



Organizational Structure's Relationship to Job Satisfaction: Moderating Effects of Personality

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Abstract

The present study examined the relationship between organizational structure and job satisfaction, as well as investigated the moderating effects of conscientiousness and agreeableness on both variables. Results showed that while there is a strong relationship between organizational structure and satisfaction, personality traits also make a significant contribution to satisfaction and engagement at work. In the present study, personality factors showed moderating effects on the structure-satisfaction relationship in a manner that agreeableness drove higher satisfaction in organic organizational structures that it did in mechanistic structures. Post hoc investigations revealed extremes of high/low agreeableness driving or depressing job satisfaction depending on individual level on conscientiousness.

Review of the Literature

- The examination of person-environment (P-E) congruence, or the degree of fit between a worker and environment has been the focus of research for decades, with physical environment and job tasks being the two most popular variables of consideration.
- In recent years, a greater focus has been on the extent to which individual and social variables impact P-E congruence.
- In examining individual differences in the context of organizational behavior, the five-factor or 'Big Five' personality model has been widely validated and used in workplace settings, thus demonstrating a strong and relevant fit for examining P-E congruence.
- Through the exploration of organizational culture and structure research, a scale developed by Khandwalla (1976) has been reliably used to assess the extent to which an organization may demonstrate organic (i.e., decentralized, open, adaptable) or mechanistic (rigid, closed, traditional) cultural/structural elements.
- A key variable in the examination of P-E congruence is job satisfaction, considered important because of its critical relationship to other variables, such as performance, productivity, absenteeism, and burnout.

Hypotheses

The present study examined the following hypotheses:

1. Participants demonstrating high conscientiousness employed by organic organizations will have higher job satisfaction levels than those employed by mechanistic organizations.
2. Participants demonstrating high agreeableness employed by mechanistic organizations will have higher job satisfaction levels than participants demonstrating low agreeableness in mechanistic organizations.

Method

- Participants (n=173) were full-time employees of a variety of U.S. based organizations including for-profit companies, non-profit organizations, and educational institutions, with 55% female and 45% male ranging in age from 21-68 years old.
- Participants completed an anonymous self-report assessment measure comprised of the Big Five personality questionnaire, the mechanistic-organic organizational structure scale, and a job satisfaction questionnaire.

Findings & Discussion

- A significant interaction effect was discovered between conscientiousness and agreeableness when predicting job satisfaction, $F(2, 96) = 4.41$, $p = 0.015$.
- Additionally, a statistically significant main effect of organizational structure as a predictor of job satisfaction was obtained, $F(1, 171) = 21.22$, $p < 0.001$.
- Interestingly, there was no significant difference obtained for job satisfaction in either organic or mechanistic structure based on individual level of conscientiousness. From the findings, it appears that participants demonstrating high conscientiousness also reported strong job satisfaction regardless of their respective organizational structure.
- It may be inferred from these findings that there is a relationship between organizational structure and job satisfaction that is independent of personality. Moreover, there appears to be a strong interaction effect between conscientiousness and agreeableness when predicting job satisfaction regardless of structure, suggesting that personality traits may be studied in isolation as well as in different combinations.

References

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