

Employee Tenure Moderates the Effect of HRM Practices and Fit on Retention

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Person-Organization (P-O) and Person-Job (P-J) fit are critical in retaining talent. Research has focused on the earliest time in an employee's life with the company. The current research expanded this scope, to explore the role of fit perceptions and the HRM practices driving them, as moderated by employee tenure. The moderating effect of employee tenure on the relationships between HRM practices, fit perceptions, and retention related attitudes was examined. Results indicate tenure moderates the effects, such that for employees of very low or high tenure, P-O fit yields stronger predictive relationships with retention, whereas for employees of moderate tenure, P-J fit yields stronger predictive relationships.

Keywords: P-O fit, P-J fit, HRM practices, employee retention, employee tenure

INTRODUCTION

In a historically low labor market (Kelly, 2019), organizations continue to face the challenge of retaining top talent (SHRM, 2018). Practitioners and researchers have devoted much focus to employee fit as a critical variable in meeting this challenge (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Also known as person-environment (P-E) fit, fit—the alignment between a work setting and the person filling a job role (Judge, 1994)—has received strong, consistent support as an important predictor of employee retention attitudes and behaviors (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005). Organizations and scholars leveraging fit to maximize employee retention often limit their focus to the earliest parts of employees' lives with the company (e.g., employee recruitment, Cable, and Judge, 1997). Because so much attention falls on the cues and means of attracting talent to the organization as an entity (Tanwar and Kumar, 2019) person-organization fit has received much of the attention as a critical variable for staffing success. The predominant focus on (a) the pre- and early employment encounters and on (b) person-organization fit has yielded successful guidance for managers, and it highlights the value in exploring the opportunities to further exploring fit's impact in employees lives beyond their earliest encounters with companies. Employees continue to form fit perceptions across their entire tenure (Shipp and Jansen, 2011), and research must consider these later stages in addition to the early times it chiefly considers (cf., newest employees; Devendorf and Highhouse, 2008). Similarly, people experience fit with their jobs (i.e., person-job fit), not just their companies. Whereas person-organization fit yields stronger relationships with commitment, person-job

fit explains more variance in employee satisfaction levels (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005), which justifies the need to consider both types of fit in understanding employees' behavior. The current research advances the existing research linking fit perceptions, related HRM antecedents, and retention by focusing on both types of fit, and their shifting levels of importance across the employee lifecycle.

Fit and HRM Practices

Broadly, employee fit researchers have devoted focus to two major types of fit perceptions. Person-organization (P-O) fit comprises the alignment, or value congruence, between an employee and his/her organization (Kristof, 1996). Person-job (P-J) fit considers how well an employees' abilities and needs match the demands presented, and rewards supplied by a job role, respectively (Cable and Edwards, 2004). Both types of fit are positively linked to employee retention (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005), thus, organizations strategically target employee fit perceptions, beginning with initial contact with potential employees (Carless, 2005) through new employee experiences (e.g., socialization Cable and Judge, 1997). In fit literature, these early experiences are critical and dominant windows of focus, but perceptions of fit continue to shift and develop beyond these early stages of the employee lifecycle. Recent work on employee fit indicates workers continually construct their perceptions of fit, based on experiences from the past, present, and future (Shipp and Jansen, 2011), with most perceptions of fit closely centered around current work experiences (Swider *et al.*, 2015). Scholars and organizations should broaden their lens to understand how management practices relate to longer tenured (cf. newer) employees' perceptions of fit. This enriches the understanding and strategic value of considering fit in retaining employees—especially the longer tenured (cf. newest) members whose replacement poses higher costs to organizations (Boushey and Glynn, 2012). Almost exclusively focusing on how *new* employees' fit perceptions relate to retention variables likely neglects an important need to understand how *longer-tenured* employees perceive a (mis)fit with their jobs and companies, which can explain their decisions to remain or leave. Growing research attention has fallen on the effects of HRM practices in shaping newer and tenured employees' behaviors, like their fit perceptions and retention (Kooji and Boon, 2018; Paul and Anantharaman, 2006).

Strategic HRM practices span a great variety of management procedures, are consistently linked to operational and financial success (Combs *et al.*, 2006), and can include recruitment and staffing practices, employee socialization and training, performance management, compensation, and work culture interventions (Combs *et al.*, 2006; Wright and Boswell, 2002). In addition to performance measures, HRM practices also yield moderate to strong, positive relationships with employee retention variables (Paul and Anantharaman, 2006; Smeenk *et al.*, 2006; Herrbach *et al.*, 2009). These effects on retention can operate through a number of mechanisms, including social exchange (Gould-Williams and Davies, 2005), intrinsic need satisfaction (Marescaux *et al.*, 2013), and psychological contracts between employees and organizations (Rousseau and Greller, 1994). HRM practices communicate organizational and vocational messages to employees (Guzzo and Noonan, 1994). A company which invests heavily in employment development, for example, communicates a much different talent philosophy to its employees than an organization investing little in employee development (Kuvaas and Dysvik, 2010). Similarly, an individual incentivized compensation system for a job communicates different messages about a work role than a collective rewards system (e.g., profit-sharing; Kuhn, 2009). Like in the explicit, purposeful content provided in recruitment, selection, and socialization experiences, employees detect and incorporate more subtle signals of organizational values and job demands from HRM practices themselves (Haggerty and Wright, 2009; Suazo *et al.*, 2011). Research on employee fit has revealed that more explicit messages (e.g., recruitment materials, employer brand) given to workers predict perceived fit and attraction to an organization and job (Devendorf and Highhouse, 2008).

Fit Perceptions Link HRM Practices to Retention

An emerging stream of research indicates HRM practices affect retention outcomes via the cues they provide employees forming fit perceptions with their work role. That is, HRM practices affect retention, and fit perceptions mediate this path (Firfiray and Mayo, 2017; Mensah and Bawole, 2018; Mostafa and

Gould-Williams, 2014). Employees use the talent management practices of their organizations as cues in understanding the specific attributes, analogous to a brand, of their companies (Maurya and Agarwal, 2018). These judgments of their companies contribute to judgements of P-E fit. To the extent employees perceive high levels of fit (P-J and P-O), they report higher levels of commitment or lower intentions to leave. This well-established mediated model served as a foundation for us to examine how employees across their life with the company may experience these mechanisms differently, according to tenure level. Specifically, we drew on the evidence suggesting the mediated model, from HRM practices to retention, via P-E fit perceptions, does not work the same for both types of fit for all employees (Kooji and Boon, 2018; Takeuchi and Takeuchi, 2013). Moreover, employee tenure, as a variable of time, merits close attention in research involving fit (Shipp and Jansen, 2011) because employees fit perceptions dynamically form around current work experiences (Swider et al., 2015). Because employee fit perceptions are dynamic, we assert tenure conditions the effects of this model, by changing the relative importance of P-O and P-J fit, respectively, to employees across their tenures in the company. Jansen and Kristof-Brown (2006) posited P-O and P-J fit matter differently to employees across their time with an organization, such that P-O fit is most relevant early in employee's organizational life, and in making long-term tenure decisions. We agree and consider the literature related to fit, including the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 2001), job crafting research, and Social Information Processing (SIP; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977) as support for such an effect.

P-J And P-O Fit: Different Across Tenure

The attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) model (Schneider, 2001) provides a framework understanding the entire staffing pipeline, from initial contact between candidate and organization through hire and finally employee separation. This model places fit at the center of this process, such that applicants' and decision-makers' perceptions of candidates P-O fit strongly factors into the attraction and selection phases of the staffing process (Higgins and Judge, 2004; Swider and Zimmerman, 2015). These stages effectively screen out those with lower P-O fit, and employees whose experiences in the company clarify their misfit will similarly leave the organization (De Cooman et al., 2009). Importantly, to a great extent, from the employees' perspective, the organization is relatively fixed: you either fit or you do not, it can/will not be changed to fit you. Comparatively, P-J fit judgments follow a less predictable path over the course of the employee lifecycle for a number of reasons. First, learning the deep (cf. surface-level) realities of a job typically requires performing the job, such that workers' P-J fit judgments often do not crystallize as quickly as P-O fit judgments, thus lessening their impact in the ASA framework (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). As a result, more variances exist in P-J fit levels across the selected workforce. Moreover, jobs are pliable to the employee whereas organizations rarely are. Job crafting, or the changes to a job role initiated or enacted by the employee(s) performing it (Wrzensniewski and Dutton, 2001). Multiple scholars have observed how employees' job crafting positively relates to P-J fit perceptions, such that employees effectively change the Job to better fit themselves, the Person(s) (Demerouti, 2014; Tims et al., 2016). Interestingly, this line of research has also revealed how job crafting actions produce larger effects on P-J fit for older workers (Kooij et al., 2017; Wong and Tetrick, 2017), implying workers increasingly find use in job crafting to improve their P-J fit experiences as their time at work stretches on. Thus, ASA mechanisms likely yield greater variance in the P-J fit perceptions of hired employees, who then can more efficaciously affect the characteristics of their job to additionally change the P-J fit they experience.

Finally, we consider how employees (re)form fit perceptions across their organizational tenure as a function of their social information processing. A very brief explanation of the Social Information Processing (SIP; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1977) model holds that workers' behaviors and attitudes result from, and drive, their work environments. Key to this model are employees' perceptions and evaluations of their environments. Attitudes and behaviors, according to the model, affect each other, and then recursively affect the workplace environmental cues that drive them (e.g., enactment; Weick, 1995). Previous fit research has discussed how SIP elegantly explains employees' fit perceptions in a similar way (Cable and Judge, 1997; Yu, 2009), such that situational factors—especially the most salient cues—

strongly influence fit perceptions, but fit perceptions also affect the environment such that, in a model of an employees' workplace characteristics and fit, P-E fit is both an outcome *and* cause. As Yu (2009) describes, "The same affective experiences that are derived from P-E fit can also in turn influence subsequent changes to P-E fit" (pg. 1211). This aligns with a more dynamic view of fit perceptions, where employees are constantly evaluating their fit with job and company, based on judgments of the past, current, and future (Shipp and Jansen, 2011).

Newer employees (e.g., employees with < 90-120 days of tenure), the focus of much P-E fit research (e.g., Carless, 2005; Sakes and Ashforth, 1997), broadly know very little about the work environment. However, recruitment and socialization efforts, organizationally derived and generated to serve a large portion of the company's workforce (Collins, 2007) provide richer information about the organization, its leadership, and values relevant to forming judgments of P-O fit (Kristof, 1996). Newer employees, then, receive much more salient information about organizational, rather than job-specific, information in making P-E fit judgements. As tenure increases, job-specific information, learned on-the-job and informed via many more subtle cues, which are not as easily managed (cf., organization-specific information). Pair this with the ASA framework's effects on P-O fit (cf. P-J) levels (Schneider, 2001) and the ability of employees to change their P-J fit, and we believe P-O fit holds great salience as an intervening variable early in employees' tenure, where much research has focused. However, in the subsequent stages of tenure, as employees experience organizational entrenchment and P-O fit, P-J fit emerges as pliable and relevant for the employees who feel embedded in their company, but who seek professional development and challenges (Ng and Feldman, 2012) and possess mechanisms and efficacy (e.g., job crafting) to enact these. In focusing on later stages of the employee lifecycle, then, we suggest job-focused fit (i.e., P-J fit) holds salience and relevance advantages over P-O fit, because of the job's relative immediacy as a social context and employees' greater familiarity with their work role's demands and supplies.

Together, we predicted that we would observe a similar mediated model as previous researchers (Firfiray and Mayo, 2017; Kooji and Boon, 2018), where P-O and P-J fit perceptions partially mediate the positive relationship between HRM practices and employee retention variables.

Hypothesis 1a: *Reported levels of HRM Practices will positively relate to employee affective commitment*

Hypothesis 1b: *Reported levels of HRM Practices will negatively relate to employee turnover intentions leave*

Hypothesis 2a: *Reported levels of HRM Practices will positively relate to employee P-O fit perceptions*

Hypothesis 2b: *Reported levels of HRM Practices will positively relate to employee P-J fit perceptions*

Hypothesis 3a: *P-O fit will (partly) mediate the relationships between reported levels of HRM practices and employee affective commitment*

Hypothesis 3b: *P-O fit will (partly) mediate the relationships between reported levels of HRM practices and employee turnover intentions*

Hypothesis 4a: *P-J fit will (partly) mediate the relationships between reported levels of HRM practices and employee affective commitment*

Hypothesis 4b: *P-J fit will (partly) mediate the relationships between reported levels of HRM practices and employee turnover intentions*

Our contribution to the model is the predicted conditioning effect of tenure. Based on SIP, we assert P-J fit will grow in salience as employee pass the early stages of the employee lifecycle. We improve on

previous research exploring the intervening role of fit perceptions in that we predict tenure will affect the extent to which P-J (cf., P-O) fit features in employee's evaluations of their work settings. In the case of HRM practices, a single study revealed P-O fit mediated the effects of HRM practices on retention, but tenure did not moderate the relationship from HRM practices to P-O fit, only the relationship from P-O fit to commitment (Kooji and Boon, 2018). Using a SIP approach, we tested the effect this study did not reveal. That is, we asserted that tenure would moderate the effects of HRM practices on P-E fit variables, given the changing salience of job (cf., organization)-relevant information over the course of an employee's life in the company.

Hypothesis 5a: Tenure will moderate the effects of HRM practices on P-E fit perceptions, such that the effects of HRM practices on P-O fit will be weaker for longer-tenured employees.

Hypothesis 5b: Tenure will moderate the effects of HRM practices on P-E fit perceptions, such that the effects of HRM practices on P-J fit will be stronger for longer-tenured employees.

We also build on the aforementioned research by testing how tenure may moderate the effects of P-E fit perceptions on retention variables. Generally, P-E fit perceptions are linked to employee retention variables in predicted directions (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, in empirically supported models where P-O and P-J fit intervene between HRM practices and retention outcomes (e.g., Boon et al., 2011), no evidence indicates the importance of either type of fit over the other. Moreover, individual studies indicate that P-J fit may not intervene similar to P-O fit (Takeuchi and Takeuchi, 2013). We believe tenure can explain this inconsistency, in accordance with Kooji and Boon (2018). That is, we predict the importance, or relevance of P-J fit, as an intervening variable between HRM practices and retention differs as a function of employee tenure. Similar to our broader predictions about the increasingly salient, and more difficult to consistently manage, weight of job (cf. organization) information in P-E fit perceptions, we predict that P-J fit perceptions grow in relative importance in explaining employee retention as tenure increases. That is:

Hypothesis 6a: Tenure will moderate the relative importance of P-O fit perceptions in predicting affective commitment, such that the importance of P-O fit will be less for longer tenured employees

Hypothesis 6b: Tenure will moderate the relative importance of P-O fit perceptions in predicting turnover intentions, such that the importance of P-O fit will be less for longer tenured employees

Hypothesis 7a: Tenure will moderate the relative importance of P-J fit perceptions in predicting affective commitment, such that the importance of P-J fit will be greater for longer tenured employees

Hypothesis 7b: Tenure will moderate the relative importance of P-J fit perceptions in predicting turnover intentions, such that the importance of P-J fit will be greater for longer tenured employees

METHOD

Sample

We used two primary means of gathering respondent data. First, we administered all scales to a group of employees ($N = 102$) working for a regional bank in the United States, as part of a larger consultation engagement focused on employee retention and relations. To increase statistical power and the generalizability of our findings, we also gathered responses from a group ($N = 314$) of Qualtrics Panels respondents, each of whom held jobs in a variety of industries (e.g., education, IT) and job roles. In total, 71% of all respondents ($N = 416$) were male and ranged in age from 19-66 years of age ($M = 37.01$, $SD = 11.96$ years).

Measures

All measures, presented below, were administered via Qualtrics. After initial contact, respondents were given instructions and information before providing consent and completing measures. Qualtrics Panel respondents were financially compensated for their participation.

HRM Practices

Concisely, we consider two specific types of HRM practices—training and development efforts and performance management practices—in the current research because of their respective contributions to elegant models of HRM practices (e.g., AMO model; Appelbaum et al., 2000), where training builds ability (Grossman and Salas, 2011) and performance management practices shape motivational factors (Buchner, 2007). We gathered information on employees' perceptions of their HRM practices using 13 items (training and performance management items) from the Workforce Engagement Assessment Scale (Performance Assessment Network, 2005), each of which requires respondents to use a 7-point Likert-type response scale ($1 = \text{Strongly Disagree}$; $7 = \text{Strongly Agree}$) to indicate their agreement with item statements. Performance Assessment Network has extensive validation evidence for the reliability and validity of these proprietary scales. Internal consistency estimates for this scale in our research were excellent ($\alpha = .95$, 95% CI [.95, .96]).

P-J Fit

Using a 7-point Likert-type response scale ($1 = \text{Strongly Disagree}$; $7 = \text{Strongly Agree}$), respondents completed a 13-item P-J fit scale (Scroggins, 2007) featuring both D-A fit and N-S fit subscales. Internal consistency estimates for this scale were adequate ($\alpha = .79$, 95% CI [.76, .82]).

P-O Fit

Using a 7-point Likert-type response scale ($1 = \text{Strongly Disagree}$; $7 = \text{Strongly Agree}$), respondents completed a 10-item P-O Fit perceptions scale (Scroggins, 2007), which includes items like “My personality and values are a good match with others in this organization.” Internal consistency estimates for this scale were good, ($\alpha = .85$, 95% CI [.83, .87]).

Affective Commitment

Using a 7-point Likert-type response scale ($1 = \text{Strongly Disagree}$; $7 = \text{Strongly Agree}$), respondents completed an 8-item affective commitment scale (Allen and Meyer, 1990; 1996), including items like “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.” Internal consistency estimates for this scale were good, ($\alpha = .84$, 95% CI [.81, .86]).

Turnover Intentions

Respondents completed three items to assess their turnover intentions (Allen and Meyer, 1990; Jaros, 1995), including items like “How often do you think about quitting your organization?” using a 7-point Likert-type response scale ($1 = \text{Never}$; $7 = \text{Always}$). Internal consistency estimates for this scale were excellent, ($\alpha = .94$, 95% CI [.93, .95]).

Tenure

Employees provided the initial month and year when they joined their organization, which allowed us to calculate tenure length relative to the date of participation. Looking across the entire sample, respondent tenure data were positively skewed, with a large portion of respondents (approximately 20%) reporting 1 year or less of tenure, and some participants (approximately 7%) reporting very extended tenures (e.g., greater than 15 years). In response to this non-normal data pattern, we used quartiles of tenure to categorize tenure values for employees, such that approximately 25% of all employees were grouped into one of four categories of increasingly extended tenure, normed according to the entire sample. For this sample, we categorized low tenure as 0-2 years of membership, 2-4.5 years of membership as below-average tenure, 4.5-8 years as above-average tenure, and 8+ years of tenure as high

tenure. Kooji and Boon (2018) similarly operationalized tenure in an ordinal fashion. Although they used three (cf. four) categories of tenure, our categories' ranges broadly resemble theirs.

Demographic Controls

Respondents also reported their age and gender.

Data Analysis

We tested our hypotheses using bivariate correlations, a structural equation model, and OLS regression-based models of dominance analysis (Azen and Budescu, 2003), examining observed scale scores and mean values. Because we tested two outcomes— affective commitment and turnover intentions—we used a structural equation model wherein all variables could be simultaneously included, rather than complete multiple mediation analyses. To test for the moderating effects of tenure, we employed a multi-group approach to our structural model and report the fit statistics of the model for the entire sample ($N = 416$) as well as the relevant path statistics, with standard errors, for the group-by-group analysis. This group-based approach, using the GROUPING command in Mplus (Muthén and Muthén, 2019), constructs and tests identical versions of the same model, derived from the respective data set of each group (i.e., low, below-average, above-average, and high tenure groups). To test the relative importance of P-O and P-J fit perceptions in predicting retention variables, we used the RLM macro for SPSS provided by Darlington and Hayes (2016), to conduct a dominance analysis (Azen and Budescu, 2003). Like with the structural model, we conducted and report the results of these tests for the full sample, as well as for the groups of employees categorized by tenure levels.

RESULTS

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for, including bivariate correlations between, measured variables of interest. The mediation model—predicted by H1a-H4b—previously supported by other studies, was supported by all tests, including the structural model we built using MPlus (Muthén and Muthén, 2019), in which affective commitment (Y_1) and turnover intentions (Y_2) were regressed onto P-O fit (M_1) and P-J fit (M_2), and HRM practices were included as an exogenous predictor (X). We report results briefly for the sake of space, and because this was not our primary focus. Figure 1 displays the full mediation model, which fit the data well, $\chi^2(18) = 1154.28$, CFI=1.00, TFI=1.00, RMSEA= .000, 95% CI [.00, .00], AIC=5090.32, BIC=5195.06 (Hu and Bentler, 1999), with standardized direct and indirect effects displayed, such that P-E fit perceptions did partially mediate the path between HRM practices and retention variables.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND BIVARIATE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MEASURED VARIABLES OF INTEREST

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	37.01	11.96	19-66	-						
2. Org. Tenure	6.18	6.56	.04-41.00	.52***	-					
3. HRM Practices	5.25	1.32	1.00-7.00	-.03	-.01	.95				
4. P-O Fit	5.06	0.93	2.50-7.00	.07**	-.08	.31***	.85			
5. P-J Fit	5.04	1.30	2.20-7.00	.14**	.01	.33***	.74***	.79		
6. Aff. Commitment	4.59	1.30	1.00-7.00	.07	.06	.65***	.56***	.52***	.84	
7. Turnover Intentions	3.51	2.02	1.00-7.00	-.16***	-.04	-.44***	-.62***	-.60***	-.69***	.94

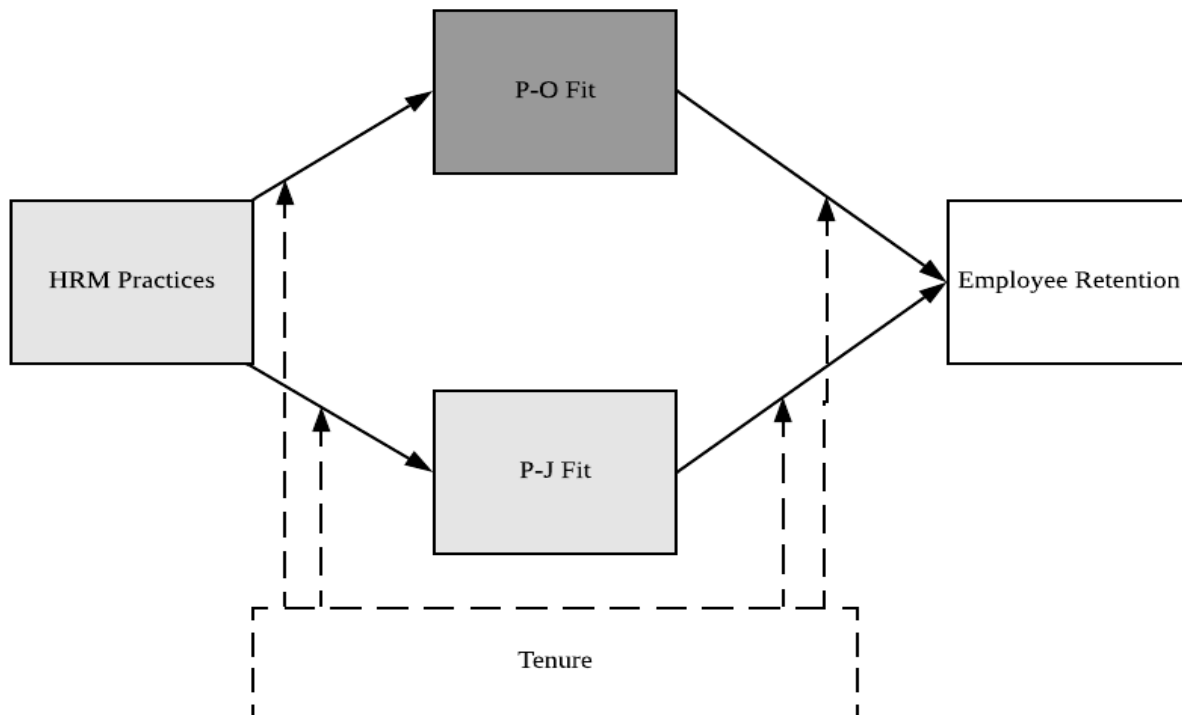
Note.

N = 416

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Internal Consistency estimates are displayed in the diagonal

FIGURE 1
MEDIATED PATHWAY BETWEEN HRM PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION, WITH PROPOSED CONDITIONING EFFECT OF TENURE



Solid lines represent established model (Firfiray and Mayo, 2017; Kooji and Boon, 2018), dashed lines represent proposed addition of current research

In Table 2, we present the full results for the model presented in Figure 1, split by tenure-level grouping. Similarly, Figure 2 displays identical path coefficients, grouped using identical line color and patterns, across the four different tenure level groupings we examined. By comparing the relevant differences in the same path coefficients across groups, we determined that Hypotheses 5a-5b were partially supported. Reviewing Figure 2 reveals that P-O fit predictive effects were, generally, closer to zero for employees closer to average tenure levels (cf. P-J fit effects) and the opposite pattern existed for employees low or high in tenure levels. In other words, the effect of tenure was curvilinear for P-O and P-J fit, such that the effects of P-O fit shrank from low-above average tenure but increased for high tenure employees. Conversely, the effects of P-J fit grew from low-below average tenure, then sharply declined—while still remaining slightly stronger than P-O fit—for above average tenure employees, before climbing again for high tenure employees, where P-O fit was once again stronger. To examine if these differences were the result of between-group differences in outcome variables, we conducted between-subjects ANOVA tests, using employees' ordinal tenure levels as an independent variable, and levels of P-O, P-J fit, affective commitment, turnover intentions, and relevant HRM practices as dependent variables. Across variables, our tests revealed no significant between-group differences in levels of these focal variables.

TABLE 2
STANDARDIZED PATH COEFFICIENTS OF HRM PRACTICES, FIT PERCEPTIONS, AND
RETENTION VARIABLES ACCORDING TO TENURE LEVEL

Structural Model Path	Tenure Level			
	<u>Low</u> ¹	<u>Below</u> <u>Average</u> ²	<u>Above</u> <u>Average</u> ³	<u>High</u> ⁴
<u>DV: Affective Commitment</u>	$R^2 = .57 (.06)$	$R^2 = .64 (.07)$	$R^2 = .58 (.06)$	$R^2 = .58 (.06)$
on PO Fit	.44 (.16)	.24 (.24)	.12 (.20)	.35 (.19)
on PJ Fit	-.03 (.16)	.29 (.25)	.34 (.18)	.09 (.20)
on HRM Practices	.51 (.06)	.44 (.09)	.55 (.06)	.55 (.06)
with TOI	$r = -.48 (.13)$	$r = -.30 (.21)$	$r = -.51 (.14)$	$r = -.46 (.16)$
<u>DV: Turnover Intentions</u>	$R^2 = .62 (.05)$	$R^2 = .61 (.07)$	$R^2 = .42 (.07)$	$R^2 = .41 (.08)$
on PO Fit	-.37 (.15)	-.29 (.23)	-.30 (.23)	-.44 (.22)
on PJ Fit	-.24 (.15)	-.38 (.25)	-.29 (.22)	-.14 (.23)
on HRM Practices	-.37 (.06)	-.18 (.10)	-.16 (.08)	-.16 (.08)
<u>PO Fit</u>	$R^2 = .25 (.06)$	$R^2 = .43 (.09)$	$R^2 = .27 (.07)$	$R^2 = .21 (.07)$
On HRM Practices	.47 (.07)	.40 (.09)	.17 (.09)	.28 (.09)
With PJ Fit	$r = .62 (.10)$	$r = .62 (.15)$	$r = .71 (.10)$	$r = .68 (.10)$
<u>PJ Fit</u>	$R^2 = .25 (.06)$	$R^2 = .50 (.08)$	$R^2 = .18 (.07)$	$R^2 = .24 (.07)$
On HRM Practices	.46 (.07)	.55 (.08)	.19 (.09)	.23 (.09)

Indirect Effects				
HRM Practices to Aff Comm.	.18 (.04)	.24 (.06)	.09 (.04)	.11 (.04)
Through PO Fit	.21 (.05)	.10 (.05)	.02 (.02)	.09 (.04)
Through PJ Fit	-.04 (.04)	.15 (.07)	.07 (.04)	.02 (.03)
HRM Practices to TOI	-.27 (.04)	-.32 (.07)	-.11 (.05)	-.15 (.05)
Through PO Fit	-.18 (.04)	-.11 (.06)	-.05 (.03)	-.12 (.05)
Through PJ Fit	-.09 (.04)	-.21 (.08)	-.06 (.03)	-.03 (.03)

¹N = 136

²N = 72

³N = 108

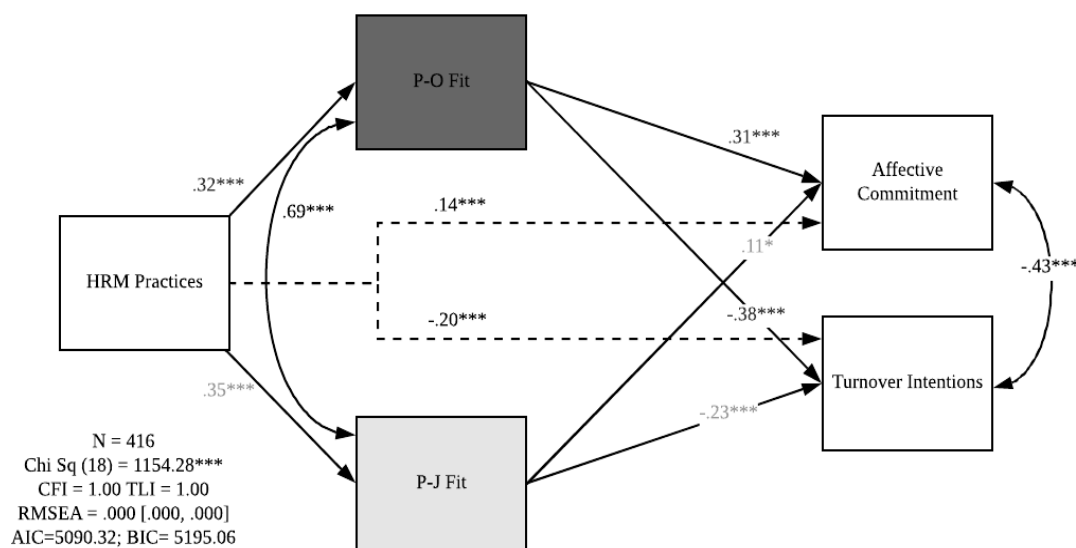
⁴N = 100

N_{Total} = 416

Note.

All path values standardized beta coefficients, unless otherwise noted (e.g., *r* or *R*²). Standard errors for each statistic provided in parentheses, for the purposes of calculating 95% Conf. Interval (adding/subtracting SE from coefficient generates interval range). Statistical significance indicators withheld to preserve visual clarity and manage Type I error concerns, because of the large number of statistics presented. Confidence intervals which do not contain zero indicate statistically significant values at *p* < .05

FIGURE 2
OBSERVED STRUCTURAL MEDIATED MODEL



Note.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

All effect sizes standardized

Dashed lines represent total indirect effects of HRM practices on Affective Commitment & Turnover Intentions, via P-O and P-J fit

Finally, we found similar support for Hypotheses 6a-7b, such that the relative importance of P-O and P-J fit as predictors of retention did differ as a function of employee tenure. Dominance analysis, which we conducted in SPSS using the RLM macro (Darlington and Hayes, 2016), results indicate that, for low and high tenure employees, P-O fit generally dominated (e.g., explaining 40%+ of the variance in

outcomes) P-J fit (24% of variance explained) in relative importance in predicting both affective commitment and turnover intentions. For below average and above average tenure employees, however, the reverse held true—P-J fit generally dominated P-O fit in relative predictive importance in relation to affective commitment and turnover intentions. Table 3 displays relevant statistics, including ΔR^2 , β , unstandardized beta coefficients, with 95% confidence intervals, for each predictor and outcome across groups.

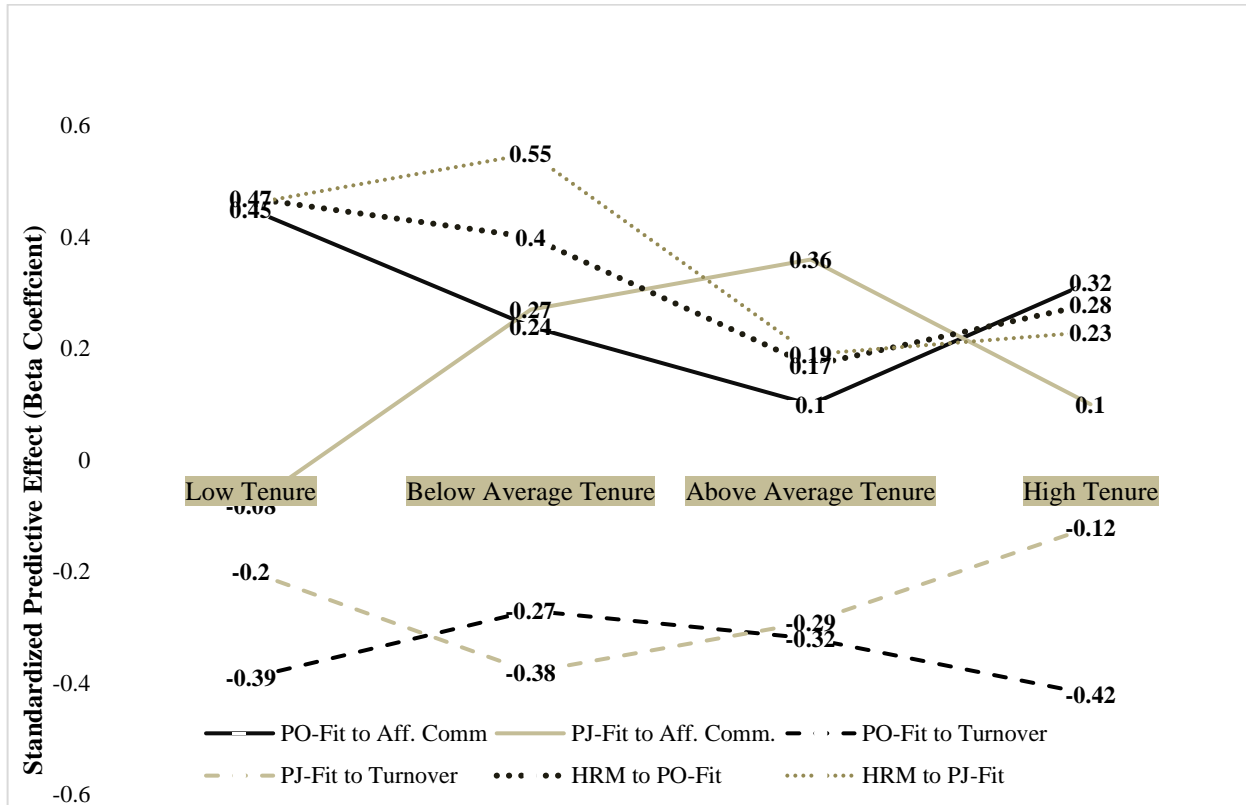
TABLE 3
DOMINANCE ANALYSIS REGRESSION RESULTS OF P-O, P-J FIT AS PREDICTORS OF EMPLOYEE RETENTION VARIABLES

Tenure Level	Predictor and Block	Outcome							
		Affective Commitment				Turnover Intentions			
		ΔR^2	B	95% CI	β	ΔR^2	B	95% CI	β
Low (0-2 Years); N = 136	P-O Fit in Block 1	.41***	0.75	0.60-0.91	.64***	.45**	-1.12	-1.33- -0.90	-.67***
	P-J fit in Block 1	.24***	0.05	-0.11-0.21	.49***	.38**	-0.75	-0.90- -0.58	-.62***
	P-O Fit in Block 2	.17***	0.70	0.48-0.92	.60***	.11**	-0.77	-1.06- -0.48	-.46***
	P-J Fit in Block 2	.01	0.05	-0.11-0.21	.07	.04	-0.35	-0.56- -0.14	-.29***
Below Average (2-4.5 Years); N = 72	P-O Fit in Block 1	.42***	0.64	0.46-0.82	.64***	.45**	-1.05	-1.33- -0.77	-.67***
	P-J fit in Block 1	.47***	0.43	0.32-0.55	.69***	.49**	-0.69	-0.87- -0.52	-.70***
	P-O Fit in Block 2	.04	0.30	0.04-0.55	.30***	.05**	-0.53	-0.92- -0.14	-.34***
	P-J Fit in Block 2	.10***	0.30	0.13-0.46	.46***	.09**	-0.44	-0.69- -0.20	-.45***
Above Average (4.5-8 Years); N = 108	P-O Fit in Block 1	.24***	0.42	0.28-0.57	.49***	.33**	-0.89	-1.13- -0.64	-.57***
	P-J fit in Block 1	.31***	0.32	0.23-0.42	.55***	.34**	-0.60	-0.77- -0.44	-.58***
	P-O Fit in Block 2	.01	0.14	-0.08-0.35	.16***	.04**	-0.48	-0.84- -0.12	-.31***
	P-J Fit in Block 2	.08***	0.25	0.11-0.40	.43***	.05**	-0.36	-0.60- -0.12	-.35***
High (8+ Years); N = 100	P-O Fit in Block 1	.28***	0.49	0.33-0.64	.53***	.34**	-0.85	-1.09- -0.62	-.59***
	P-J fit in Block 1	.20***	0.31	0.19-0.44	.44***	.26**	-0.57	-0.76- -0.38	-.51***
	P-O Fit in Block 2	.09***	0.41	0.17-0.65	.44***	.09**	-0.68	-1.03- -0.32	-.44***
	P-J Fit in Block 2	.01	0.08	-0.11-0.26	.11***	.01	-0.18	-0.45- 0.09	-.16

Note.

Comparing similar statistics (ΔR^2) for similar steps of the regression reveals the relative importance of each predictor in relation to either outcome. A predictor accounting for more variance at an equivalent block (e.g., in block 1 or block 2) is said to be dominant over the other predictor.

FIGURE 3
COMPARISON OF STANDARDIZED PREDICTIVE EFFECTS OF HRM PRACTICES AND PERCEIVED FIT ON RETENTION, ACROSS MULTIPLE TENURE LEVELS



DISCUSSION

Previous research has well-established the intervening, important role of fit on the path between HRM practices and employee retention, but, like much research on fit, paid little attention to the importance of time. Our findings clearly demonstrate organizational tenure matters and changes the importance of fit perceptions. For the longest tenure, and newest, members of a company, our models demonstrate P-O fit matters more than P-J fit, whereas the reverse holds true for those closer to median tenure levels. Similarly, the effects of HRM practices on retention variables differs as a function of employee tenure. Our models also reveal how failing to account for the conditional effects of tenure-level can obfuscate results, such that the model based on the entire sample indicates a relatively diminished role of P-J fit. Together, for managers seeking clear, effective information, conditioning effects are critical cues to avoid ineffective, inaccurate one-size fits-all approaches.

This research also lends clarity to some inconsistent evidence in this research stream, such that some researchers have supported the intervening role of P-J fit (Boon et al., 2011), whereas others have not observed such an effect (Takeuchi and Takeuchi, 2013). Our results indicate both types of fit matter, but they matter differently to employees at different stages of the employee lifecycle. Our research reveals this very important consideration for future researchers in the current research stream.

The current research also indicates P-J fit is a more important predictor of retention outcomes for the employees not at the beginning or twilight of their organizational lives. We predicted P-J fit would grow in importance after the earliest stage of job tenure, but we did not anticipate P-O fit would hold greater

importance for later stage employees. We believe employees' ability and desire to change job challenges, through job crafting or promotion/placement mechanisms (e.g., changing jobs within the same company), explains the greater effects we observed for P-J fit among middle-tenure employees. Possibly, P-O fit's increased importance among later stage employees relates to the changes in their own values (Kollman et al., 2020) and specific psychological contract experiences (Vantilborgh et al., 2015), or the differences in their aspirations and desires for their future (Bown-Wilson and Parry, 2013). Importantly, this research supports the shifting importance of both types of fit (Jansen and Kristof-Brown, 2006), informing the established model where P-E fit intervenes between HRM practices and retention.

Implications for Practice

Briefly, our results offer two major pieces of guidance to practice: (a) HRM strategic management should uniquely consider each stage of the employee lifecycle (Thompson, 2009) and (b) although P-O fit holds relatively greater importance early in the employee lifecycle, P-J fit matters more to employees in the middle stages of their organizational lifecycle. An organization is a relatively fixed entity, from the employees' perspective. As employment progresses beyond the early relationship, the daily demands and rewards of the job hold greater opportunity for growth, change, and to experience new, motivating challenges. In some regards, the relationships and mechanisms which tie an employee to his/her organization, including P-O fit judgments (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), are more consistent and can even grow (e.g., vested rewards systems; Clementi et al., 2006). Jobs, however, change more frequently, because of necessity, strategic HR work design (Korunka and Kubicek, 2017), and employee initiative (Tims, et al., 2016). Thus, practitioners must attend more closely to P-J fit perceptions resulting from HRM practices for the mid-tenure members of their companies.

Comparatively, the newest and longest-standing members are better retained through P-O fit perception management. For these employees, managers need to attend more closely to the organizational fit cues—things like culture, values, norms, and mission—given to employees in these stages of tenure. Compared to previous research on fit, often focused on new employees, the current research offers novel insights into the higher sensitivity of the longest tenured members to P-O fit dimensions. The majority of research on fit perceptions and retention focuses only on the newest members, but those with greater tenures deserve special focus to retain, such that these employees' job and organization-specific expertise make them more expensive to replace than new employees (Siebert and Zubanov, 2009) and a critical internal source of labor for promotion and placement. That is, rather than focusing on using fit to keep newer employees around, our research provides guidance on how to retain the often more valuable staffing supplies of internal workers. Employees like those we examined, with years of experience, like possess chances to seek work elsewhere, and our research indicates retained employees differently value organization and job fit across their tenure. Whereas value congruence drive retention in the earliest and later windows of the lifecycle, job demands, and rewards hold precedence in the middle years, where workers may have the greatest opportunity for promotions and career progression in an organization. During these mid-tenure years, managers should focus on the facilitation of P-J fit in order to manage job attitudes and turnover intentions. Managers should provide training and development opportunities in order to give these employees the opportunity to acquire and develop knowledge, skills, and abilities (D-A fit) needed for good performance, career progression, and obtainment of desired job outcomes (N-S fit). Managers can also give employees the autonomy to craft their jobs to some degree. This can facilitate both D-A and N-S forms of P-J fit. Job crafting has been found to increase employee perceptions of P-J fit (Tims et al., 2016). Managers should also make sure that available job outcomes are valued by employees.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study poses a number of limitations. First, we used a cross-sectional method of gathering data, which precludes confident assertions of causality. Whereas a variable like job tenure is conceptually exogenous to the other variables in our model, we acknowledge fit perceptions may influence employees'

reports of HRM practices, such that stronger fit perceptions may improve employees' general attitudes about their organization's management practices (e.g., Lee et al., 2013). Our research's important contribution was not the mediated, or temporally ordered, path from HRM practices to fit and retention variables, but the conditioning effect of tenure. Multiple previous research has methodologically established this mediated pathway (Boon et al., 2011; Firfiray and Mayo, 2017; Kooij and Boon, 2018; Mensah and Bawole, 2018; Mostafa and Gould-Williams, 2014; Takeuchi and Takeuchi, 2013), and our research models yielded similar path estimates for the mediated model. Because fit perceptions are dynamically formed, and strongly derived from an employee's current job situation (Swider et al., 2015), cross-sectional research may be more appropriate for such research (Spector, 2019), although future researchers could gather HRM practice information from a separate source (e.g., HR staff), which would provide more support for the independence of this variable from employees' fit perceptions, and would address the second limitation of cross-sectional designs—common method bias (CMB). We tested for CMB using Harman's single factor test, based on a direct oblimin rotation and principal axis factoring extraction. Results provide no evidence for CMB—a single factor did not explain a majority of the variance in any of these models (no % of variance exceed 35%), and including a common latent methods factor in our structural model. Authors have written at-length about the hyperbolic mythical threat posed by CMB (Fuller et al., 2016; Spector and Brannick, 2009). Moreover, CMB does not inherently inflate empirical relationships (Crampton and Wagner, 1994) and may even deflate detection of non-linear moderating effects (Siemsen et al., 2010) like those our study included. Future research, involving independent reports of HRM practices or relevant outcome variables (e.g., employee performance/withdrawal behaviors) could improve upon our methods and further the conversation on how employee fit intervenes between HRM practices and relevant outcomes of interest.

CONCLUSIONS

Retaining talented employees remains a critical issue facing many managers. Research supporting the link between HRM practices and retention has revealed the mediating role of fit perceptions. Our research provides a rare glimpse into the importance of tenure level, such that different types of fit matter differently to newer and more experienced workers. Compared to work primarily focused on capturing and securing newer workers, our research emphasizes the need, and effective strategies, for leveraging fit perceptions across the employee lifecycle. Whereas P-O fit perceptions remain important for newer and the most experienced workers, management efforts should consider how workers between these tenure extremes respond more sensitively to P-J fit perceptions.

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