

# Fit Perception and Engagement: The Mediating Role of Work Meaningfulness

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## Abstract

Research on engagement has gained considerable attention in recent years as it is a strong predictor of a range of positive individual and organizational outcomes. There is a question of why the level of the engagement is different from employee to employee in an organization, though they are provided with the same resources. This study aims to investigate the influence of fit perception on engagement and the role of the employee's psychological condition (work meaningfulness) on this relationship. This study mainly employed a survey research strategy, and data were primarily garnered from a questionnaire. This study was conducted among 145 respondents from the public sector organizations in Sri Lanka. Partial least-square structural equation modelling was employed to analyse the generated data. In this study, the researcher has conceptualized fit perception as a higher order construct comprising Person Job fit and Person Organization fit. The study revealed that fit perception positively influences employee engagement, and this relationship is mediated by work meaningfulness. This study contributes to the literature by deepening the understanding of the fit perception and engagement relationship by introducing work meaningfulness as a mediator variable. By highlighting how engagement is influenced by fit perception and work meaningfulness, this study facilitates practitioners to build and maintain an engaged workforce. Further contributions of this study, the avenue for future research, and study limitations are presented in detail at the end of this article.

## Key Words

Engagement, Fit Perception, Job Demand, Job Resource, Work Meaningfulness, Psychological Conditions

## Introduction

Organizations are very concerned in building and keeping engaged employees because they are highly motivated and productive in the workplace, and the engagement is an index of employee well-being (Landells & Albrecht, 2019; Leiter & Bakker, 2010; Rayton et al., 2019; Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). Therefore, researchers and practitioners have made many attempts to deepen the understanding of work engagement and identify various antecedents and consequences of engagement. According to fit-theory, individuals' 'fit' perception leads to the formation of their attitudes and behaviours. Fit is the 'similarity' or 'match' employees and organizations experience (Kristof, 1996; Yu, 2013). Employees' desire to "fit" comes from a desire for needs fulfilment, and they search for jobs and organizations to which they fit well (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). Employees who perceive a high level of fit feel that they

have the necessary skills and capabilities to perform their job and are provided with necessary resources to satisfy their job demands and personal needs (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Employees' feeling of fit influence their job attitudes such as commitment, satisfaction and engagement (Rayton et al., 2019). Lack of understanding of the influence of fit perception that comes from individuals' inherent needs on engagement could badly affect organizations' efforts to build and maintain the engaged workforce.

There is a limited number of studies that examined the association between fit perception and engagement. Researchers (Bakker et al., 2011; Christian et al., 2011) emphasized the need for further research to expand our understanding of the influence of fit perception on engagement. The researcher found only a limited number of studies that examined the association between the fit perception and engagement since 2011. However, the lack

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of consistencies was observed among these studies: these studies used different types of engagement and fit and employed different research designs. Many of these studies employed a cross-sectional design. They examined the positive influence of fit (either PJ-fit or PO-fit) on a different type of engagement such as Job engagement, Work engagement, Organizational engagement, Student engagement and Newcomer engagement (Alfes et al., 2016; Biswas & Bhatnagar, 2013; Bui et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2014; Kimura, 2011; Maden-Eyiusta, 2016; Saks & Gruman, 2011; Viljevac et al., 2012; Warr & Inceoglu, 2012). A few studies deploy the longitudinal design to find the relationship between the fit perception and engagement (Ho & Astakhova, 2018; Lu et al., 2014; Sortheix et al., 2013). All these studies considered fit perception as a lower-order construct. Though Chuang et al. (2016) conceptualized fit perception as a higher order construct, they did not link fit perception to engagement. In a recent study, Rayton et al. (2019) examined the influence of PO-fit and PJ-fit on engagement and the mediating role of organizational commitment and satisfaction on this relationship. However, there is still a need for deepening the understanding of the fit perception and engagement relationship to expand the literature on fit perception and engagement. Also, there is a need for directing organizations to develop strategies for building and maintaining an engaged workforce (Bakker et al., 2011; Christian et al., 2011; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014)

Work meaningfulness is a positive work-related psychological condition. Work meaningfulness is an employee's feeling that the work he/she does is worthwhile, useful and valuable (Albrecht, 2015; Kahn, 1990; Landells & Albrecht, 2019). Therefore, employees with a high level of Fit- Perception may feel that their work is meaningful and such feeling may influence their attitudes, such as engagement and well-being. Recent studies found that employees' psychological conditions such as availability, safety, and meaningfulness influence the relationship between job resources and engagement (Byrne et al., 2017; Landells & Albrecht, 2017, 2019). However, the role of meaningfulness on the relationship between fit perception and engagement remains mostly untested.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the influence of fit perception and work meaningfulness on employees' engagement. This study also introduces work meaningfulness as a mediator between the fit perception and engagement relationship in the light of Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) Theory. Also, this study measures fit perception as a high-order construct of PJ-fit and PO-fit. This study contributes to the literature by deepening the understanding of the fit perception and engagement relationship by introducing work meaningfulness as a mediator variable and considering the fit perception as a higher order construct. By highlighting how fit perception and meaningfulness influence engagement, this study facilitates practitioners to build engaged workforce.

## Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### *Fit Perception*

Among the various types of fits, PO-fit and PJ-fit have been widely discussed among research scholars and practitioners because these two types of fit have always been related to positive organizational and individual outcomes (Cable & DeRue 2002; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014; Kristof 1996). Kristof (1996) defines PO-fit as the compatibility between an individual and an organization. There is high PO-fit when an employee feels that their values and goals are fitting with the organizational environment. High level of PO-fit leads to the positive individual and organizational level outcomes (Holland 1997; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987). The PO-fit concept emerged from Tom's (1971) suggestions that employees are more successful when there is a compatibility between the organization and their personality. Consequently, many studies on fit theory were founded on the Tom's (1971) idea that the PO-fit is the compatibility between the individual's fundamental characteristics and the organization environment (Christiansen et al., 1997). However, the subsequent studies on fit theory focused on the value compatibility between individuals and organizations.

It is evident that, though there are various operationalizations of PO-fit, each of them focuses to what extent the personality of the individual is congruent with organizational characteristics (Jung & Takeuchi, 2014; Kristof et al., 2005). A meta-analysis highlighted that many studies measure PO-fit as a fit between individuals and their organization (Kristof et al., 2005). Previous studies reported that the high level of PO-fit reduces the employee turnover, leads to positive work-related attitudes, positive social behaviour, high work performance and positive organizational outcomes (Jung & Takeuchi, 2014; Kristof et al., 2005). Significantly, PO-fit positively influences necessary work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly et al., 1991).

PJ-fit relates to the congruence between an individual and his or her job (Kristof, 1996). According to Venkatesh et al. (2017) 'PJ-fit focuses on the extent to which there is congruence between what the individual brings to the table, what the job needs are, and what the job provides the individual' (p. 4). PJ-fit consists of two dimensions: demands-abilities and needs-supplies. The demands-abilities fit is employees' perception that they have capabilities and competencies to meet job requirements. On the other hand, the needs-supplies fit is an employee's perception that there is congruence between their motives and needs that their job provides (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996). Both the Demands-abilities fit and needs-supplies fit are the two components of PJ-fit (Edwards, 1991). PJ-fit perception motivates employees to master challenging tasks as they feel that they have the required skills and

abilities and are provided with the necessary resources to satisfy their expectations (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014). Although PO-fit and PJ-fit are different concepts, they are similar in terms of the compatibility between the individual and their work and work environment.

### *Work Meaningfulness*

Work meaningfulness is 'a positive work-related psychological state reflecting the extent to which employees think and feel they make a significant, important, and useful contribution to a worthwhile purpose in the execution of their work' (Albrecht, 2015, p. 212). It is related to an individual's feeling that their work is meaningful and valuable (Kahn, 1990). Work meaningfulness is an employee's psychological state that influences work outcomes (Humphrey et al., 2007). Previous studies explored a close association between work meaningfulness and engagement (Albrecht, 2013; Albrecht & Su, 2012; Byrne et al., 2017; Kahn, 1990; Kahn & Heaphy, 2014; Landells & Albrecht, 2019; May et al., 2004). Although mediator role of meaningfulness on the relationship between job resources and engagement has been already tested (Landells & Albrecht, 2017, 2019), the role of meaningfulness on the relationship between the fit perception and engagement remains mostly untested.

### *Fit Perceptions, Work Meaningfulness and Work Engagement*

Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Employees' ability to balance the demands of their jobs and available resources is central for employees to become engaged in their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). When employees make a cognitive judgment between his/her needs and what the job offers and his or her skills and abilities related to the requirements of the job he/she perceive a high level of fit (Cable & Edwards 2004). In return, the fit perceptions, influence his/her attitudes toward their work and work environment (Wheeler et al., 2012) and such an attitude can be engagement (Jung & Takeuchi, 2014). Employees with a high level of fit perception are more willing to put their investment in their work and become engaged (Crawford et al., 2010; Jung & Takeuchi, 2014). According to Kahn (1990), employees with high perceived fit feel more meaning in work and become highly engaged. Jung and Takeuchi (2014) argued that work meaningfulness emerged when employees strongly perceived that sufficient resources were available to meet their work and workplace requirements. Also, high perceived fit facilitates employees' identification with the organization because high fit perception enables employees to better understand the expectations (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Such identification and understanding facilitate employees to engage in their work. Conservation of resource (COR) theory

highlights that resources help individuals to cultivate more resources (Gruman & Saks, 2013; Hobfoll, 2001, 202). Employees' fit perception as a resource can increase positive work-related psychological state of employees (work meaningfulness) which facilitates them to engage in their work.

Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2014) provides a potentially useful explanatory framework to examine fit perception, work meaningfulness and engagement relationship. JD-R theory defines that the work environment is a combination of demand and resources. JD-R theory suggests that job and personal resources (e.g., job autonomy and self-efficacy) lead to employees' engagement. The JD-R theory's job demands are proposed, via an energy depleting and health impairment pathway, to adversely impact engagement and malicious individual and organizational outcomes (Schaufeli, 2013). Job resources facilitate the employee's management of job demand, motivate personal learning and development, and produce positive outcomes. The sources of the resources can be the organization, interpersonal and group relations and the task itself (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands are related to adverse outcomes such as burnout, disengagement and health problems, whereas job resources are related to positive results such as work engagement and commitment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007).

Employees perceive a high level of fit when (a) they have personal resources or are provided with sufficient resources to complete the required task; (b) they find job and job environment that provides sufficient resources to meet their inner need. In other words, employees who feel that they are with sufficient resources to meet the demands of work and workplace and their expectations perceive a high level of fit, and such perception enhance employees' positive work-related psychological state. Therefore, the perceived fit as a resource facilitates employees to engage in their work and enhance their positive psychological state which makes employees think and feel that they can make a significant and useful contribution to a meaningful purpose in the execution of their work (Albrecht, 2015). Based on the previous studies and JD-R theory, one can expect that fit perception as a resource facilitates employee's engagement and the feeling of work meaningfulness. Thus, the researcher proposes the following hypotheses.

- H1: Employee's fit perception positively influences their engagement
- H2: Fit perception positively influences work meaningfulness
- H3: Work meaningfulness positively influences engagement

When employees are provided with sufficient resources, they feel that the work is meaningful (Jung & Takeuchi, 2014). Past studies reported that work meaningfulness as

employees' psychological conditions mediate the influence of job resources on engagement (Byrne et al., 2017; Landells & Albrecht, 2017, 2019). According to the JD-R theory, while resources function as a predictor of engagement, some resources can influence the relationship between resource and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Employees' feeling of work meaningfulness, a positive work-related psychological state (Albrecht, 2015), can be considered an individual level resource and influences the relationship between the resources (fit perception) and engagement. Moreover, when employees perceive that they have the right abilities and skills and are provided with the necessary resources to satisfy their inherent needs, they perceive that their work is meaningful; consequently, they are highly engaged in their work. Based on the previous studies and JD-R theory, one can expect that fit perception as a resource facilitates employees' engagement through meaningfulness. Thus, the researcher has proposed the following hypothesis to achieve objectives of this study.

H4: Work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between fit perception and engagement

## Methods

In this study, to attain the research objectives the researcher adopted logical arguments that build on existing theoretical and empirical foundations. Such a deductive approach requires a quantitative method (Bryman, 2011; Creswell, 2014), and thus, the researcher adopted a quantitative approach. This study mainly employed a survey research strategy, and data were primarily garnered from a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed with previously validated scales to measure the constructs used in this study.

The current study relied on cross-sectional and self-reported data. Self-reports might be suitable to assess perceived experiences; however, cross-sectional and self-reported data are vulnerable to common method variance (CMV). The researcher has taken some precautions to minimize CMV in the survey design stage and detect CMV in the analysis stage. The researcher has taken the following steps to minimize the CMV in the survey design stage: participants were informed that absolute anonymity and confidentiality will be kept and requested to answer the questions honestly and to the best of their knowledge; difficulties in understanding the survey was minimized to reduce the chance of responding questions randomly (Chang et al., 2010; Podsakoff et al., 2003). In the analysis stage, the researcher ran Harman's single factor analysis to detect CMV in the data set and found CMV is not a severe issue in this study.

## Respondents

The researcher administered questionnaire surveys to collect the data for hypotheses testing. Data were collected

from employees in public-sector organizations in Sri Lanka. In public-sector organizations, more importance is given to employees' educational qualifications, and less importance is given to their capabilities, psychological needs, and expectations when employees are selected to a post. Nevertheless, in the private sector, considerable importance is given to the employees' psychological needs and expectations in the selection process. Therefore, employees in public-sector organizations only have been invited to this study. After getting approval from the head of the department/unit, questionnaires were distributed to the organisation's permanent staff. Respondents were provided with a pre-paid envelope with the researcher's address to enable the questionnaires' confidential direct return. In total, 400 questionnaires were distributed. The researcher received 189 questionnaires from the respondents. Forty-four questionnaires were rejected because of a large number of missing variables (more than 15% per variable), and ultimately this study was conducted with 145 respondents. Table 1 shows the profile of respondents included in this study.

Male and female participants constituted 48% and 52%, respectively. Majority of the employees (54%) are university degree holders. Concerning age and working experience of respondents, their average age and working experience were 36.3 and 8.2 years, with a standard deviation of 8.4 and 7.1 years, respectively.

## Variables and Measures

In this study, the researcher conceptualized that the fit perception, work meaningfulness and engagement are the predictor, mediator and dependent variable, respectively. Work meaningfulness and engagement can be influenced by both the work and the work environment, which reflects PJ-fit and PO-fit. Also, some previous research on the fit perception considered the fit perception as a higher order construct. For example, Chuang et al. (2016) conceptualized the perception of the person environment fit as a higher order construct of four types of fit.

When the constructs that researchers use are quite complex, they can be operationalized at higher abstraction

**Table 1.** Respondents Profile

Respondents Profile		Count (%)
Gender	Male	70 (48)
	Female	75 (52)
Marital status	Married	104 (72)
	Unmarried	41 (28)
Education	Degree holder	78 (54)
	Others	67 (46)
		Mean (SD)
Work experience	8.2	7.1
Age	36.3	8.4

**Source:** Survey data.

levels (Hair et al., 2017). Higher-order models or hierarchical component models (HCMs) involve examining second-order structures that contain many layers of components. In this study, the fit perception can be described at two levels of abstraction. Particularly, fit perception can be represented by two first-order components that capture separate attributes of fit perception. The first-order component includes PJ-Fit and PO-Fit. These first-order components might form the more abstract second-order component fit perception. By considering the fit perception as a second-order construct, it captures the essence of both constructs (PO-Fit and PJ-Fit), and the model can be simplified. The HCMs allow researchers to reduce the relationship in the structural model and make the model more parsimonious (Hair et al., 2017). Also, considering the fit perception as HCMs minimizes the complexity in identifying mediator role in this study which is a focal point of this study.

### *Work Engagement*

It was measured with the nine-item Utrecht work engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The scale measures respondents' levels of energy, willingness to invest effort, enthusiasm, inspiration, concentration, and involvement in their work. This scale consists of three dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption are highly correlated (Seppälä et al., 2009). Recent studies treated them as one factor with acceptable reliability coefficient (James, 2019; Rayton & Yalabic, 2014; Reilly et al., 2019). The present study confirmed the one-factor model through factor analysis. The original items scored on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). To maintain consistency among scales, a 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used. A sample item includes 'I feel happy when I am working intensely'. The average score of all items in the scale was computed. Higher scores indicate greater levels of work engagement. The previous study reported very high-reliability score (James, 2019; Rayton et al., 2019). For the current study, internal consistency was satisfactory (CrA = .93)

### *Work Meaningfulness*

It measures the extent to which employees think and feel they make a significant, important, and useful contribution to a meaningful purpose in implementing their work. Work meaningfulness was measured with six items scale drawn from May (2004). A sample item includes 'The work I do on this job is very important to me'. A 7-point Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree was used to maintain consistency among scales. May et al. (2004) reported a high-reliability coefficient (CrA > .90). The estimated internal consistency reliability of the current study was found to be CrA = .94.

### *PO-fit*

PO-fit is a measure of to what extent employees fit their organization. It was measured with three items scale

developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). This measure has been used in various studies and always been related to the other measures used in the present studies. Previous studies (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Rayton et al., 2019) have reported very high-reliability coefficient (CrA was > .90). A sample item is, 'The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that the organization values'. Participants responded items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The average score of all items in the scale was computed. Higher scores indicate greater levels of respondents' PO-fit. The estimated internal consistency reliability of the current study was found to be CrA = .86.

### *PJ-fit*

The degree of fit between the person and their job was measured using six items scale modified by Rayton et al. (2019) from the original scale developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). Sample items are 'The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my present job' and 'The match is very good between the demands of my job and my personal skills'. Rayton et al. (2019) found a high-reliability score for this six items scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (CrA) = 0.92). Participants responded items on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). The average score of all items in the scale was computed. Higher scores indicate greater levels of respondents' PO-fit. The estimated internal consistency reliability of the current study was found to be CrA = .93.

## *Procedure for Data Analysis*

First, the survey data were entered into a Microsoft Excel sheet and then transferred to SPSS 20 for data cleaning and analysis. The data were preliminarily screened for errors and outliers. As the current study is a prediction oriented and the number of samples is small variance-based structural equation modelling was employed instead of covariance-based (PLS-SEM) SEM (Hair et al., 2011, 2013).

The fit perception was considered as a second-order component. The first-order components are PJ-Fit and PO-Fit. The researcher followed the guidelines proposed by Hair et al. (2018, p. 47–51) to estimate the second-order component. The fit perception was conceptualized as Reflective-Formative type component, and it was estimated using the repeated indicator approach.

## *Data Analysis*

The correlations between fit perception, work meaningfulness and engagement were ranging from 0.26 to 0.58 (see Table 1). The reasonable correlation values suggest that constructs are independent and fit for path model analysis.

## *Measurement Models*

The constructs included in the present study are reflective and reliability and validity of the measurement model were

assessed through widely accepted criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2011). The reliability and convergent validity were assessed through items loading, CrA, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2011, 2017). Table 2 specifies correlations between constructs in the model, CrA, CR and AVE. Factor loadings of each indicator were greater than 0.7, except three indicators of fit perception (see Table 4) and one indicator of work meaningfulness. The three indicators of fit perception were kept because its loadings were significant, and the AVE of the construct (fit perception) was greater than the threshold value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2011). As the loading of one indicator of meaningfulness was very low (0.39), it was removed from the scale. CrA and CR of each construct were greater than the expected value of 0.70, thus confirming the reliability of both the indicators and constructs. AVEs of all latent variables were

more than the threshold value of 0.50 (Table 2) which explain convergent validity of the constructs in the model.

As advised by Hair et al. (2011, 2017), discriminant validity of the constructs was assessed through three criteria: square root of AVE of each construct, Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) and indicator's loading and its cross-loading. It was found that the square root of AVE of each construct was more significant than the correlation of other constructs (see Table 3) and each indicator's loadings to the specified constructs are significantly higher than the loading to any other constructs (see Table 4). The HTMT value for all pair of constructs was less than the threshold value of 0.85, and the confidence interval of the HTMT statistic did not include the value 1 for all combinations of constructs. Based on these assessments, it can be concluded that the measurement model establishes satisfactory discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2011, 2017).

**Table 2.** Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs	ENG	FIT-P	PJ-Fit	PO-Fit	WoM	CrA	CR	AVE
Engagement (ENG)	1.00					0.93	0.94	0.64
FIT perception	0.50	1.00				0.90	0.92	0.56
PJ-Fit	0.50	0.96	1.00			0.93	0.94	0.73
PO-Fit	0.26	0.67	0.43	1.00		0.86	0.91	0.78
Work Meaning	0.58	0.52	0.48	0.40	1.00	0.94	0.96	0.81

**Source:** Data analysis.

**Notes:** The shaded area shows the correlations between the variables. AVE = average variance extracted; ENG = engagement; FIT-P = fit perception; PJ-Fit = person-job fit; PO-Fit = person-organization fit; WoM = work meaningfulness.

**Table 3.** Fornell–Larcker Criterion Analysis

Constructs	ENG	FIT-P	WoM
Engagement	<b>0.80</b>		
FIT perception	0.50	<b>0.75</b>	
Work meaningfulness	0.58	0.52	<b>0.90</b>

**Source:** Data analysis.

**Notes:** Bold diagonal figures (bold) are the square root of AVE. ENG = engagement; FIT-P = fit perception; WoM = work meaningfulness.

**Table 4.** Loading and Cross-Loading

	Engagement	Fit Perception	Work Meaningfulness
Eng_1	<b>0.70</b>	0.25	0.45
Eng_2	<b>0.84</b>	0.40	0.47
Eng_3	<b>0.81</b>	0.38	0.54
Eng_4	<b>0.87</b>	0.46	0.49
Eng_5	<b>0.75</b>	0.33	0.31
Eng_6	<b>0.82</b>	0.45	0.45
Eng_7	<b>0.82</b>	0.40	0.46
Eng_8	<b>0.83</b>	0.46	0.55
Eng_9	<b>0.76</b>	0.43	0.40
Fit-P_1	0.50	<b>0.84</b>	0.38
Fit-P_2	0.55	<b>0.83</b>	0.49
Fit-P_3	0.42	<b>0.86</b>	0.43
Fit-P_4	0.32	<b>0.82</b>	0.43
Fit-P_5	0.39	<b>0.79</b>	0.39

(Table 4 continued)

(Table 4 continued)

	Engagement	Fit Perception	Work Meaningfulness
Fit-P_6	0.36	<b>0.77</b>	0.32
Fit-P_7	0.17	<b>0.52</b>	0.36
Fit-P_8	0.30	<b>0.65</b>	0.36
Fit-P_9	0.21	<b>0.59</b>	0.35
WoM_1	0.56	0.45	<b>0.89</b>
WoM_2	0.48	0.45	<b>0.90</b>
WoM_3	0.46	0.49	<b>0.94</b>
WoM_4	0.52	0.50	<b>0.89</b>
WoM_5	0.58	0.47	<b>0.89</b>

**Source:** Data analysis.

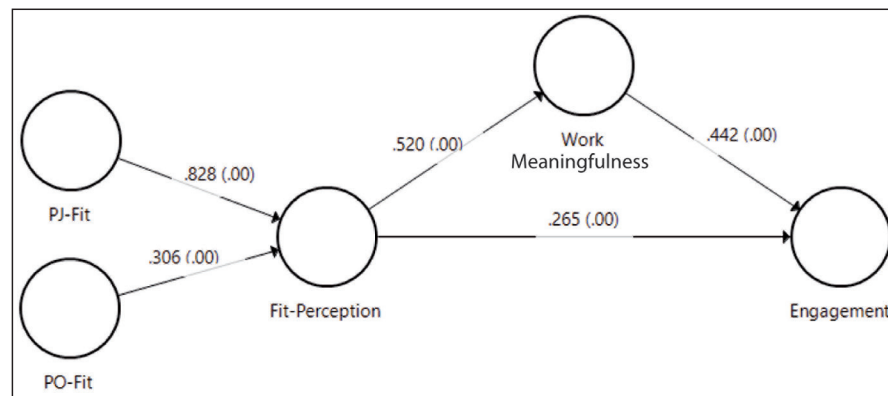
**Notes:** ENG = engagement; FIT-P = fit perception; WoM = work meaningfulness.

### Structural Model

As advised by Hair et al. (2011, 2017), the structural model was assessed through multicollinearity, the significance of path coefficient, variance explained ( $R^2$ ), predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) and the effect size ( $f^2$ ). The determinant of the coefficient of the critical endogenous construct ( $R^2$  for work meaningfulness = 0.27 and  $R^2$  for engagement = 0.38) was satisfactory. The cross-validated redundancy of dependent variables was larger than the threshold value of zero (work meaningfulness = 0.20, engagement=0.23); signifying that the model had predictive relevance. Moreover, all VIF resulting from the collinearity test was <5, indicating that multicollinearity was not a threat to this structural model. The effect size of fit perception on

meaningfulness (0.37) and work meaningfulness on engagement (0.23) were large and medium, respectively, but the effect size of fit perception on engagement was small (0.08). Work meaningfulness may absorb the direct effect of the fit perception on the engagement.

The significance of the proposed relationship of each path was assessed via a bootstrapping technique. The bootstrapping procedure requires no distributional assumption (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) and produces reasonable standard error estimates (Tenenhaus et al., 2005). In PLS-SEM setting, the no sign changes option, 0.05 significance levels, and 5,000 samples in the bootstrapping setting were used to generate standard error and *t*-statistics. The path coefficients and its significance are shown in Figure 1 and Table 5.



**Figure 1.** Structural Paths and its Significance

**Source:** Data analysis.

**Table 5.** Structural Paths and its Significance

Path	Path Coefficient	STD	t-Statistics	P Values
Direct effect				
Fit perception to engagement	.26	0.09	2.90	.00
Fit perception to meaningfulness	.52	0.07	7.86	.00
Meaningfulness to engagement	.44	0.10	4.35	.00
Indirect effect				
Fit perception to engagement through meaningfulness	0.23	0.06	3.63	.00

**Source:** Data analysis.

### Mediator Effect

This study proposed that the relationship between fit perception and engagement is mediated by work meaningfulness. Researcher follows the guidelines of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Hair et al. (2013) to test the mediator effect. First, the direct relationship between the fit perception and engagement was estimated without the work meaningfulness (mediator variable), the relationship was positive ( $\beta = 0.50$ ) and significant ( $p < .05$ ). In the next step, with the mediator variable (work meaningfulness), the indirect and the direct effect were calculated. The path coefficients for fit perception to work meaningfulness (0.52) and work meaningfulness to engagement (0.44) were significant. Thus, the indirect effect of fit perception to engagement through work meaningfulness was 0.23 ( $0.52 \times 0.44$ ), and it was significant at the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, it can be concluded that work meaningfulness mediates the relationship between fit perception and engagement.

Finally, the strength of mediation was examined by estimating the variance accounted for (VAF) (Hair et al., 2013). The total effect was 0.49 (direct effect (0.26) plus indirect effect (0.23)). Thus, the VAF has a value of 0.47 ( $0.23/0.49$ ). This value shows that the mediation effect is significant, and the 47% effect of fit perception on engagement is explained by the work meaningfulness (Hair et al., 2013). The VAF is between 0.2 and 0.8 (.46), which signifies the existence of the partial mediation. That is, work meaningfulness inhibited the relationship between fit perception and engagement, thereby supporting Hypothesis 4.

### Discussion

This study aimed to examine the relationship between fit perception and engagement, and the influence of work meaningfulness on the relationship between fit perception and engagement. This study found that fit perception positively influences both work meaningfulness and employee engagement in their work. At the same time, work meaningfulness positively influences work engagement. The findings of this study also indicated that work meaningfulness plays a crucial role in the positive relationship between fit perception and engagement. In other words, fit perception influences engagement through work meaningfulness.

When employees perceive a high level of fit, they feel that they have the necessary resources to meet the work-demand, work environment-demand and inner needs. Perceived fit as a resource enhances employee engagement at work, and such fit perception makes them perceive their work as meaningful. Also, consistent with previous studies (Landells & Albrecht, 2019; Kahn, 1990), this study found that work meaningfulness increases employees' engagement. The indirect effect of fit perception on engagement

through meaningfulness is powerful, and thus it absorbed a considerable amount of the direct impact of fit perception (47%) on engagement. There was a question of why engagement is different from person to person in an organization though all employees are provided with the same resources (Rayton et al., 2019). This study found that individual-level variables such as employees' fit perception and feeling of work meaningfulness are significant matters for this difference.

### The Implication for Theory and Practice

This study contributes to both theory and practice. This study extends the knowledge of recent evidence collected on the relationship between fit perception and engagement. The current study deepens the understanding of the fit perception and engagement relationship by identifying the mediator role of the psychological condition (work meaningfulness) on this relationship. The fit perception increases employees' feeling that they can make a useful and significant contribution when they execute their work. Employees' feeling of work meaningfulness enables them to engage in their work (Albrecht, 2013; Albrecht & Su, 2012; Byrne et al., 2017). The current study explains this relationship through the light of the JD-R theory. Thus, it suggests fit perception and work meaningfulness can be considered individual-level resources in JD-R theory. Moreover, this study found that while fit perception works as a predictor of engagement, work meaningfulness works as a mediator on the relationship between fit perception and engagement.

Given that engaged employees are highly motivated and productive in the workplace (Landells & Albrecht, 2019; Leiter & Bakker, 2010; Rayton et al., 2019) organizations must think about employees' fit perception towards their work and work environment. The organization should also take the necessary steps to make employees feel that they can make a useful contribution through the work they execute. Therefore in the process of selection and recruitment of new employees, the organization should consider employees' fit perception. Notably, the study's findings alert the public-sector organizations that give more importance to employees' educational qualifications, and less importance to their capabilities, psychological needs, and expectations when employees are selected to a post. In the selection process, potential candidates should be informed the nature of the work and organization (organizational culture), expected skills, knowledge and attitudes of the employees and the resources available to fulfil workplace demands and satisfy their needs. In addition to the paper qualifications, the public-sector organizations need to develop an assessment method to assess employees' inner needs that they want to meet at the workplace to ensure the better fit to the world of work and make employees feel that their work is meaningful. In a dynamic era, the work and work demands change frequently, and organizations



should be very cautious when redesigning the job and job requirements. When an organization attempts to implement changes in the existing job in the form of job simplification, job enlargement or job enhancement employees' fit perception needs to be considered. To build an engaged workforce in the organization, when new changes are introduced, the organization should provide employees with sufficient resources to meet their workplace demand and satisfy their inner needs.

### Limitation and Further Search Idea

Given that the data were self-report and cross-sectional, the common method bias (CMB) should be considered. The researcher has attempted in both the survey design and analysis stage to minimize and detect CMB; however, the researcher's actions have some constraints in detecting CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2003). This study was conducted with a small sample (145) with a convenience sampling method and among employees only in public-sector organizations. Thus, caution needs to be undertaken about the generalizability of the findings. The findings need to be verified across different organizational settings to be generalized. Also, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the interpretation of causality.

Despite the limitations, the current study opens new insights for further research. Further research could be conducted to identify other individual level factors such as employees' psychological capital, attitudes, values that may influence engagement. Such investigations can further explain why employees have different levels of engagement despite having access to the same resources in the organization. Further studies could also be conducted to identify the moderating role of individual level variables on the relationship between fit perception and engagement to deepen the understanding of this relationship. According to Kahn (1990), work meaningfulness, psychological availability, and safety are the three psychological conditions that enhance employees' engagement. The current study assessed the influence of work meaningfulness on the relationship between fit perception and engagement; further studies are encouraged to identify the role of employees' psychological availability and psychological safety on the relationship between fit perception and engagement.

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