

Job demands and personal work style

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Abstract: Taking into consideration the O*NET, specialists from organizational psychology can determine what personal characteristics influence job performance. This present article aims to show whether a relationship exists between personal work style and job demands and what impact this has this on job involvement and satisfaction. The group of subjects consisted of 333 employees, who completed questionnaires in order to evaluate their preferred work style, their job requirements and degree of involvement on work and work satisfaction. The results showed that there is a match between work style and work demands, but work involvement does not mediate the relation between job characteristics and job satisfaction. These results can be used to propose strategies to increase the satisfaction level of employees.

Keywords: job demands, personal work style, matching index, professional involvement, job satisfaction

Introduction

There are many studies that have shown that professional involvement or participation in organizational decision-making can enhance employee satisfaction (Mortensen & Fullmer, 2002; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Robert, 1995). We assume that a condition to maximize efficiency in the workplace matches with the personal work style of the employee with demands that go with the job. For this research, the objective is to show how matching can correlate with job satisfaction, a relation probably influenced by involvement on the job, from the Romanian population.

Personal working style

According to O*NET, *work styles* are the personal characteristics that can affect how well someone performs in a job, a part of worker's characteristics, beside abilities, occupational interests and work values. Personal work style can be also seen as the manner in which the individual works (Gambrell, 2005), as a „sum of professional, organizational, political and moral qualities which are conveyed in people's daily activities” (Mihuț, 1989, p. 73) or as „a synergy of heterogeneous factors of a motivational, affective, cognitive and psychosocial nature, whose merger determines each

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individual's perspective on relating to one's work and using one's resources in order to achieve individual and organizational goals" Niculiță (2005, p. 8).

From the perspective of McFletcher Inventory (2000, as cited in Gambrell, 2005), working style is a combination of three basic elements: how a person prefers to work (the *want*), what a person actually does (the *is*) and the expectations of others (the *should*). Feuerstein and Nicholas (2006) also describe and analyze the concept of work style and determine it to be an individual cognitive, behavioral and physiological reaction pattern which occurs while performing work tasks. From this perspective, one's work style can also be characterized by the tolerance for uncertainty, the ability to make decisions when not all the information is available as opposed to situations when the decision must respect some precise and detailed procedures, in order to adapt quickly to new requests (Gambrell, 2005).

There is not an agreement between different authors about the definition of work style, about its characteristics or component factors. Especially in terms of evaluation methodology, worker style is seen either as a combination of personality traits, as a set of behavioral dispositions or attitudes toward work that can be delivered or as an individual pattern influencing individual involvement in their work. For example, *Working style orientation* (McFletcher, 2000) is a general categorization of how individuals prefer to think and do tasks. *WSP Inventory* classifies people into four orientations: the worker/task (work as an individual performance, specific work activities identified with the job), supervisor/project manager (job level of coordination to ensure that everyone can perform his/her work successfully, the identification with the projects and people), manager/organizer (identified with the initiation of activities, with the objectives and results) or adaptive (identified with all three orientations, represents a balance between them).

Another tool, taking into consideration the typical procedural differences in the way work is performed, *Workplace Personality Inventory Development* (Pearson, 2007) proposes seven main work styles and sixteen subtypes: Achievement Orientation (Achievement/Effort, Persistence, Initiative), Social Influence (Leadership), Interpersonal Orientation (Cooperation, Concern for Others, Social Orientation), Adjustment (Self Control, Stress Tolerance, Adaptability/Flexibility), Conscientiousness (Dependability, Attention to Detail, Integrity), Independence (Independence), Practical Intelligence (Innovation, Analytical Thinking). Probably the most meticulous and complete taxonomy of psychological factors associated with individual work style is that of Borman, Kusibiak and Scheinder (1999). These authors present an overview of academic research on personality factors correlated with work performance and take into

consideration the specific contexts of 35 professional areas. From their analyses, the authors have developed a comprehensive model of the concept of work styles, which includes 7 primary dimensions and 17 secondary dimensions. The seven primary dimensions are: achievement orientation (effort, initiative, persistence), social influence (energy, leadership orientation), interpersonal orientation (cooperation, concern for others, social orientation), adjustment (self-control, stress tolerance, adaptability/flexibility), conscientiousness (dependability, attention to detail, integrity), independence, practical intelligence (innovation, analytical thinking).

In conclusion, there is not a clear definition of work style and, its characteristics or factors description depend on each author. In our opinion, work style includes the psychological variables related to the organizational behavior of individuals and can be defined as an employee's preferred way of relating to work and the organizational context of work (attitudinal) and of effectively performing work related tasks (behavioral)(Constantin et al, 2010). For this research, we assume that great employee satisfaction requires a correlation between personal work style and job requirements.

The relations between work demands and job satisfaction

Knowing that working style contributes to creating the „psychological profile of the potential employee” (Pearson, 2007), it helps to assess the fitting level between the employee, the job and the organization. For example, the Job Characteristic's Model proposed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) indicates that all job characteristics influence individual performance at work (as cited in Su-Chao & Ming-Shing, 2006). From this perspective, based on the job characteristics, jobs with more challenges and changes that give greater autonomy to employees will increase the employee job satisfaction and reduce the rate of resignation. The authors identified five dimensions of a job that can influence employee motivation: the variety of skills, task identification, task significance, autonomy and feedback on the task (Chaudhari, 2012). If the job favors these features, there are three situations that may occur for employees: meaning work experience, responsibility for work outcomes and results of working knowledge. In this case the three indices - experience, motivation for work and job satisfaction - will increase.

Although person-job fit is strongly related to a number of outcomes, including job performance and satisfaction (Caldwell & O'Reilly), previous research has also proved that both person-job (P-J) and person-organization (P-O) fit has had an impact on job satisfaction and intent to quit. P-O fit was a better predictor of intentions to quit than was P-J fit, but there was little difference in their relative influence on job satisfaction (Lauver & Kristof-Brown).

Van den Tooren & De Jonge (2010) showed that different patterns of situations could be observed among the availability, relevance and use of matching and non-matching job resources in a *physically* demanding situation at work. Further, it was shown that there generally seems to be a dominant role of *emotional* job resources in the job stress process, whereas the role of *physical* job resources and, to a lesser extent, *cognitive* job resources appear much weaker and mainly restricted to corresponding types of job demands. Employees who are faced with a particular type of job demands may take advantage of both matching and non-matching job resources, implying that the 'matching hypothesis' is a probabilistic rather than a static principle.

Determinants of satisfaction and professional involvement

Job satisfaction refers to a collection of workers' attitudes towards their work (Trăistaru, 2007). Two aspects of job satisfaction can be distinguished. The first is the facet satisfaction, which is the employee tendency to be more or less satisfied with various facets of his/her work (relationships, work evaluation, support for performance, work overload, organizational learning etc.). It is also considered to be an overall satisfaction, a global indicator of a person's satisfaction with his/her work. From this perspective, job satisfaction is an average value of evaluation related to the attitudes that individuals have for various facets of their work (Zlate, 2007). Job satisfaction can be defined as a positive emotional response, determined by work requirements or as a feeling of gratitude derived for the individual from the work they have performed or in terms of pleasure or positive emotion resulting from the exercise of a job, job experiences and perceived functional relationship between what a person wants and what job gives (Dhammika et al, 2012). Hulin et al described in 1985 a model of job satisfaction that identifies four factors of psychological processes involved: the results of work roles, work roles contribution, the reference used for job evaluation and subjective usefulness of the contribution and achievement.

There have been studies that have shown a direct relationship between different working style factors and satisfaction at work. For example, people with an internal locus of control are more likely to meet a higher level of overall satisfaction on the job compared to different facets of job satisfaction, as opposed to people with an external locus of control who are satisfied only by a certain facet of the job (Tillman et al, 2010). Also, professional involvement or participation in decision-making can determine employee satisfaction (Mortensen & Fullmer, 2002; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Robert, 1995). Taking into consideration the relationships between the Big Five personality traits and job involvement, a study done on Taiwanese

population shows that neuroticism relates negatively to employee job involvement, whereas extroversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness relate positively to it (Liao & Lee, 2009).

Taking into consideration the effects of job demands on *job satisfaction*, low-demand/ unpleasant encounters were significantly and negatively related to job satisfaction, professional commitment and frequency and intensity of emotional exhaustion, while high-demand/ pleasant encounters were also related to frequency and intensity of emotional exhaustion (Gaither & Nadkarni, 2012). Personal work style can be seen as the manner in which the individual works, taking into consideration some personal characteristics that affect how well they perform in their job (Gambrell, 2005). Greater employee efficiency requires a correlation between personal work style and job requirements, otherwise, this could predict involvement and satisfaction at work. In this context, we assume that a person who identifies his/her personal style of working with the organizational environment will be more involved in the task and satisfied at work.

Based on the evidence presented above, we formulated two objectives: a) to identify if there is a correlation between preferred work style and work demands (on subjective perceptions); b) to identify the extent to which this match predicts involvement and job satisfaction, taking into consideration the age.

Method

Participants

The 333 participants were employees, aged between 20 and 65 years (with $M = 34.43$ and $SD = 8.87$), 111 men and 212 women. They were employed both in public institutions (126) and private companies (164), with different levels of studies – high school and under high school (148) and graduate and postgraduate (185).

Measures

Working Style Questionnaire (Constantin et al., 2010) includes 62 items and the 7 factor characteristics for a preferred working style (adaptive-innovative, dependent-independent, planned-spontaneous, individualist-collectivist, involved-detached, intuitive-analytical, inductive-deductive).

WDSM & TI questionnaire (Constantin, 2013) is used to assess the current job demands. It contains 28 bipolar type items, where the subject can respond to the degree he/she considers the current job requirements of an employee who is closer to the description of the left or the right pole.

Q12 questionnaire is applied to assess the degree of involvement with the current job (employee engagement). This instrument is based on 25 years of management research through thousands of focus groups (Buckingham & Coffman 1999). It evaluates those basic attitudes that affect employee morale in the workplace and it distinguishes the difference between the productive jobs and others. They are grouped under the term *emotional involvement of employees* - the extent to which they identify with organizational goals, participate with interest and persuade them to achieve recognition as well as finding satisfaction. There are 12 items on which the subject can respond from a 5-step scale (from "very small extent" to "great extent"). A meta-analysis of 4,172 business units (Harter, Schmidt, Killham & Asplund, 2006) obtained a Cronbach alpha of 0.91.

Work Satisfaction Questionnaire (Constantin, 2004) contains 32 items, where the subject can respond on a Likert scale in 6 steps (from "never true" to "always true"). Based on a population of 566 subjects, the author reported the following factors and corresponding internal consistency coefficients: *payment and promotion* 0.82, *leadership and interpersonal relationships* (0.76), *organizational and communication* (0.73). Throughout the whole questionnaire the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.87.

Data collection procedure

The respondents involved in this study were employees from different organizations. Data was collected from a total of 333 participants through a survey questionnaire. A research assistant described the reason for this study, the voluntary and the anonymous nature of the study and then presented each questionnaire.

Results

Descriptive statistics for the variables included in the study

Data from this research were analyzed with two statistical programs: SPSS for Windows 17.0 and AMOS Graphics. For each questionnaire we applied the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal distribution of data (Table 1).

	M	SD	Min	Max	α	Z_{KS}	p
Working style	28.39	6.64	9.00	48.00	.67	.63	.82
SM - adaptive	.48	.35	.00	1.00	.91	2.36	.00**
SM - dependent	.38	.33	.00	1.00	.84	2.86	.00**
SM - planned	.56	.27	.00	1.00	.75	2.37	.00**
SM - individualist	.59	.39	.00	1.00	.88	4.23	.00**
SM - involved	.37	.29	.00	1.00	.77	2.65	.00**
SM - intuitive	.42	.33	.00	1.00	.76	3.01	.00**
SM - inductive	.42	.33	.00	1.00	.77	3.15	.00**

Work demands	104.49	16.86	55.00	171.00	.75	.85	.46
JD - adaptive	3.64	1.71	1.00	7.00	.73	1.86	.00**
JD - dependent	2.85	1.63	1.00	7.00	.68	2.60	.00**
JD - planned	3.05	1.50	1.00	7.00	.68	2.24	.00**
JD - individualist	4.39	1.64	1.00	7.00	.63	1.61	.01*
JD - involved	3.65	1.57	1.00	7.00	.39	1.73	.00**
JD - intuitive	4.37	1.54	1.00	7.00	.60	1.93	.00**
JD - inductive	3.62	1.44	1.00	7.00	.53	1.86	.00**
PP	3.63	.58	2.00	5.00	.80	.87	.43
SP	3.32	.35	2.44	4.58	.57	1.01	.25

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables; *Note.* M = mean, *SD* = standard deviation, *Min* = minimum, *Max* = maximum, α = Alpha Cronbach, Z_{KS} = index of normal distribution, **p* significant under .05; ***p* significant under .01; *SM 09* = working style questionnaire, *JD* = work demands questionnaire, *PP* = involvement in work questionnaire, *SP* = work satisfaction questionnaire.

To test the internal consistency of *work demands* questionnaire, we calculated an alpha Cronbach for each factor. Because the coefficient was too small, we deleted some factors from the analyses: work demands on involved-detached, work demands on inductive-deductive. For better internal consistency for the work satisfaction questionnaire, we deleted 3 items (1, 5, 13) and we obtained an .60 coefficient. We obtained a normal distribution for the total scores of each questionnaire, so this data are suitable for parametric statistical methods. Because for the score on each factor we cannot normalize the distribution, we used nonparametric statistical methods for these scores. To reduce extreme values for the variable work demands we used the *winsorizing* method (Sava, 2004).

The Turnover Intentions have a minimum value because the two questions with no/yes response categories were coded as 0 and 1, and the two questions measured with a five-point Likert scale were 1 to 5. To eliminate these differences on the analyses we used the variables z-scores.

Matching index calculation

To check the relation between preferred work style and work demands, we applied a Spearman correlation (Table 2). Most of the correlations obtained medium or strong effects and mainly the ones with a negative sign on adaptive and intuitive factors.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 SMadap	-										
2 SMdep	.15**	-									
3 SMplan	-.56**	-.13*	-								
4 SMindiv	-.27**	-.61**	.18**	-							
5 SMinv	-.04	.17**	-.03	-.07	-						
6 SMint	-.40**	.01	.44**	.01	.15**	-					
7 SMind	-.34**	-.13*	.34**	.20**	.16**	.47**	-				
8 JDadapt	-.47**	-.14*	.29**	.15**	-.12*	.20**	.12*	-			
9 JDdep	.02	.35**	.02	-.34**	.08	.03	-.13*	.02	-		
10 JDplan	-.29**	-.02	.36**	.07	.01	.18**	.10	.32**	.20**	-	
11 JDindiv	-.13*	-.37**	.13*	.39**	-.05	.06	.12*	.14**	-.47*	.06	-
12 JDint	.19**	.07	-.14**	-.00	.07	-.33**	-.13*	-.20**	.00	-.16**	.02

Table 2. Correlations between working style questionnaire and work demands questionnaire; Note: SM = working style factors, JD = work demands factors; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

To verify next research objective, we calculated a *matching index* between preferred work style and work demands (on total scores), defined as the difference between the T scores of the two variables (as it was used in Rayneri et al, 2006).

The relation between work characteristics, organization involvement and satisfaction

To test the mediations proposed for the total mat high index and for the matching index for each factor, we used multivariate statistics and SEM program by AMOS. On model 1 (Fig.2), we tested the mediating role work involvement at work between the matching index and work satisfaction, but we did not obtain significant results (Table 3). We used the bootstrapping method to see if the indirect effect was significant and obtained a non-significant relation between the index of matching and work satisfaction but a significant relation between involvement in work and work satisfaction.

Mediation Path	Unstandardized estimate	SE	Standardized estimate	Bias-corrected 90% CI for mean indirect effect	
				Lower CI	Upper CI
<i>Matching index</i> → <i>work involvement</i> → <i>work satisfaction</i>	-.016	.015	-.003	-.017	.308

Table 3. Mediation effect of involvement in work between work characteristics and work satisfaction

The correlations among matching index and involvement in work, matching index and work satisfaction were small and positive. This weak relation between work characteristics and work involvement or satisfaction does not seem to be as important as a relation between work involvement and satisfaction between these two variables obtained a negative and strong effect. This result shows that people with a high level of involvement in work have a low level of work satisfaction; this can be explained by contextual factors which modify the level of satisfaction of employees: job environment, routine tasks, salary etc.

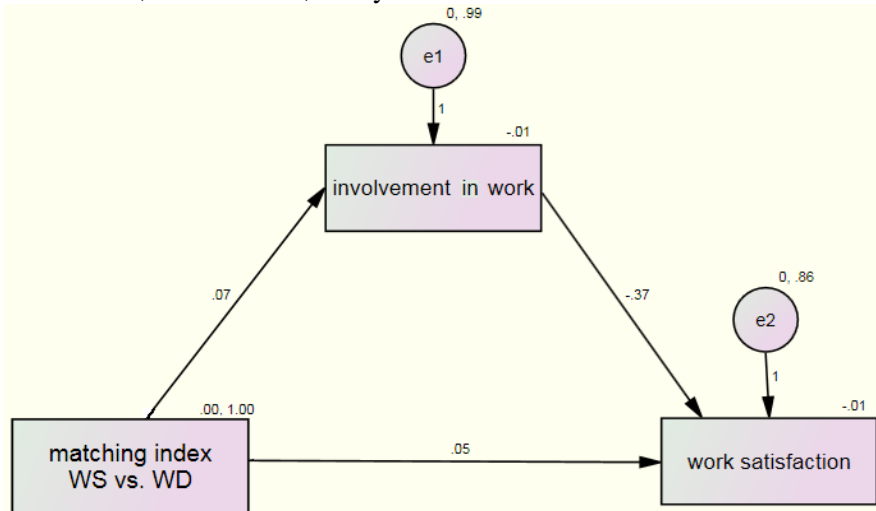


Figure 1: Model 1; Note: CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .16, $\chi^2 = .01$, $p = .91$

For model 2 (Fig. 3), we added *age* as a predictor for involvement in work. The results were similar to the previous model because we did not obtain the mediating effect of involvement in work (Table 4).

Mediation Path	Unstandardized estimate	SE	Standardized estimate	Bias-corrected 90% CI for mean indirect effect	
				Lower CI	Upper CI
Age → work involvement → work satisfaction	.00	0.014	.003	-.001	.001

Table 4. *Mediation effect of involvement in work between age and work satisfaction*

The variable *age* seems to correlate at a low level and in a negative way with the matching index. Because of this, we can conclude that older people are more likely to reduce matching of work style and work demands probably because most of the jobs do not change its demands for each employee.

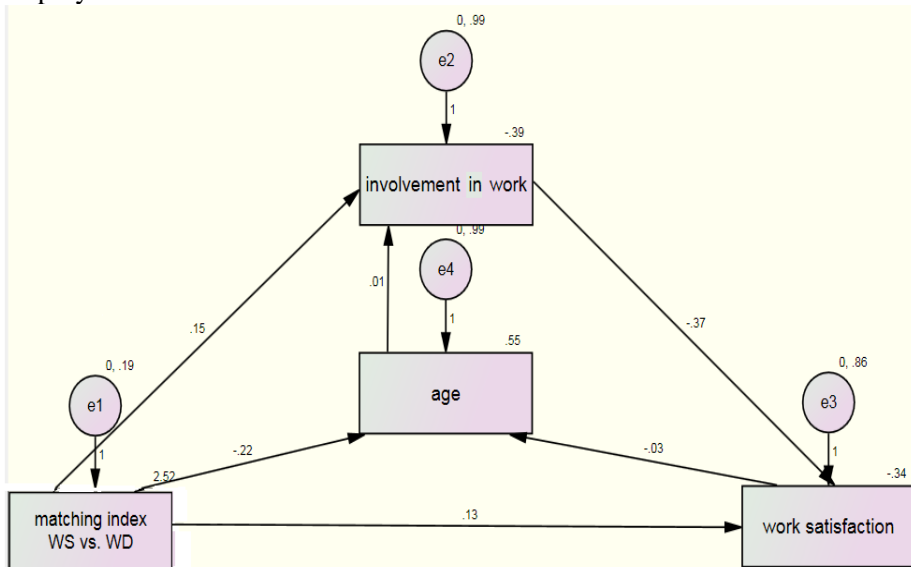


Figure 3: Model 2; Note: $CFI = 1.00$, $NFI = .99$, $RMSEA = .00$, $\chi^2 = .21$, $p = .89$

Discussion

Taking into consideration that *professional involvement* or participation in organizational decision-making can enhance *employee satisfaction* (Mortensen & Fullmer, 2002; Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Robert, 1995), we assumed that a condition to maximize efficiency in the workplace matches the *personal work style* of the employee with the *job demands*. Another objective of this research was to show if this matching can correlate with job satisfaction and if this relation is related to the involvement on the job.

Some conclusions can be reached from this research. First of all, there is a significant correlation between preferred *work style* and *job demands*. An aspect that can influence job performance in a positive way because the way they like to work is compatible with what the job or company requires. Because the analyses was made on each factor of working style and work demands, we can remark that the strongest correlation was a negative one and was for people with both an adaptive-innovative working style and work demands ($r = -.47$). This shows that people who have an adaptive working style prefer to accomplish demands on an innovative style and vice versa: innovative people prefer adaptive requests from the workplace. The relationship is not as strong, but there is also a negative one for subjects who have both work style and work demands for the intuitive and analytical type ($r = -.33$). On the other hand, the relationship is a positive one for employees who coincide work style and work demands being dependent/independent ($r = .35$), planned/spontaneous ($r = .36$) or the individualist/collective ($r = .39$) type. For them there is a direct relationship between preferred work style and work requests. The analyses can be detailed by some differences between low-demands and high-demands like other researchers have done (Gaither & Nadkarni, 2012).

A second important finding from our empirical results is that this matching of personal work style with job demands can correlate with work satisfaction in a positive way, and it seems to correlate in a negative way with the employee's age. These results are concordant with the scientific results which present a relation between the person–job fit model and a number of outcomes, including job performance and satisfaction (Caldwell & O'Reilly). We can conclude that high level of matching between *personal work style* and *job demands* is associated with a high level of work satisfaction, both directly and indirectly (through work involvement). This relation (correlations) is still at an average level, and we have to supplement the data to be able to generalize these findings.

In practice, these results can be used to propose strategies in order to increase employee satisfaction. Given a mismatch between personal work style and job demands, the organizational environment can assist employees giving them tasks that they can easily adapt to, tasks that are familiar to them or stereotyped tasks which increase *self-efficacy*. The accent should be placed on personal characteristics and less on job characteristics. Moreover, involvement in work can be used as a mediator between J-P fit and professional satisfaction, interventions aimed at increasing involvement of the employees, resulting in a reduction job - personality discrepancies on job satisfaction.

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