



RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERSON–JOB FIT—A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Organisations increasingly recognise that sustainable competitive advantage depends on attracting and retaining employees whose competencies align with organisational objectives. Although considerable empirical evidence demonstrates that recruitment processes influence employee performance, the mechanisms through which recruitment translates into superior performance remain insufficiently explained. Existing studies largely emphasise the direct relationship between recruitment practices and employee outcomes while paying comparatively little attention to the mediating role of Person–Job Fit (P–J Fit). Furthermore, much of the available evidence originates from developed economies, limiting theoretical understanding within emerging economies. This conceptual manuscript addresses this gap by proposing a theoretical framework that explains how recruitment processes influence employee performance through Person–Job Fit. Drawing upon Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory, the paper argues that recruitment creates organisational value not merely by attracting qualified applicants but by ensuring that employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, values and interests correspond closely with job requirements. The manuscript synthesises contemporary literature to develop four theoretically derived propositions and presents a conceptual model illustrating the mediating role of Person–Job Fit. The paper contributes to human resource management literature by integrating two complementary theoretical perspectives into a unified explanatory framework that neither theory alone can adequately provide.

1. Introduction

The increasingly dynamic, knowledge-driven and globally competitive business environment has elevated human resources from an operational function to a strategic asset capable of generating sustainable organisational advantage (Armstrong, 2021; Boon et al., 2021). Organisations no longer compete solely on the basis of financial resources, technology or physical infrastructure; rather, their competitiveness increasingly depends on their ability to attract, recruit and retain talented employees whose competencies

align with organisational objectives (Gold & Smith, 2022). Consequently, recruitment has evolved beyond a routine administrative activity into a strategic human resource management practice that determines the quality of an organisation's human capital and ultimately influences organisational effectiveness (Firman & Inrawati, 2023).

Recruitment constitutes the process through which organisations identify, attract, assess and select qualified individuals capable of performing organisational roles effectively (Armstrong, 2021). Contemporary recruitment extends beyond filling vacant positions to encompass strategic workforce planning, employer branding, competency assessment, realistic job previews, digital recruitment platforms and evidence-based selection methods (Anju & Avanish, 2021; Farinha & Pina, 2024; Chen et al., 2025). These practices enable organisations to acquire employees whose competencies match both current organisational needs and future strategic directions.

Employee performance remains one of the most widely studied outcomes in human resource management because it directly influences organisational productivity, service quality, innovation and competitive advantage (Bağcı & Karabay, 2021; Goetz & Wald, 2022). Previous research consistently demonstrates that effective recruitment practices positively influence employee performance (Firman & Inrawati, 2023; Ukpabi & Salaudeen, 2021; Barattucci et al., 2025). However, the process through which recruitment creates performance advantages remains theoretically underdeveloped. Recruitment alone cannot guarantee superior employee performance if employees are assigned to positions that do not correspond with their competencies, values, interests and career aspirations (Edwards, 2023; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This observation suggests that recruitment creates value primarily by facilitating an appropriate match between employees and jobs rather than simply selecting highly qualified individuals. Person–Job Fit (P–J Fit) has therefore emerged as an important concept for explaining this mechanism (Edwards, 1991, 2023; Chhabra, 2022).

Although numerous empirical studies have independently examined recruitment practices, Person–Job Fit and employee performance, relatively few conceptual studies integrate these constructs into a comprehensive theoretical framework (Boon et al., 2021; Al-Nawasrah & Alafi, 2024). Existing studies often treat recruitment as having a direct effect on performance while overlooking the psychological and behavioral mechanisms through which recruitment decisions produce organizational outcomes. Furthermore, much of the existing literature originates from developed economies (Edwards, 2023). Consequently, there remains a need for conceptual models that integrate established theories to explain how recruitment practices translate into improved employee performance through Person–Job Fit.

This conceptual manuscript addresses this gap by synthesizing contemporary literature within an integrated theoretical framework. Drawing on Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) and Person–Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, 1991, 2023), the paper argues that recruitment enhances employee performance primarily by improving the alignment between employee competencies and job requirements. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the conceptual literature. Section 3 presents the theoretical foundation. Section 4 develops the conceptual framework and advances four research propositions. Section 5 articulates the theoretical contributions, followed by practical implications in Section 6. Section 7 outlines future research directions, and Section 8 concludes the paper.

2. Conceptual Literature Review

2.1 Employee Performance

Employee performance represents one of the most extensively investigated constructs in organisational behaviour and human resource management because it directly determines organisational productivity, competitiveness and long-term sustainability (Bağcı & Karabay, 2021). Contemporary research recognises employee performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, innovative work behaviour and organisational citizenship behaviour (Goetz & Wald, 2022). Strategic human resource management literature consistently identifies employee performance as the principal mechanism through which human resource practices create organisational value (Boon et al., 2021). Although numerous organisational practices influence employee performance, recruitment occupies a particularly important position because it determines the quality of human capital entering the organisation.

2.2 Recruitment Process

Recruitment is widely recognised as one of the most strategic functions of human resource management because it determines the quality of an organisation's workforce (Armstrong, 2021; Gold & Smith, 2022). Contemporary literature conceptualises recruitment as a comprehensive strategic process involving workforce planning, talent sourcing, employer branding, competency assessment, selection and organisational onboarding (Armstrong, 2021). Advances in artificial intelligence, predictive analytics and algorithm-based screening have transformed recruitment into a data-driven decision-making process capable of improving selection accuracy (Anju & Avanish, 2021; Farinha & Pina, 2024; Cao et al., 2024). Structured recruitment systems consistently report higher employee productivity, lower turnover rates and greater operational efficiency than informal or subjective practices (Firman & Inrawati, 2023; Barattucci et al., 2025).

2.3 Person–Job Fit

Person–Job Fit (P–J Fit) has become one of the most influential concepts in organisational behaviour for explaining why some employees perform exceptionally well while others experience persistent performance difficulties despite possessing similar qualifications (Edwards, 2023; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Person–Job Fit refers to the degree of correspondence between employees' knowledge, skills, abilities, experience, personality, values and interests and the requirements of a particular job. Kristof-Brown and colleagues distinguish between demands–abilities fit and needs–supplies fit; both dimensions contribute significantly to employee effectiveness. Contemporary research consistently demonstrates that employees experiencing high Person–Job Fit exhibit greater intrinsic motivation, stronger organisational commitment, improved engagement and superior job performance (Bağcı & Karabay, 2021; Chhabra, 2022; Goetz & Wald, 2022; Alqhaiwi et al., 2023). Recent studies also position Person–Job Fit as a strategic mechanism linking human resource management practices with employee outcomes (Al-Nawasrah & Alafi, 2024; Abualoush et al., 2022).

2.4 Critical Literature Gap

Although recruitment, employee performance and Person–Job Fit have each received substantial scholarly attention, the literature remains fragmented. Most studies investigate the direct effects of recruitment on performance or examine Person–Job Fit independently, with relatively few integrating all three constructs

into a unified theoretical framework (Boon et al., 2021; Al-Nawasrah & Alafi, 2024). Moreover, existing evidence is predominantly empirical, while conceptual integration explaining how and why recruitment enhances performance through Person–Job Fit remains limited. This gap is particularly evident in developing country contexts (Edwards, 2023). Accordingly, this paper addresses this gap by developing an integrated conceptual framework that positions Person–Job Fit as the mediating mechanism through which recruitment processes translate into enhanced employee performance.

3. Theoretical Foundation

No single theory adequately explains how recruitment influences employee performance because recruitment simultaneously concerns the acquisition of valuable human capital and the alignment of employees with organisational roles. Consequently, this paper integrates Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory to generate a coherent explanatory mechanism.

3.1 Human Capital Theory and the Logic of Recruitment

Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961) rests on the core proposition that investments in people through education, training, experience and selection generate returns in the form of higher productivity. From this theoretical standpoint, individuals differ in the stock of knowledge, skills and abilities they possess, and these differences produce measurable differences in economic output. Recruitment, within this framework, constitutes a strategic investment decision: organisations seek to acquire individuals who already possess knowledge, skills and abilities that can raise organisational productivity. The relevant theoretical assumption is therefore that the quality of human capital selected at the point of entry shapes subsequent performance outcomes. However, Human Capital Theory alone does not specify the conditions under which the acquired human capital is effectively utilised. Possession of competencies does not automatically guarantee that those competencies will be applied productively in a given role.

3.2 Person–Environment Fit Theory and the Logic of Compatibility

Person–Environment Fit Theory (Edwards, 1991, 2023; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) complements Human Capital Theory by explaining that the value of human capital is realised only when there is compatibility between the individual and the work environment. The theory’s central proposition is that congruence between individual characteristics and environmental demands produces positive attitudinal and behavioural outcomes, whereas incongruence produces strain, reduced motivation and poorer performance. Person–Job Fit is the specific form of fit most relevant to the present argument because it focuses on the congruence between an employee’s knowledge, skills, abilities, values and interests and the requirements of a particular job (Edwards, 2023). Demands–abilities fit ensures that employees can meet job requirements; needs–supplies fit ensures that the job satisfies employees’ psychological and career needs. Both dimensions are necessary for sustained high performance.

3.3 Theoretical Integration and the Mediating Mechanism

The integration of the two theories generates a logical chain that neither theory can fully articulate alone. Human Capital Theory explains why organisations invest in recruitment: to acquire productive knowledge, skills and abilities. Person–Environment Fit Theory explains why the mere acquisition of those competencies is insufficient: they must be placed in roles where demands–abilities and needs–supplies congruence exist. When recruitment successfully identifies applicants who both possess valuable human capital and match the specific requirements of the target job, Person–Job Fit is achieved. High Person–Job

Fit then enables the effective utilisation of the acquired human capital, producing superior employee performance. Conversely, when recruitment fails to achieve fit, even highly skilled employees underperform because their competencies are misaligned with role demands. Person–Job Fit therefore functions as the mediating mechanism through which recruitment investments are transformed into performance outcomes.

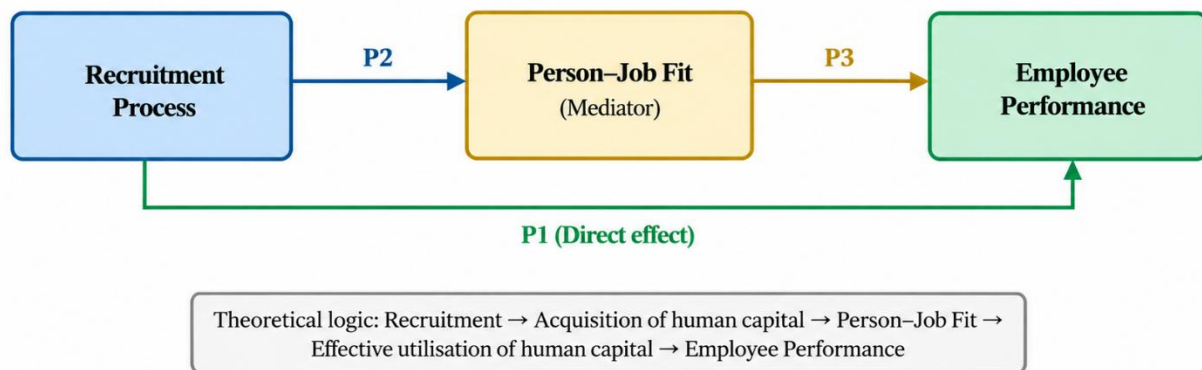
The explicit theoretical chain is therefore: Recruitment → Acquisition of human capital → Person–Job Fit → Effective utilisation of human capital → Employee Performance. This chain supplies the deductive foundation for the four propositions that follow.

4. Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions

Drawing upon the integrated theoretical argument above, this paper proposes that recruitment creates organisational value through two complementary pathways. The first pathway involves the acquisition of competent employees (Human Capital Theory). The second pathway involves ensuring compatibility between employee characteristics and job requirements (Person–Environment Fit Theory). The interaction between these pathways determines employee performance.

4.1 Proposed Conceptual Framework

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework:
Recruitment Process, Person–Job Fit and Employee Performance**



Source: Authors' conceptualisation based on Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory (2026)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Authors' conceptualisation (2026).

4.2 Recruitment Process and Employee Performance (P1)

Theoretical premise. Human Capital Theory posits that differences in the stock of knowledge, skills and abilities generate differences in productive output (Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961). Recruitment is the organisational process that determines the initial quality of that stock.

Logical argument. If higher-quality human capital produces higher performance, then recruitment practices that systematically identify and select applicants with superior knowledge, skills and abilities should elevate subsequent employee performance. Structured, competency based and transparent recruitment systems reduce selection error and increase the probability that entrants possess the competencies required for productive contribution.

Supporting literature. Empirical studies confirm that structured recruitment procedures improve employee productivity and organisational effectiveness (Firman & Inrawati, 2023; Ukpabi & Salaudeen, 2021; Chen et al., 2025).

Proposition 1 (P1): Recruitment process positively influences employee performance.

4.3 Recruitment Process and Person–Job Fit (P2)

Theoretical premise. Person–Environment Fit Theory holds that compatibility between individual characteristics and job demands is not automatic; it must be created through organisational processes that assess and match candidates to roles (Edwards, 1991, 2023).

Logical argument. Recruitment decisions regarding attraction strategies, assessment methods, competency evaluation, structured interviews and selection criteria directly determine the degree of demands–abilities and needs–supplies congruence achieved at entry. Competency-based and technology-enabled recruitment systems improve the precision of this matching process, thereby elevating Person–Job Fit.

Supporting literature. Recent evidence shows that artificial intelligence-supported and competency-based recruitment systems significantly improve compatibility between employee competencies and job requirements (Cao et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2025; Baker, 2025).

Proposition 2 (P2): Recruitment process positively influences Person–Job Fit.

4.4 Person–Job Fit and Employee Performance (P3)

Theoretical premise. Person–Environment Fit Theory asserts that congruence between individual characteristics and job requirements produces higher motivation, lower strain and superior performance (Edwards, 2023; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Logical argument. When demands–abilities fit is high, employees can apply their competencies effectively. When needs–supplies fit is high, employees experience intrinsic motivation and engagement. The joint presence of both forms of fit therefore enables the productive utilisation of human capital and yields superior task, contextual and innovative performance.

Supporting literature. Substantial evidence confirms that Person–Job Fit improves employee performance, organisational citizenship behaviour, innovation and engagement (Bağcı & Karabay, 2021; Chhabra, 2022; Goetz & Wald, 2022; Chen, Sparrow & Cooper, 2024).

Proposition 3 (P3): Person–Job Fit positively influences employee performance.

4.5 The Mediating Role of Person–Job Fit (P4)

Theoretical premise. The integration of Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory generates a mechanism that neither theory fully specifies alone. Human Capital Theory accounts for the acquisition of productive competencies through recruitment; Person–Environment Fit Theory accounts for the conditions under which those competencies are effectively utilised.

Logical argument. Recruitment improves employee performance only to the extent that it successfully places individuals whose knowledge, skills, abilities, values and interests correspond with job requirements. When recruitment achieves high Person–Job Fit, the acquired human capital is productively deployed and performance rises. When recruitment fails to achieve fit, the same human capital remains under-utilised and the performance benefit is attenuated or lost. Person–Job Fit therefore transmits (mediates) the effect of recruitment on performance. This mediating role constitutes the principal conceptual contribution of the present framework: it explains how recruitment creates organisational value rather than merely asserting that it does.

Supporting literature. Prior studies provide indirect support by showing that HR practices influence outcomes through Person–Job Fit (Boon et al., 2021; Al-Nawasrah & Alafi, 2024). The present framework extends this logic specifically to recruitment.

Proposition 4 (P4): Person–Job Fit mediates the relationship between recruitment process and employee performance.

5. Theoretical Contributions

The contribution of this conceptual manuscript is clarified by distinguishing what is already established, what remains unexplained, and what the present integration adds.

What is already established. Empirical research has demonstrated that effective recruitment improves employee performance (Firman & Inrawati, 2023; Ukpabi & Salaudeen, 2021) and that Person–Job Fit predicts performance, commitment and innovation (Bağcı & Karabay, 2021; Goetz & Wald, 2022). Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory are each well developed.

What existing studies have not adequately explained. Most studies treat the recruitment–performance link as direct and leave the intervening psychological mechanism unspecified. Conceptual integration explaining why and how recruitment produces performance gains through fit remains limited, especially in emerging-economy contexts.

What the present paper adds. By integrating Human Capital Theory with Person–Environment Fit Theory, the manuscript generates a deductive mechanism—Recruitment → acquisition of human capital → Person–Job Fit → effective utilisation of human capital → performance—that neither theory independently supplies. Human Capital Theory alone cannot explain why acquired competencies sometimes fail to produce performance; Person–Environment Fit Theory alone does not explain how organisations systematically acquire the human capital that is then fitted to jobs. The mediation of Person–Job Fit therefore constitutes a new theoretical explanation of the recruitment–performance relationship rather than a mere combination of three established constructs.

In addition, the framework extends Person–Job Fit from an individual-level outcome to a strategic human resource management mechanism and supplies a theoretical foundation for future empirical work in emerging economies.

6. Practical Implications

First, organisations should treat recruitment as a strategic investment rather than an administrative routine. Second, recruitment systems should prioritise Person–Job Fit alongside formal qualifications by assessing values, personality, adaptability and career aspirations. Third, technology-enabled recruitment tools should be used to improve matching precision while preserving fairness and human judgement. Fourth, managers

should monitor Person–Job Fit after entry through periodic job analysis, development programmes and job redesign. Finally, policymakers and educational institutions should strengthen alignment between curricula and labour-market competency demands.

7. Future Research Directions

Future studies should (1) validate the model with SEM or PLS-SEM, (2) test the framework across industries and sectors, (3) examine additional mediators and moderators (e.g., organisational commitment, leadership, organisational culture), (4) employ longitudinal designs to capture the dynamics of Person–Job Fit over time, and (5) conduct comparative research between developed and emerging economies to assess boundary conditions.

8. Conclusion

Recruitment occupies a strategic position because it determines the quality of organisational human capital. However, recruitment creates organisational value only when it successfully identifies individuals whose competencies correspond with job requirements. This conceptual manuscript has proposed an integrated framework explaining how recruitment influences employee performance through the mediating role of Person–Job Fit. Drawing on Human Capital Theory and Person–Environment Fit Theory, the paper demonstrates that effective recruitment both attracts competent individuals and facilitates compatibility between employee characteristics and job demands. The resulting Person–Job Fit enables the productive utilisation of human capital and yields superior employee performance. The framework advances strategic human resource management theory by supplying a mechanism that neither Human Capital Theory nor Person–Environment Fit Theory can fully articulate alone, and it provides a foundation for future empirical investigation across diverse organisational and national contexts.

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