizations. Kristof emphasizes the fact that there is not enough research on the process of how the learning mechanisms effects the level of person-job fit. Based on this conception, the paper aims to provide contribution towards understanding these mechanisms.

The Impact of Social Learning on the Formation of Person-Organization Fit

Employment practices predicated on person-job fit are performed in respect of the knowledge, skills and abilities of the candidates for the job. On the basis of O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991), Carless (2005) and various authors' research, the condition that the employment practices are performed in terms of person-job fit is considered as "given" for the purpose of this study. Prediction of the individuals demand to work in a job is a subjective fit forecast (Carless, 2005:413). In the subsequent stage there may exist mechanisms to provide the person-organization fit. Such a mechanism can grow as a result of the training and orientation programs as well as the intransfer of experiences by the newcomer. As the employer becomes a member of the organization, he socially learns the organization's values, expected line of behavior and his organizational role through a socialization process (Chatman, 1989: 345). In such a perspective, we are faced with a two-tier fit process: The selection and entrance of the compatible individuals for the jobs in the first stage and the continuance of the fit process through both the individual and the organizational socialization processes following the acceptance to the organization in the second stage.

In the second stage, cognitive learning as an outcome of the socialization process may possibly be an effective factor (Kristof, 1996: 39). The course of how the learning mechanisms and models effect the level of individual's fit to the organization can be a tool to close the gap between the person-job fit and the person-organization fit. Such a closure will enhance the determination of the appropriate strategies to reach the optimal combination of fit in the organization.

Social learning can be contemplated as a moderating variable between the person-job fit and the person-organization fit towards the closure of the mentioned gap. Based on the social learning theory of Bandura (1977; 1978) where human behavior is explained through continuous and reciprocal interaction of the cognitive, behavioral and environmental factors, Crittenden (2005: 960) points out that both the knowledge and the experiences of the individual has a significant effect on his behavior. He also indicates that there is a cycle of reciprocal interaction amongst the individual-behavior-environment ternary.

In the process of social learning, the individual realizes a value in the organization and he recalls it. Later on, he determines his behavior with reference to this awareness. The organization responds to this behavior with an organizational reward or punishment (DelCampo, 2006: 465) apart from the individual and thereby a revision and modification or a reinforcement in the bahavior is ensured. Aforecited sort of behavior is reflected to the individual himself who uses this model of learning and his values are reshaped.

Experiences in this cycle are not necessarily learned by the individual himself by experiencing them but are learned via others' behavior in the organization. Learning is through the agents and on a theoretical basis. The individual observes the other people in the organization and reshapes his behavior via the values perceived through others' behavior. The reciprocal and continuous interaction cycle reflects this process. Accordingly, while individuals draw on conclusions from both their own experiences and from observing the others' behavior who take place in their social environments, they actualize learning through what these conclusions represent.

The above mentioned social learning process exhibits an individual profile with a high cognitive awareness, attaining the implicit behavior in his environment (Davis ve Luthans, 1980). This individual profile appears to be interrelated with the self-monitoring notion defined as the ability of controlling the behaviors expressing oneself (Bolino ve Turnley, 2003; Leone, 2006). Since, while the individuals with a low level of self-monitoring are shaping their behavior with their own emotinal states, attitudes and values, individuals with a high level of self-monitoring have a tendency to shape their own behavior using the verbal and nonverbal communication channels to observe the behaviors performed by others (Leone, 2006). In social learning perspective, emphasizing learning through others and looking up to the big picture (Crittenden, 2005), individuals with a high level of self-monitoring might be expected to be open to this method of learning.

Moser and Galais (2007) highlights the fact that an increase in the job satisfaction level of an employee is dependent upon the individual's ability and opportunity to have control over the explicit and/or implicit attainable signs and symbols related to this performance. Individuals with a high level of self-monitoring have an endeavour to anticipate and plan the conditions to become existing in advance (Ickes, Holloway, Stinson ve Hoodenpyle, 2006). In order to strive with this effort they have a propensity to determine their own self-perceptions according to the requirements of the conditions and roles. On the other hand, individuals with a low level of self-monitoring tend to keep and maintain the traits, values and attitudes they have had prior to working in the organization (Leone, 2006). Consequently, while the low level self-monitors are focusing on information oriented towards them and their own affective states, high level self-monitors are focused on other individuals, social roles and social relationships, and are concerened with the information about being at the right time, right place and the right person.

As the individuals with a low level of self-monitoring feature order and stability in their lives, they claim to be "themselves". Thus, it is often expected that the new employees with a low level of self-monitoring to do their work and be "themselves". Contradicting the low self-monitors, individuals with a high level of self-monitoring are more effective in short term interactions during their early periods at work. They rapidly perceive information, symbols and clues about the prospect of the group they stepped into and they tend to personate into an appropriate social image (Moser ve Galais, 2007: 84). They are open to social learning yet they use other people's experiences, behavior and attitudes as a role model during the image building process.

Proposition 1: Individual's self-monitoring level effects their openness to social learning. It is expected that individuals with a low level of self-monitoring close themselves to social learning and the individuals with a high level of self-monitoring are open to social learning.

Low self-monitoring individuals may develop an apprehension due to the projection of dissonance in their behavior since they have substantially consistent and rigid values. However, high self-monitoring individuals, observing the behavior of the others in the organization and perceiving the new values in the organizational setting, strategically fit in the organizational environmet readily through the use of impression management (Day ve Schleicher, 2006).

Affirmative effect of the use of social learning processes in increasing the organizational fit mentioned by O'reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) and Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson

(2005), indicates an intention towards the realization of self-monitoring as a strong differentiator that becomes a moderating element in the development of the person-organization fit.

Individuals with a high level of self-monitoring having an intense need to be accepted, approved and taken into consideration as cited by Ickes, Holloway, Stinson, and Hoodenpyle (2006), carry out social learning using the impression management techniques effectively. Thus, through a self-transformation process, they construct a social image consistent with the organizational values (Day ve Schleicher, 2006). The low self-monitors, not transforming themselves and enabling to build a self-consistency with the social world that they do not enhance a fit with.

Proposition2: High self-monitors provide a high level of person-organization fit in consequence of their ability to transform themselves through social learning.

Proposition 3: Low self-monitors provide a low level of person-job fit under the circumstance of sustainable value conflicts in consequence of their closeness to social learning, and in the cases where conflicts turn into dissonance they experience person-organization dissonance.

Person-organization fit and/or dissonance provokes in various results concerning the individuals. Results presented by O'reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) and Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman and Johnson (2005) signifies that the realization of the person-organization fit positively effects the employee's commitment to the organization, job satisfaction and performance. Sheridan (1992: 1038) comments on the fact that the organizational values significantly influences the amount of time spent in the organization and he claims that the individual's job performance is closely interrelated to the organization's cultural values in effecting and determining this time span (and so the turnover intention). Results displaying that the confirmity of individual and organizational values influence the time spent in the organization in Sheridan (1992), Schneider (1987) and O'Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell's (1991) research may lead to a different kind of commitment's coming into prominence.

Proposition 4: While a high level of person-organization fit will positively effect the job satisfaction, performance and commitment, person-organization dissonance will effect the mentioned organizational outcomes negatively.

Conclusion

Based on the assumption that person-job fit is provided during the selection and employment processes (Chatman, 1989; Carless, 2005; Chuang ve Sackett, 2005), it is aimed to develop an explanatory mechanism to point out the effect of social learning on the provision of the person-organization fit during the period of employment and in the diminishing of the gap between the two kinds of fit. Since social learning depends on reshaping of one's values and attitudes through collecting information over other people's behavior, in other words making a change in behavior (Bandura, 1977; 1978; Crittenden 2005), the level of self-monitoring is considered to be a variable creating difference in the creation of the adequate individual for the learning process. In spite of the low self-monitors focused on the information oriented towards themselves and disposed to conserving and maintaining their previous behavior, values, beliefs and attitudes who are closed to social learning, the high self-monitors are expected to observe the behavior, experience and attitudes of the others in creating a substantial role inventory for themselves carrying out the social learning process (Davis and Luthans, 1980; Day and Schleicher, 2006; Ickes et al., 2006; Leone, 2006; Mehra, Kilduff and Brass, 2001).

Consequently, the organizational outcomes suggested to be emerging in the presence or absence of social learning are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: The impact of social learning on organizational outcomes

Social Learning	Organizational Outcomes
In the case of being open to social learning...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-Organization fit increases with the Person-Job fit. • Job satisfaction increases. • Performance increases. • Job commitment increases. • An increase in the Person-Organization fit may cause the organizational citizenship behavior to emerge.
In the case of being closed to social learning...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Person-Job fit maintains its stability. • Person-Organization fit is realized at a low level or dissonance is developed. • Job satisfaction decreases. • Performance decreases. • Job commitment maintains its stability. • Turnover intention emerges if dissonance level is high.

Limitations

Self-monitoring is the variable considered in the functioning of the social learning mechanism since it is thought to be the possibly significant variable effecting the individual's openness or closeness to social learning. However, it will not be possible to observe if there is a significant effect of the individual's cultural values (Aktaş, 2007) or if the individualistic-collectivist cultural values also act as moderating variables in the person-organization fit level and the organizational outcomes attained.

Suggestions for Further Research

In this paper, propositions about the social learning mechanism are developed. Aiming to generate hypothesis to be tested from these initial propositions a longitudinal study can be developed commencing with the employment process and embracing the following period. It would be challenging and rewarding to study the concept of social learning with an approach towards understanding the interaction between the organizational members-behavior-environmental contingents and the singularity of the organizations in their unique and real environmental conditions. It will be an advantage to observe how high self-monitors carry out social learning through others' experiences with a methodology using participative observation and thought experiment techniques.

Managerial Implications

Ensuring the person-organization fit during the selection and employment periods will be beneficial especially to the human resource managers. Managers usually assess the person-job fit during this period. We suggest that tools might be developed to assess the level of person-organization level using the variables of openness to social learning and the level of self-monitoring. Providing person-organization fit will yield to decrease the turnover rate and increase the job satisfaction, performance and job commitment engendering a citizenship behavior among the employees in the organization. The managers will seek for alternative approaches to enhance settings

for social learning. Although there are some advantages of high self-monitors on constructing person-organization fit, it might be possible that some disadvantages will occur for the organization. Therefore, each organization should seek for an optimum combination balancing the rate of low self-monitors and high self-monitors in the organization.

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