The Role of Personal Projects in the Relationship Between Job Fit and Satisfaction

by

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Abstract

One of the most common measures of employee well-being is job satisfaction. Person-job fit, the degree to which an individual perceives their fit to their job, is one of the strongest known predictors of job satisfaction. However, the idea of fit does not necessarily capture whether a job fulfills one's requirements for a meaningful life. Under Free Trait Theory, people can act in ways that do not fit their personality when situations are sufficiently important. One characterization that may determine a situation's importance is its relevance to an individual's projects. This suggests that person-job fit could be potentially less relevant to satisfaction when their job satisfies the needs of their personal projects. The present study investigated the role of work-related personal projects in the relationship between job fit and satisfaction.

Participants (*n=195*) were asked about their perceived person-job fit (Person-Job Fit Scale), job satisfaction (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire), and personal projects (Little's personal project analysis methodology) for their current (or most recent job) and for one previous job. Most participants reported having work-related personal projects that were important to them. There was a strong positive relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction for both current (or most recent) jobs (*r*=.71) and for previous jobs (*r*=.60). The importance and the number of work-related personal projects did not contribute to predictions of job satisfaction. They did not moderate the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. These results contribute to the literature on job fit and satisfaction. Specifically, they suggest that any contribution of personal projects to job satisfaction was, in fact, relatively stable across a variety of job situations and people.

Keywords: person-job fit, job satisfaction, personal projects, work-related personal projects, Free Trait Theory

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Introduction

Job satisfaction, the extent to which an individual is content with their job, is important for both employees and employers. Judge et al. (2001), in a meta-analysis of over three hundred studies, found a weak but positive correlation between job satisfaction and productivity (r = .30). Employees who report high job satisfaction are also unlikely to intend to quit (Mobley, 1977). Turnover costs are a significant financial burden to employers; therefore, having happy employeesleads to lower costs from less turnover (Harter et al., 2002). At the organizational level, firms with satisfied employees have greater returns on assets and return on equity (Kessler et al., 2020). Recruitment also becomes easier when existing employees share their contentment with their job with others (Rad & De Moraes, 2009). Hence, the satisfaction of employees is a good indicator of a firm's success and future (Kessler et al., 2020).

Satisfaction with one's job extends beyond the workplace; individuals who are content with their jobs are more likely to report higher overall subjective well-being (Bowling et al., 2010). Job satisfaction is positively correlated with various facets of subjective well-being, including positive affect, happiness, and general life satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010). Additional research has found that job satisfaction is moderately correlated with self-reported emotional and physical health (Satuf et al., 2018). Therefore, understanding and predicting job satisfaction is relevant to increasing organizational success and promoting employee happiness.

Job fit is a moderately strong predictor of job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). However, the strength of the correlation between job fit and job satisfaction is not consistent across studies. Within the meta-analysis by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), mean correlations between various types of job fit and satisfaction ranged from r=.24 (person-group fit) to r=.44 (person-job fit). The variance in the fit-satisfaction correlation can be assumed to be more

significant between individual studies since Kristof-Brown et al. only presented mean correlations of multiple studies. After the publication of this meta-analysis, individual studies found that correlations can range from r=.19 (Hoff et al., 2020) to r=.50 (Peng & Mao, 2015). The differences in these correlations imply that the strength of the relationship between fit and satisfaction varies between individuals. Given the importance of job satisfaction, it is worth exploring other factors which might contribute to understanding the contribution of job fit to satisfaction.

One of the best-developed models of job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 2004) combines a variety of personal and organizational fit characteristics with motivation and cognitive factors. This theory posits that goals direct behaviour by motivating individuals to develop strategies to achieve these goals (Locke & Latham, 1990). High performance in achieving these goals results in job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 1990). Focussing on motivation, there are factors that are relatively stable in time – such as those relating to goals – and there are potentially more dynamic factors, such as those relating to the challenges and successes in the job (Locke & Latham, 2004). These factors that affect goal motivation are also components of job fit (Barrick et al., 2017). For example, a cooperative work environment may help an individual achieve their work goals. Likewise, the employee may perceive the cooperative work environment as a good fit for their work style, relating to their overall sense of fit in the workplace. In Locke and Latham's theory, job satisfaction and fit are directly related to goal motivation. Job satisfaction is directly a biproduct of goal achievement, and job fit indirectly is a factor that influences goal motivation. Since both are related to goals, can the presence of a goal change the relationship between the two?

Current evidence supports that both fit and satisfaction change, including their relationship. Previous research does indicate that subjective perceptions of job fit do change over time within the course of a job (Kim et al., 2020). Job fit may change due to either a change in the job (Kim et al., 2020) or changes within the employee (Sylva et al., 2019). Additionally, job satisfaction changes over time, even within the same job (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). Given that both job fit and job satisfaction vary over time, the relationship between the two also varies (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Using Locke and Latham's motivation theory, the presence of a work-related goal may be the origin of this dynamic relationship between fit and satisfaction. Both variables (fit and satisfaction) are affected by the presence or change in a goal.

In addition to Locke and Latham's motivation theory, the Free Trait Theory by Little (2008) aids in explaining the changes in the fit-satisfaction relationship. Mainly, Free Trait Theory can be applied to explain changes in the fit caused by the presence of a goal. In Free Trait Theory, these goals are called "personal projects" (Little, 2008). A personal project is any valued goal or state in which one takes several actions over time to obtain or maintain a particular goal or state (Little, 1983). Personal projects include various activities, including getting a promotion at work, strengthening a relationship with a family member, managing one's high blood pressure, or showing competence in a specific field (Little, 1983). According to Free Trait Theory, people can and will behave in ways that do not match their traits to achieve their personal projects (Little, 2008). Individuals will behave atypical of their baseline behaviour to achieve their goals. This is supported by current evidence that situational circumstances often contribute to behaviour at work (Smithikrai, 2008).

Changes in traits, as proposed by Free Trait theory, may lead to changes in perceived job fit. If the job characteristics stay static, but individuals employ Free Traits, there should be a

change in job fit. In Little's Free Trait Theory, the effect these changes in fit have on satisfaction is unknown. According to Locke and Latham (2004), it is known that work goals (or work-related personal projects) are related to increased satisfaction in the job. Using these two models, it could be suggested that the presence of goals/personal projects would weaken this relationship between fit and satisfaction. Hence, the present study aims to investigate whether a personal project related to work affects the relationship between job fit and job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is 'the degree to which one is content in their job' (Spector, 1997). It is a subjective construct rated by the employee (Kristensen & Westergaard-Nielsen, 2007). Employees can be satisfied overall with their job or with specific aspects such as pay, co-workers, or workplace safety (Tatsuse & Sekine, 2011). Most research on job satisfaction is cross-sectional; a group of participants is asked about their current jobs. A meta-analysis by Dormann and Zapf (2001) found that the mean test-retest correlation of job satisfaction of individuals who remained in the same job and organization was r=.42. For individuals who switched either jobs or organizations mean test-retest job satisfaction correlation was r=.19 (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). One important caveat of the results of this metanalysis is that the time between the test and the retest varied between studies. However, the results of the Dormann and Zapf (2001) study imply that job satisfaction does change over time, even in the same job, since its stability is not perfect (i.e., r=1.0).

Due to the benefits of having satisfied employees (e.g., increased productivity as found by Judge et al., 2001) or being a satisfied worker (e.g., increased subjective well-being as found by Bowling et al., 2010), there has been extensive research on how organizations can improve job satisfaction. Indeed, there are tens of thousands of peer-reviewed studies on the topic (per

review by Hoff et al., 2020). In this literature, researchers generally categorize variables associated with job satisfaction as either job-related or person-related (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006).

Job-related factors are external facets of the job or the workplace itself (Gazioglu & Tansel, 2006). These job-related factors that have been predictive of job satisfaction include pay satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010), safe working conditions (Gyekye, 2015), and perceived integrity of the manager (Davis & Rothstein, 2006). All the job-related factors that have been examined have very weak correlations with job satisfaction. Pay is one of the first factors that come to mind when considering a job. However, according to a meta-analysis by Judge et al. (2010), which looked at various occupation types, pay and job satisfaction were only weakly correlated (r=.15). In contrast, satisfaction with pay has a potentially stronger relationship with job satisfaction, a correlation of r=.23. Additionally, when employers create safe working environments, employees are more likely to be satisfied with their job (Davis & Rothstein, 2006).

Person-related factors associated with job satisfaction include personality traits (Judge et al., 2002), character strengths (Gander et al., 2012), and affective disposition (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000). Certain "types" of individuals are pre-disposed to be more satisfied in their jobs. For example, positive correlations have been repeatedly found between many of the *big five* personality traits and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002), with emotional stability being the best predictor of job satisfaction among the five traits (r=.29). This correlation is generally unsurprising, as emotional stability is predictive of many positive life outcomes such as general life satisfaction (Hills & Argyle, 2001) and longevity (Terracciano et al., 2008).

Amongst all the variables affecting job satisfaction, internal characteristics (person-related characteristics) are often top-of-mind for employers when recruiting new employees

(Caliendo et al., 2022). Both employers and potential employees predict a fit between a person and job based on these characteristics. Personality characteristics (Terracciano et al., 2010), character strengths (Gander et al., 2020), and affective dispositions (Connolly & Viswesvaran, 2000) have generally been considered characteristics that are relatively stable in adulthood. However, current research suggests that personal characteristics are malleable across situations (Aaker, 1999; Little, 2008). Our ideas about job fit might then have to be revised. How do these dynamic personal characteristics affect job satisfaction?

Person-Environment Fit at Work

Job fit – the match between an individual's characteristics and work environment - is another significant interest of industrial psychologists (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The broader category of job fit is sometimes referred to as person-environment fit at work, encompassing all aspects of fit related to the job (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). According to a review by van Vianen (2018), there are thousands of academic articles on this topic alone. As previously mentioned, neither internal nor external factors exclusively determine job satisfaction (Aziri, 2011). Instead, it has been proposed that the fit between personal and job-related factors is more important than the specific factors in most situations. The review by van Vianen (2018) concluded that there is significant evidence that the compatibility between a person and work environment is a stronger predictor of outcomes such as job satisfaction than the person or environment is individually (van Vianen, 2018).

Since person-environment fit is the relationship between a person and their work environment, there are many aspects of the work environment that are elements of person-job fit. These aspects of fit include person-organization-fit, person-supervisor fit, person-group fit, and person-job fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Person-organization fit is the perceived fit between

an employee and the organization, including its values, culture, and structure (Kristof, 1996). Person-supervisor fit is the match between an employee and their supervisor's personality and management style (Griffeth et al., 2000), while person-group fit is the fit between co-workers (Seong et al., 2015). Finally, person-job fit is the alignment of an individual's characteristics and their job or tasks on the job (Edwards, 1991).

A few tools have been developed to measure person-job fit, including the Person-Job Fit Scale (Brkich et al., 2002) and the similarly named P-J Fit Scale by Saks and Ashforth (1997). Occasionally, researchers develop their own measures of person-job fit for their studies (e.g., Huang et al., 2019), while others use qualitative measures such as unstructured interviews (e.g., Hennekam et al., 2021). Person-Job Fit Scale (Brkich et al., 2002) appears to be more widely used in the literature; based on a database search of ProQuest, approximately a hundred articles have been published regarding the Person-Job Fit Scale. Both these scales measure the perceived fit the individual has with the "knowledge, skills, abilities, needs and values" of the job requirements (Brkich et al., 2002). The Person-Job Fit Scale is a subjective measure based on the individual's self-reports of fit to these job variables (Ehnhart, 2006).

Similar to job satisfaction, recent research has found evidence that job fit changes over time (Boon & Biron, 2016). This is partly due to the malleability of our characteristics and those of the workplace (Boon & Biron, 2016). There is limited research on changes in job fit over time within the same job, with some evidence that perceived fit does change over time (Kim et al., 2020). Changes in work demands and employee skills (i.e., additional training) affected job fit (Kim et al., 2020). A study by Sylva et al. (2019) found that proactive career-building behaviour (i.e., additional training and promotions) increased perceived fit. However, that study did not assess whether participants believed these proactive career behaviours aligned with their true

personalities. Regardless, these findings may align with the principles of Free Trait Theory; external circumstances cause changes in traits. However, more information is needed to know if these external circumstances (e.g., skills training, work-demand changes) are related to the employees' personal projects.

Person-Job Fit and Satisfaction

Person-job fit is a subset of person-environment fit in the workplace (Hinkle & Choi, 2009). These dimensions include an individual's goals (Taylor & Chin, 2004), needs (e.g., Resick et al., 2007), personality (e.g., Judge et al., 2002), and character strengths (e.g., Heintz & Ruch, 2020) among others. Additionally, it is one of the strongest predictors of job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

In one of the most cited studies in this field, Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) reported a meta-analysis of 47 studies on the correlation between various types of job fit and satisfaction. Various forms of person-environment fit (e.g., person-job fit and person-organization fit) correlated positively with job satisfaction. The strongest correlation between job fit and satisfaction was overall person-job fit and satisfaction. The average correlation between person-job fit and job satisfaction was r=.44 (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This would explain about 22% of the variance observed in job satisfaction and suggest that there is room for others to explore factors that could explain the variance observed in job satisfaction.

Several studies (e.g., Peng & Mao, 2015; Gabriel et al., 2014) have been published since the Kristof-Brown et al. meta-analysis. These studies have found similar moderate positive correlations between various aspects of job fit and job satisfaction. Peng and Mao (2015) found that the correlation between person-job fit (as measured by the Person-Job Fit Scale) and job satisfaction in the sample studied was approximately r=.50. In the 2014 study by Gabriel et al.,

the correlation between fit and satisfaction was r=.33. The relationship between job fit and satisfaction may vary between studies partly due to the measures used for each construct and the sample characteristics. However, the correlation between person-job fit and job satisfaction remains moderate in strength (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

Though the relationship between job-fit and satisfaction varies between studies, this does not imply directly that the relationship between fit and satisfaction varies within individuals. However, there appears to be minimal current literature on the changes of the relationship between fit and satisfaction within individuals. This includes changes in the fit-satisfaction relationship within the same job and between different jobs.

A scan of the current literature on fit-satisfaction yielded one study that investigated changes in the relationship between these two variables. It was found that the type of interests an individual has affects how much job fit will affect job satisfaction. Weigand et al. (2021) describe that types of personal interest matter more to the relationship between fit and job satisfaction than others. For example, individuals with high artistic interests have a stronger relationship between fit and job satisfaction than those with conventional interests (e.g., keeping records, collecting items, categorizing) (Wiegand et al., 2021). These findings indicate that there is variability in the strength of the job fit-job satisfaction relationship based on the characteristics of employees. For some, job fit matters more to job satisfaction than others.

Knowing the moderating third variable's effect on the relationship between fit and satisfaction can help explain why the strength of this relationship varies between individuals. If the evidence supports that some external factors could influence this relationship, interventions can be targeted toward that third variable to increase employee satisfaction and encourage positive outcomes.

Methodological Limitations of Fit and Satisfaction Studies

Most studies on person-job fit consider only the participants' current or most recent jobs. A limited number of studies look at job satisfaction or fit for more than one job (Gabriel et al., 2014). The cross-sectional design may be biased as people are more likely to stay in satisfying jobs than unsatisfying ones (see Boswell et al., 2009). As a result, there is limited variation among job fit and satisfaction scores in this case. This results in the attenuation of the correlation due to the limited range of results. The methodologies used so far may reduce the likelihood of finding a more robust correlation if there is one. Evidence suggests that job fit changes over time within a job (Kim et al., 2020) and likewise satisfaction (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). However, the change in the strength of the relationship between fit and satisfaction across various jobs is not known. A partial within-subject design, in which individuals are asked about multiple jobs, should increase the variation in both job fit and job satisfaction scores and explore the strength of this relationship in different work situations. In addition to increased variation in fit and satisfaction, a partial within-subject design can illuminate the various effects of a third variable on this relationship. The effect of a third factor on the fit-satisfaction relationship can be examined in the case of multiple jobs, either confirming or disconfirming the effect of this factor on the fit-satisfaction relationship.

Potential Moderating Variable: Personal Projects

Though person-job fit and job satisfaction have a moderate relationship, the strength of this relationship varies between individuals (Wiegand et al., 2021). Personal characteristics have been investigated (ex: Peng & Mao, 2015); other external factors that influence this relationship have been less so. However, Free Trait Theory challenges this idea of stability of job fit. Free Trait Theory describes how people may act in ways that do not reflect their traits to help achieve

personal projects (Little, 2008). That is to say, although traits are said to represent stable, enduring dispositions, people can and do behave in ways counter to those traits when it is sufficiently important. Free Trait Theory proposes using social "scripts" when individuals change their behaviour. These scripts are used by individuals to achieve their goals or to match their values (Little, 2008). Individuals can perceive what social behaviour is needed and overcome their innate disposition and characteristics to pursue their goals (Little, 2008).

Temporary changes in disposition, as described by Free Trait Theory, can occur in various settings, including the workplace (Little, 2008). Changes in disposition are more likely to occur if the behaviour requiring adjustment is linked and relevant to the individual's desired goals (Albuquerque et al., 2013). For example, if a presentation relates to a significant promotion, an introverted employee may act as though they are extroverted to succeed. In this example, the employee temporarily changes their characteristics to meet their desired goal. This would imply that job fit would also change; the requirements of the job have stayed the same, but the traits of the individual have changed.

Motivation theory additionally suggests that goals (similar to personal projects), job satisfaction, and job fit are intertwined (Locke & Latham, 2004). The pursuit of work-related goals affects job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 2004). Both factors related to the goal and factors that affect the ability to achieve the goal relate to motivation (Locke & Latham, 2004). Factors that affect the pursuit of the goal include situational variables in the workplace. Job fit is directly related to situational variables in the workplace (van Vianen, 2018). Given this model, job fit indirectly affects motivation to achieve these goals. Motivation to achieve these goals relates to satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 2004). This model therefore suggests that job satisfaction and job fit are linked through the pursuit of theses work goals.

A literature review of research involving personal projects, job satisfaction, and job fit was conducted. There appear to be no previous studies that examine the effect of personal projects on either job satisfaction or job fit. A few studies have examined the relationship of work-related personal projects with other measures of workplace well-being. For instance, a study by Salmela-aro et al. (2004) examined the number of work-related personal projects as an outcome measure for a burnout intervention. A work-related personal project is defined as a valued goal or task in which the individual categorizes it as related to their work-life (Little, 2011). Salmela-aro et al. (2004) had researchers determine whether each personal project listed by the participants met the definition of a work-related personal project. A burnout intervention for employees reduced the number of work-related personal projects (Salmela-aro et al., 2004). Burnout and job satisfaction are inversely related; generally, burnout predicts lower job satisfaction (Scanlan & Still, 2013). The results of the Salmela-aro et al. (2004) study suggest that work-related personal projects may negatively affect general well-being at work.

Additionally, in 2014 Albuquerque et al. found that work-related personal projects predicted subjective and psychological well-being for certain individuals. The authors hypothesized that work-related personal projects help contribute to the well-being and a sense of accomplishment and mastery when an individual does not feel competent. Work-related personal projects were examined as a moderator variable in the relationships between "proactive conscientiousness facets, personality traits, and subjective and psychological well-being." Similar to Salmela-aro et al. (2004), the researchers classified the personal projects. Results of the study indicate that work-related personal projects moderate the relationship between some aspects of the personality trait of conscientiousness and psychological well-being in individuals with low competence (Albuquerque et al., 2014). Job satisfaction is associated with general well-

being (Bowling et al., 2010). Further research, including the present study, is necessary to determine if this relationship is also present between work-related personal projects and job satisfaction.

Present Study

The present study investigated the role of work-related personal projects as a potential moderator of the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. Participants were asked questions about their current/ most recent job and, if applicable, the job they held before that role. Participants were also asked to describe personal projects they had during their current and previous jobs. This aspect of the study addressed the limited research on the effect of moderating variables in this relationship between fit and satisfaction. The inclusion of work-related personal projects as an additional variable may help to explain why the correlation between fit and satisfaction has historically been found to be moderate, despite a strong theoretical basis and extensive publications on the matter. As mentioned, it was proposed that Free Trait Theory may explain the changes in perceived job fit based on changes in personal characteristics in order to attain one's goals. The present study aimed to determine if these goals (or personal projects) affect the relationship between job fit and job satisfaction.

It is hypothesized that work-related personal projects will moderate the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. It is expected that the presence of work-related personal projects will weaken the relationship between job-fit and job-satisfaction. It is hypothesized that the presence of the work-related personal projects will allow participants to adopt Free Traits, therefore reducing perceived person-job fit. It is proposed that though person-job fit is reduced, job satisfaction remains the same or increased. This is according to Motivation Theory (Locke & Latham, 2004) which proposes that the presence of work goals (or work-

related personal projects) is related to job satisfaction. Overall, the hypothesized model of the present study suggests that the presence of these work-related personal projects will moderate the fit-satisfaction relationship by reducing the strength of the relationship.

Methods

Overview of Study Design

The present study was an online survey involving a set of questionnaires pertaining to demographic information about the participants, job fit, job satisfaction, and personal projects held during the jobs. First, participants were asked about their current/most recent job. Participants completed the job fit survey (Person Job Fit Scale), the job satisfaction measures (Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire), and the questionnaire related to personal projects (Personal Project Analysis), for the most current/recent job participants listed. Participants then completed the same surveys (Person Job Fit Scale, Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire and the Personal Project Analysis) for the second job they listed. If they did not list a second job, they were not prompted to complete the second set of surveys.

Participant Recruitment

A variety of recruitment methods were used for the present study. A recruitment poster (see Appendix A) was designed to promote the study. The poster was used for promotions of the study online as well as attached to emails sent to local employers. Employers in the Greater Sudbury area were contacted via email regarding the survey distribution. Employers were told that none of the specific survey responses would be available. However, they could access any future publications on the project. Several organizations shared the survey via newsletters or on their websites—the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce, the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, and the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce shared the study via their newsletter

as well as on their social media platforms. The United Steelworkers Local 6500 shared the study in their newsletter and on their website.

Social media marketing was also employed to recruit participants. The study was posted on Reddit, Kijiji, Craigslist, several community Facebook pages, and LinkedIn. Advertisements for the study were also included in a paid promotion on LinkedIn. Students at Laurentian University who met the study participation criteria were recruited. Students who participated in this study received 0.5 credits towards a Psychology course via SONA. The Laurentian Research Board of Ethics approved all these recruitment methods (see Appendix B).

The survey was hosted online via RedCap. In order to participate, participants were required to self-declare that they were at least 18 years old and had worked in a full-time job within the last five years for at least six months. Beyond five years out of work, there was concern that participants may have some difficulty remembering their work experiences. Participants were excluded if they did not indicate they worked full-time hours or omitted the hours worked in their survey responses. Statistics Canada (2016) states that full-time hours are considered equal to or greater than 30 hours per week. After completing the survey on RedCap, participants could include their email to be entered in the draw for a $100 CAD gift card to Starbucks.

Measures

Demographic Questions

General demographic information was collected from the participants including age, gender, employment status, and marital status. Participants were then asked questions about their current job or most recent full-time job they have held in the last five years (noted as Job 1). Participants were also asked to list if they had a job prior to Job 1 (denoted as Job 2). For both

Job 1 and Job 2 participants were asked a series of questions including job title, hours worked per week, length of employment and salary. See Appendix C.

Person-Job Fit Scale (PJFS)

The PJFS (Saks & Ashforth, 1997) is a four-item questionnaire used to assess individual person-job fit perceptions. According to Saks and Ashforth (2002), the PJFS can be described with a single factor. Participants were asked to respond to each of the four statements for each of the jobs listed in the demographic questionnaire. The responses choices range from 1 to 5 with 1 being (*strongly disagree*) and 5 being (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate higher person-job fit perceptions. The following are the four statements rated on the PJFS:

- To what extent do your knowledge, skills, and abilities match the requirements of the job?
- To what extent does the job fulfill your needs?
- To what extent is the job a good match for you?
- To what extent does the job enable you to do the kind of work you want to do?

The PJFS has demonstrated internal reliability of α=.79 among university employees (Wahat, 2014) to α=.87 among recent hires after college graduation (Saks & Ashforth, 2002). Based on a literature review of the PJFS, there is limited research on the validity of the scale with other measures of person-job fit.

Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire Short Form (MSQ)

The MSQ Short Form (Weiss et al., 1967) is a 20-item questionnaire used to assess satisfaction with one's job in the present study. The MSQ also provided an overall score for

general job satisfaction, a combination of both extrinsic and intrinsic satisfaction. The MSQ assessed how satisfied individuals are with certain aspects of their job on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses choices ranged from 1 to 5 with 1 being (*very dissatisfied*) and 5 being (*very satisfied*). Higher scores indicated greater overall job satisfaction.

The MSQ has demonstrated a high degree of validity and reliability within the working adult population (Brown et al., 2006; Hancer & George, 2003). The MSQ has shown to be a good measure of job satisfaction, with high concurrent validity, as it has been found to correlate well with other measures of job satisfaction (Brown et al., 2006). This scale demonstrated high internal reliability with an alpha coefficient of α=.90 among restaurant employees (Hancer & George, 2003) to α=.97 among school psychologists (Brown et al., 2006).

Personal Project Analysis (PPA)

The Personal Project Analysis in the present study was developed using existing methods to analyze the topic in studies by Salmela-aro et al., (2004) and from Little's Personal Project Analysis (1983). The following prompt asked participants to list up to ten concurrent personal projects during the course of their employment.

"People have many kinds of things that they think, hope for and accomplish. Such personal projects may be related to any life domain, such as education, work, family, or self-related issues. Think now about what kinds of personal projects you have/had [during your job as X]. Examples of personal projects included: cut down on junk food, succeed in my psychology course, go to Europe this summer, find a part-time job, save for retirement, be a good parent (Little, 1983)."

Previous research on personal projects typically asked participants to list between four and six personal projects (Helgeson, 2019; Little, 1983 Salmela-aro et al., 2004; Vroman et al.,

2009). Research indicated that on average, one can list approximately a maximum of 15 of personal projects for a given time (Little & Coulombe, 2015). During an exploratory study of the present study, participants, on average, provided approximately four personal projects. Therefore, the number of projects listed per job was allocated to a maximum of ten. For each project listed participants were asked to rate each project in terms of i) how important it was to them and ii) whether the personal project was related to work or not (see Appendix D).

In terms of the analysis to determine if work-related personal projects were a moderating variable in the relationship between person-job fit and satisfaction, various operationalizations of personal projects were proposed. In existing literature on work-related personal projects, quantitative analyses of the construct were made in terms of the number of work-related personal projects a participant had (e.g., Salmela-aro et al., 2004). However, there were limitations in restricting the construct of work-related personal projects to such terms. The number of work-related personal projects may not reflect the relevance these projects have to the participants. Therefore, the percentage of personal projects related to work was used in order to capture the relevance of these work-related personal projects to the participants. The percentage of personal projects related to work was calculated by dividing the number of personal projects classified as "work-related" by participants during Job 1 by the total number of personal projects listed during the course for Job 1. This same principle applied to percentage of work-related personal projects during Job 2.

An additional construct regarding work-related personal projects was also developed for the present study. Participants were asked to rate the importance of each personal project on a scale of 0 to 100. The sum of all importance ratings for work-related personal projects was divided by the overall sum of importance ratings for all personal projects. This provided a

percentage of importance of personal projects related to work. Like percent of person projects related to work, the percent importance aimed to capture the value of these personal projects had in the lives of the participants.

Procedure

On the RedCap survey landing page, participants were invited to participate in a study investigating job satisfaction. Participants were asked to indicate their consent and informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point.

After providing consent, participants completed the demographic questions (see Appendix B) and were asked to list up to two jobs they had held. Listing at least one job was mandatory to proceed with the survey. The current/ most recent job the participants held was denoted as Job 1. If they listed an additional job prior to that, it was denoted as Job 2. Participants then proceeded to complete the PJFS for Job 1 followed by the job satisfaction measure MSQ for Job 1. Once completed, participants were prompted to list up to ten personal projects that they had

during their tenure in Job 1. Participants will then be asked to rate each project on its importance and relatedness to Job 1. If participants listed a second job (Job 2), they were prompted to complete the PJFS, MSQ and Personal Project Analysis respectively for Job 2. The survey took approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete depending on whether one or two jobs were listed. Recruitment for the study took place between January 10th, 2022 to April 30th, 2022. After completing the online survey, participants were debriefed about the actual nature of the study and provided with contact information of the study administrators. At this point, participants could voluntarily include their email to be entered into a draw for the gift card.

Data Analyses

A linear mixed model was used to determine if of work-related personal projects is a moderator in the relationship between person-job fit (PJFS) and job satisfaction (MSQ). In this proposed model the independent variables would be person-job fit and work-related personal projects. Work-related personal projects were analyzed in terms of the percentage of total person-projects listed. The dependent variable in this model is job satisfaction. A significant p-value for the interaction between work-related personal projects and PJFS determined if it is a moderator variable in the model.

Linear mixed models are not less powerful than simple regression, and potentially more powerful. Using the statistical analysis program Stata 17the power was estimated for a comparable regression model with two covariates (for example, age, education) and three independent predictors (person-job fit, work-related personal projects, and their interaction). Predicting 240 participants, acceptable power ($\beta = .80$) was found for effects as small as those with r^2 of 4%, excellent power ($\beta = .90$) for those explaining 6 percent of the variance, and power approaching certainty ($\beta > .99$) for r^2 values greater than 9%. This suggests that the present study can reliably rule out non-detected correlations around .30 and would generally be expected to detect small effects *(*$r = .20$).

In addition to the linear mixed model, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted between PJFS and MSQ. Significance and direction of correlation were assessed. Similar effect sizes were required as the linear mixed model for the tests to have sufficient power given the estimated sample size.

Results

Approximately 359 participants began the online study. Many participants did not meet the participation requirements or failed to complete at least the questionnaires for Job 1. Of the 359 initial participants, 108 did not completed all the questions pertaining to Job 1 (PJFS, MSQ, and Personal Project Analysis) and were excluded from the study sample. However, participants were not excluded if they failed to complete the demographic questions, since the demographic questions were not central to the hypothesis. Of the 251 participants remaining, 56 did not meet the participation requirements of the study. They indicated they have worked in their current/ most recent job for less than six months, did not work full time. These 56 participants were removed, leaving the study sample size of *n*=195. Of those 195 remaining participants, only 115 completed the PFJS, MSQ and Personal Project Analysis for Job 2 and met the demographic requirements (in the job for at least 6 months and the role must be full-time). Therefore, the final sample consisted of 195 participants who completed the survey for current jobs (labelled Job 1 throughout) and 115 who completed the survey for a previous job (labelled Job 2). Any missing data in the final sample were excluded on a per analysis basis as applicable. When "n" is not indicated in the following analyses and tables, it is assumed to be *n*=195 for Job1 and for the linear mixed model and *n*=115 for Job 2.

Sample Characteristics

Several demographic questions were included in the survey. Of the 195 participants, the sample was primarily female (69.7%). The majority of participants were between the ages of 26 and 35 (33.4%), followed by ages 18 to 25 (25.1%) and 36 to 46 (23.6%). Though there were no geographical restrictions on participation, the vast majority of participants indicated that they were currently living in Canada (90.8%). The educational attainment of the sample was primarily

a trade diploma (26.2%), followed by a bachelor's degree (23.6%) and a high school degree (12.8%). Most participants were married or in a domestic partnership (51.3%). The majority of participants did not have any children under the age of 18 (60.5%). Most participants were currently employed (70.8%). A summary of the results of key demographic questions are included in Table 1.

Job Characteristics

Job categories for both Job 1 and Job 2 were classified using the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO - *International Standard Classification of Occupations*, n.d.). Across the ten categories, the most common occupational class was professionals (Job1=22.1%, Job 2=20.9%) and technicians (Job1=22.1%, Job 2=20.9%) Sales and service jobs were also frequently listed for Job 1 (20.5%) and Job 2 (14.8%). Table 2 summarize these job classifications distributions reported for Job 1 and Job 2 by participants.

The mean salary of the 136 participants who listed their salary for Job 1 was *M*=$67,096 CAD (*SD*=$42,342). The mean salary for Job 2 (*n*=83) was significantly lower than Job 1 (*M*=$50,193, *SD*= $32,757). All participants were required to have worked in their Job for at least six months. The mean tenure length was 5.87 years (*SD*=7.02) for Job 1 and 5.03 years (*SD*=5.09) for Job 2. Likewise, in order to participate in the study, participants must be or have recently been employed full-time. The mean weekly hours were 40.0 hours (*SD*=7.2) for Job 1 and 42.4 hours (*SD*=9.2) for Job 2. Table 3 summarizes these quantitative descriptors of Job 1 and Job 2.

Personal Project Characteristics

Participants were asked to list up to ten personal projects during the course of their current (Job 1) and previous job (Job 2). Among the total number of personal projects listed for

Job 1 *(M*= 5.20) and Job 2 (*M*=3.37), 42.7% and 44.6%, respectively, were classified as work-related by participants. For Job 1, 76.4% of participants listed at least one personal project related to work. During Job 2, 68.6% of participants included at least one work-related personal project. When factoring in the importance rating given to each personal project by participants, the mean proportion of importance ratings attributed to work-related personal projects was 43.1% (*SD*=36.8%) for Job 1 and 52.1% (*SD*= 37.0%) for Job 2. Table 4 include a summary of the number, type, importance, and relatedness to work of the listed personal projects of participants respectively for Job 1 and Job 2.

Scale Means

Scale reliability and scales means were calculated for the PJFS and MSQ for both Job 1 and Job 2. Cronbach's alpha was similar for the PJFS scale for both Job 1 (α=.82) and Job 2 (α=.87). Likewise, the scale reliability for the MSQ was similar for Job 1(α=.92) and Job 2 (α=.92). The mean PJFS score was *M*=14.83 (*SD*=3.61) for Job 1 and *M*=13.10 (*SD*=4.24) forJob 2.The mean MSQ score for Job 1 was *M*=72.75 (*SD*=14.04) and *M*=61.04(*SD*=15.78) for Job 2. A summary of the scale means per item, standard deviations and scale reliabilities are included in Table 5.

Person-Job Fit and Job Satisfaction Analysis

There is a relatively strong positive correlation between job fit (PJFS) for Job 1 and job satisfaction (MSQ) for Job 1 (r=.71, p<.01). Similarly, there is a relatively strong positive correlation between fit and satisfaction for Job 2 (r=.60, p<.01). Given the power analysis conducted prior to this study, these correlations are significantly larger than what the minimum correlations would need to be given the estimated sample size. Additional post-hoc analyses were performed. A weak positive correlation was found between job fit for current and previous

jobs *(r*=.24, *p*<.01). Job satisfaction scores between Job 1 and Job 2 also had a weak positive correlation (*r*=.18, *p*<.05). The results of these correlations are summarized in Table 6.

Linear Mixed Model

In a linear mixed model, the percent of personal projects related to work was found did not affect job satisfaction (*z*=-0.23, *p*>.05). There was also no interaction between the percentage of personal projects related to work and job fit as predictors of job satisfaction (*z*=-0.24, *p*>.05). These effect sizes are much smaller than what would be required given the estimated sample size (see Planned Analyses in Methods). PJFS was found to significantly contribute to the regression model to predict MSQ (*z*=10.65, *p*<.05). These results show that the percent of personal projects related to work is not a moderator in the relationship between PJFS and MSQ. As part of this mixed linear model, age did predict MSQ (*z*=-2.41, *p*<.05). The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 7. In addition to the percent of personal projects related to work, a separate linear mixed model was created looking at the effect of the number of work-related personal projects on MSQ. The number of work-related projects did not affect MSQ (*z*=-0.18, *p*>0.05), nor did the number of work-related personal projects moderate the relationship between PJFS and MSQ (*z*=0.17, *p*>.05). Job 1 was not associated with higher job satisfaction than Job 2.

Discussion

The present study investigated whether personal projects moderate the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. The results suggest that work-related personal projects did not moderate this relationship. Additionally, personal projects did not predict job satisfaction directly. The relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction was strong, and most participants reported personal projects that they classified as work-related.

To see if work-related personal projects were associated with job satisfaction, work-related personal projects were analyzed in terms of their percentage of total personal projects listed. The number and percentage of work-related personal projects had no direct impact and did not interact with person-job fit or job satisfaction. Additionally, work-related personal projects were also analyzed in terms of the percentage of the personal project importance ratings attributed to work-related personal projects. The importance rating of work-related personal projects had no direct impact on the person-job fit or job satisfaction. No significant interaction effects were noted in the linear mixed model. The study as designed had adequate or reasonable power to find even minor effects.

It was hypothesized that having personal projects related to one's job would interact with the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. The primary theoretical basis of the present study was Locke and Latham's motivation theory (2004) and Free Trait Theory (Little, 2008). Motivation theory supposes that job satisfaction, job fit, and goals at work are all interrelated (Locke & Latham, 2004). Free Trait Theory supposes that individuals adjust their characteristics to achieve valued goals (Little, 2008). It was hypothesized that the presence of a valued goal (a personal project) would result in the adoption of free traits in order to achieve that goal. It was proposed that these temporary adjustments in traits would result in changes in the relationship between fit and satisfaction since fit would no longer be the same since the behaviour was changed to achieve the personal project.

In the present study, most participants connected their jobs to their personal projects, listing at least one work-related personal project per job. Most participants had at least one personal project related to work for both current jobs (74.5%) and previous jobs (70.1%). Furthermore, over half of all personal projects listed were classified by participants as work-

related. The prevalence of work-related personal projects in the adult population is relatively high (Little, 2011). Albuquerque et al. (2014) found that over 70% of participants included a work-related personal project in their list of current personal projects. One possible explanation for the lack of any observed effect was that there was minor variance in the present sample in the presence and importance of personal projects – most people could articulate a link between their jobs and important personal projects. Personal projects may already be incorporated into people's job fit assessments.

This study's analysis of work-related personal projects regarding job fit and satisfaction was unique. A limited number of previous studies have explored the role of work-related personal projects in terms of other variables. Of these few studies, none looked directly at job satisfaction. The results of the Salmela-aro et al. (2004) study suggest that work-related personal projects are associated with burnout. Due to the close, yet inverse, the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction, it was potentially expected to find a relationship between work-related personal projects and job satisfaction. However, in the present study, work-related personal projects did not significantly predict job satisfaction, including whether these variables had a negative relationship. Burnout and job satisfaction are not perfectly inversely related; correlations range from r=.45 to r=.51 in a sample of occupational therapists (Scalan & Still, 2013). The results of the present study provide additional evidence that variables (such as work-related personal projects) can predict one construct, burnout or satisfaction, but not the other. Similarly, the 2014 Albuquerque et al. study found that work-related personal projects predicted overall well-being and moderated the relationship between certain personality traits (conscientiousness) and well-being. Like the Salmela-aro et al. (2004) study, it was hypothesized

that the similarity in well-being and job satisfaction constructs would result in a similar predictive and moderating effect of work-related personal projects.

Overall, the results of the present study suggest that work-related personal projects do not moderate the relationship between job fit and job satisfaction. The relationship between job fit and job satisfaction is strong; however, it is variable between individuals (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The goal of the present study was to determine if the presence of work-related personal projects explains the variance in this relationship, which it did not. It is unknown if other personal or external factors affect this relationship.

In the motivational model (Loche & Latham, 2004), the work goal, job satisfaction, and job fit are all related. However, the role of the goal in the direct relationship between fit and satisfaction is unclear. The results of the current study suggest that the goal does not moderate the relationship. Additionally, the goal (work-related personal projects) did not independently predict satisfaction. However, this does not mean that work-related personal projects do not relate to job fit or satisfaction. Work-related personal projects are probably captured within job fit and satisfaction measures. Personal projects may contribute to a sense of job fit. Likewise, personal projects may be a facet of job satisfaction. Therefore, it would unlikely moderate the relationship between the two variables.

Personal projects are critical tenets of Free Trait Theory (Little, 2008). According to Little, personal projects drive temporary traits and behaviour changes. Based on the results of the present study, we do not know if individuals are changing their traits to accommodate tasks at work. However, we know that most participants have personal projects that they perceive are related to work. The lack of effect on the fit-satisfaction relationship is present whether the number of work-related personal project or their relative importance to the individual are part of

the linear mixed model. The results of the present study indicate that work-related personal projects do not increase or decrease the strength of the relationship between fit and satisfaction. Job fit is not more or less relevant to satisfaction given the presence of these personal projects. Given these results, it is unclear if either Free Trait Theory or personal projects are relevant to fit and satisfaction. It is also possible that the changes in traits proposed by Free Trait Theory are occurring across the vast majority of individuals in the workplace. If the adaptations occur for nearly everyone, the lack of variation in changes to the fit-satisfaction relationship will equate to a null moderator effect of work-related personal projects.

Additionally, there is the possibility that the constructs used in the present study related to personal projects were not associated with the use of Free Traits. If Free Traits were not used by participants to achieve their personal projects, the hypothesised change in relationship between fit and satisfaction may not be present. In fact, not all individuals must employ Free Traits in order to achieve their personal projects (Little, 2008). Individuals may use other strategies to achieve their personal projects, including setting changes and tasks changes that are better suited to their baseline traits (Little, 2008). Since there may be a mix of participants who employ Free Traits and some that do not in order to achieve their work-related personal projects, this may explain why there is no overall effect of personal projects on the fit-satisfaction relationship.

In addition to examining the moderating effect of work-related personal projects, the present study also examined the direct correlation between person-job fit and job satisfaction. Strong positive correlations were found between person-job fit (measured by the PJFS) and job satisfaction (measured by the MSQ) for both most recent and previous jobs. These correlations were more substantial than what has been found in previous research on job fit and satisfaction.

In a meta-analysis by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), the mean correlation between person-job fit and job satisfaction was moderate (r=.44), with a considerable confidence interval (CI 95% of r=.20 to r=.68). The present results fall at the high end of this confidence interval (r=.71 and r=.60). A study by Peng and Mao (2015) used the exact measures of job fit and job satisfaction as the present study, the Person-Job Fit Scales (PJFS) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ). The correlation between that study's PJFS and MSQ was r=.50, p<.01 (Peng & Mao, 2015). Additionally, the correlation between MSQ scores for Job 1 and Job 2 (r=.18, p<.05), were similar to the correlations in the metanalysis by Dormann and Zapf (2001) (r=.19), which investigated the relationship of within-subject job satisfaction scores over two different jobs.

The variation in the scale scores in the present study likely contributed to the stronger correlation. The mean PJFS score in the Peng and Mao (2015) study was similar to the mean PJFS scores found in the present study. Mean MSQ scores for current and previous jobs were also similar to those found by Peng and Mao. However, the standard deviations of the current study's mean PJFS and MSQ scores were nearly three times greater. This comparison indicates that the population of Peng and Mao's sample has a different range of satisfaction scores than the sample used in the present study. More significant variation can result in stronger correlations. The unique design and study sample may explain why stronger correlations were found. Few studies on job fit and satisfaction inquire about more than one job. The present study inquired about the participants' most recent job and one other prior job. This methodology attempted to reduce the effect of within-subject biases in job satisfaction ratings. Previous research indicates that job satisfaction is somewhat stable within individuals, even over multiple jobs (Dormann & Zapf, 2001). The linear mixed model found variations in job satisfaction scores between current

and previous jobs. This evidence supports that self-selection bias was not a significant contributor to the strong correlations, as there was evidence, at least for the previous job, that participants were willing to provide lower satisfaction ratings.

Cofounding variables were also investigated to determine their effect on job satisfaction. In the present study, the results of the linear mixed model indicated that variables such as gender, hours worked, and salary did not predict job satisfaction. Additionally, they did not interact with the relationship between job fit and satisfaction. Age did predict job satisfaction, though these two variables were inversely related. Results of the model indicate that young participants indicated greater job satisfaction than older participants. Previous research notes a relationship between age and job satisfaction, though this relationship is generally categorized as non-linear (Hochwarter et al., 2001). The relationship between age and job satisfaction is U-shaped; those at the beginning and end of their careers are most satisfied in their jobs. The present study sample skews young, with the majority of participants under the age of 35, with only about 5% of participants over 55 years old. As a result, the upward trend in job satisfaction in one's late career may not have been captured due to so few participants in this age category.

Limitations

Job satisfaction can vary depending on participant characteristics, including culture, age, income, and education (Unanue et al., 2017). The study sample's demographic characteristics reduce the results' generalizability to global workers. The participants in the present study were mainly from Canada (90.8%), though participation was open globally. However, this is common in research. For example, Peng and Mao's (2015) study participants were recruited solely in Hunan, China. This was partly because the present study was not translated to accommodate participation by more diverse nationalities.

Even within Canada, the sample characteristics differed from the average Canadian worker. The present study's mean income was slightly higher than the general Canadian population. The mean income was $67,096 in Job 1 and $50,193 in Job 2. The mean annual salary in Canada is approximately $51,300, and the median salary is $39,500 (Government of Canada, 2016). The current literature on the relationship between salary and job satisfaction is somewhat inconclusive, with some indication that pay is weakly correlated with job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010). However, the linear mixed model indicated that pay did not contribute to satisfaction ratings in the study sample.

The present study measured job fit and satisfaction for more than one job. The strength of this study design is greater variation among job fit and satisfaction scores, which partly contributed to the stronger correlations found in the present study. However, this method for assessing job fit and satisfaction requires retrospective assessments of the participants' previous jobs. It is unclear what these retrospective assessments' effect had on the ratings, though the linear mixed model did indicate that past jobs were indicative of lower satisfaction scores. The correlation between fit and satisfaction was also weaker for the previous job than for the current one. However, we do not know what the cause is. It is possible that participants likely switched to more satisfying jobs. The potential bias in these assessments may have nothing to do with the actual fit or satisfaction yet still affected their ratings.

In previous research on work-related personal projects (e.g., Salmela-aro et al., 2004; Albuquerque et al., 2014), the researchers determined whether a personal project was work-related, not the participants. Researchers reviewed the personal projects listed by the participants and determined their categorization. In the current study, participants were asked to classify their personal projects. The benefit of this methodology is that the relation of a personal project to

work may not be evident to the researchers. For example, several participants listed physical fitness goals as personal projects related to work, even if they worked in a sedentary job. The relationship between this personal project and work may not be evident to a researcher. The participants may also not clearly understand what a work-related personal project is and may have misclassified them.

There was also significant participant attrition in the study. One hundred eight participants began the online study but did not complete the survey questions for at least their current job (PJFS, MSQ, and PPA). Participants were not excluded if they failed to complete the demographic questions since those questions were not central to the study hypothesis. Some of these 108 participants only clicked on the landing page of the survey. In contrast, others completed a large portion of the survey questions for their current job before ending their participation. This is one of the limitations of a voluntary study; participants are free to discontinue the survey at any point. In other studies on job satisfaction and job fit, occasionally, researchers recruit participants who work for a specific employer or are part of a specific union. These participants may have more incentive to complete the entire survey.

Participants were excluded if they did not include at least one personal project. However, it is unknown if including participants with no personal projects, work-related or not, would affect the results of the linear mixed model. In terms of motivational theory, including participants who did not have goals/work-related personal projects may have changed the effect these projects have on satisfaction. There might have been a more transparent link between any personal projects and job satisfaction if more variance in the number of personal projects was included, including individuals with none.

In addition to not completing all the survey questions, participants were excluded if they did not work in their current job for at least six months or worked less than full-time hours. The linear mixed model was run with these excluded participants, with similar results. This indicates that whether someone works full-time or if they have been employed for less than six months does not affect the relationship between fit and satisfaction. Furthermore, it does not change the fact that work-related personal projects did not moderate the fit-satisfaction relationship. In future research, participants who fit these criteria should be included in the study.

The study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic when several public health restrictions were in place in Canada. The effect of COVID-19 workplace restrictions on job satisfaction is not known. In other studies, employees report satisfaction with remote work, while others may prefer to work in person (Kondratowicz et al., 2022). The current study did not capture what the current workplace arrangements were for employees. It is unknown if these work arrangements had any effect on satisfaction or whether employees these arrangements affected the relationship between fit and satisfaction.

Future Research Directions

Further research is needed to determine the role of work-related personal projects in work-life and personal life. Generally, any personal projects are associated with greater well-being (Little, 2011). Results of the present study indicate that work-related personal projects are part of most individuals' personal project repertoire. However, a personal project does not mean one will complete this project. This is a crucial tenet of motivational theory- the successful completion of the goal is what leads to satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 1990). The mere presence of a goal (or a personal project) may not directly lead to increased satisfaction. Instead, it is the achievement of a personal project that may lead to great well-being. Further research is needed

on the nature of completing work-related personal projects and their effect on job satisfaction. This would be a fuller application of the motivational theory model.

In the present study, there was no direct measure of these proposed adjustments in traits. Only an indirect measure of changes was the change in the relation of person-job fit and satisfaction. However, it is possible that these adjustments, as proposed by Free Trait Theory, did occur but were not captured by these indirect measures. Not everyone must use Free Traits to achieve their personal projects (Little, 2008). Further research suggests that questions be included to understand if and how participants adapt to achieve their personal projects. Additionally, a better understanding of the nature of these personal projects would improve our understanding of Free Trait Theory. A study that includes self-rating/classification of personal projects and classification by researchers can help us understand why there are discrepancies between the two. As a result, hopefully, more robust measures of personal projects, particularly work-related personal projects, can be developed.

Suppose the suggested improved future research approaches confirm that personal projects do not moderate the relationship between fit and satisfaction. In that case, it may help to explain why current research suggests that personality measures alone are weak predictors of job satisfaction. Current research suggests that conscientiousness is the strongest personality predictor of job satisfaction, which displays a weak positive relationship with satisfaction *(r*=.26) (Judge et al., 2002). Perhaps personality traits do not strongly predict job satisfaction because they are changeable, as suggested by Free Trait Theory (Little, 2008). Future research should investigate personal projects' role in the relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. If personal projects moderate this relationship, this will provide further evidence that individuals are changing their traits to meet their goals, as Free Trait Theory prescribes.

The study results suggest that more research is needed to determine what causes the variance in the fit-satisfaction relationship. Though the relationship between job fit and satisfaction has been well established and further confirmed with the results of this study, it is still relevant to determine what affects this relationship. Not everyone can work in a job that with a good fit. There is merit to discovering what one can do to increase satisfaction with work when they are in a role that may not be an ideal fit. The presence or importance of work-related personal projects does not appear to be a moderator in this relationship. However, further research on other potential moderator variables is warranted. Additionally, as evidenced by the present study and previous research, there is still a significant proportion of variation in job satisfaction that is not explained by fit. Investigating other predictors of job satisfaction not related to fit may also help individuals be satisfied in their jobs when the fit is less than ideal.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the present study indicate that work-related personal projects do not moderate the relationship between person-job fit and job satisfaction. Work-related personal projects do not predict job satisfaction. However, the present study confirms that there is a strong positive correlation between person-job fit and job satisfaction. Additional studies are needed to determine the role of other variables in this relationship between person-job fit and satisfaction.

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Tables

Table 1

Demographics Characteristics

Variable	*n*	*%*
Gender		
Female	136	69.7
Male	40	20.5
Other	6	3.1
Not Specified	13	6.7
Age		
18-25	49	25.1
26-35	65	33.4
36-45	46	23.6
46-55	24	12.3
56-65	7	3.5
66+	4	2.1
Country		
Canada	177	90.8
United States	12	6.2
United Kingdom	2	1.0
Germany	1	0.5
Austria	1	0.5
Not Specified	2	1.0
Education		
Some Highschool	1	0.5
High School Degree	25	12.8
Some College	8	4.1
Trade Diploma	51	26.2
Some University	27	13.8
Bachelor's Degree	46	23.6
Master's Degree	17	8.7
Professional Degree	5	2.6
Doctorate Degree	5	2.6
Not Specified	10	5.1

Marital Status		
Single	75	38.5
Married/ Partnership	100	51.3
Widowed	2	1.0
Divorced	8	4.1
Separated	3	1.5
Other	4	2.1
Not Specified	3	1.5
Dependent Children		
Yes	69	35.4
No	118	60.5
Not Specified	8	4.1
Current Employment Status		
Employed Full-Time	138	70.8
Retired	3	1.5
Attending School	52	26.7
Looking For Work	13	6.7
Leave	3	1.5

Note. Participants had the option to include multiple responses for their current employment.

Table 2

Qualitative Characteristics of Job 1 and Job 2

Job Category	Job 1		Job 2	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*
Managers	24	12.3	20	17.4
Professionals	43	22.1	24	20.9
Technicians	43	22.1	24	20.9
Clerical	16	8.2	9	7.8
Service and Sales	40	20.5	17	14.8
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries	0	0.0	1	0.8
Craft and Trades	6	3.1	3	2.6
Plant and Machine Operators	2	1.0	2	1.7
Elementary Occupations	4	2.0	6	5.2
Armed Forces	0	0.0	1	0.8
Not Specified	17	8.7	8	7.0
Self-Employed				
Yes	24	12.3	9	7.8
No	169	86.7	105	91.3
Not Specified	2	1.0	1	0.9

Table 3

Quantitative Characteristics of Job 1 and Job 2

Variable	Job 1		Job 2	
	n	*M (SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*
Salary	136	$67,096 ($42,342)	83	$50,193 ($32,757)
Length of Time Employed (Years)	195	5.87 (7.02)	154	5.03 (5.09)
Hours a Week Worked	195	40.0 (7.2)	154	42.4 (9.2)

Table 4

Characteristics of Personal Projects During Job 1 and Job 2

Variable	Job 1 *M (SD)*	Job 2 *M (SD)*
Total Number of Personal Projects	5.20 (2.50)	3.37 (2.05)
Number of Personal Projects Related to Work	2.21 (2.29)	1.35 (1.34)
Percent of Personal Projects Related to Work (%)	42.7% (36.6)	44.6% (39.4)
Importance of Personal Projects Related to Work (%)	43.1% (36.8)	52.1% (37.0)

Table 5

Scale Means and Scale Reliability

Scale	*M (SD)*	Scale Reliability	
		Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
PJFS Job 1	14.83 (3.61)	4	.82
PJFS Job 2	13.10 (4.24)	4	.87
MSQ Job 1	72.75(14.04)	20	.92
MSQ Job 2	61.04 (15.78)	20	.92

Table 6

Pearson Correlations Among PJFS and MSQ for Job 1 and Job 2

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. PJFS Job 1	-			
2. MSQ Job 1	.71**	-		
3. PJFS Job 2	.25**	.24**	-	
4. MSQ Job 2	.23**	.18*	.60**	-

*Denotes significance of $p<.05$

** Denotes significance of $p< .01$.

Table 7

Linear Model for Predicting MSQ

Variable	b	SE B	z
Constant	35.53	3.77	9.42*
Age	-0.13	0.05	-2.41*
PJFS	2.67	.25	10.65*
Percent PP Related to Work	-1.31	5.78	-0.23
PJFS X Percent PP Related to Work	0.10	0.40	0.24

*Indicates significance at the p<.05 level.

Appendices

Appendix A

Recruitment Poster

Appendix B

Ethics Approval

APPROVAL FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS
Research Ethics Board – Laurentian University

This letter confirms that the research project identified below has successfully passed the ethics review by the Laurentian University Research Ethics Board (REB). Your ethics approval date, other milestone dates, and any special conditions for your project are indicated below.

TYPE OF APPROVAL / New X / Modifications to project / Time extension

Name of Principal Investigator and school/department	Sarah Colton, Psychology, supervisors Bruce Oddson, Josee Turcotte
Title of Project	Does fit really matter? The role of personal projects in the relationship between job fit and satisfaction.
REB file number	6021082
Date of original approval of project	December 23, 2021
Date of approval of project modifications or extension *(if applicable)*	
Final/Interim report due on: *(You may request an extension)*	December 23, 2022
Conditions placed on project	

During the course of your research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol, recruitment or consent forms may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to the Research Ethics website to complete the appropriate REB form.

All projects must submit a report to REB at least once per year. If involvement with human participants continues for longer than one year (e.g. you have not completed the objectives of the study and have not yet terminated contact with the participants, except for feedback of final results to participants), you must request an extension using the appropriate LU REB form. In all cases, please ensure that your research complies with Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS). Also please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence with the REB office.

Congratulations and best wishes in conducting your research.

Rosanna Langer, PHD, Chair, *Laurentian University Research Ethics Board*

Appendix C

Demographic Questions

1. What is your age in years?
2. (Optional) Please specify your gender:
3. What country to you currently live in?
4. What is the HIGHEST degree or level of school you have COMPLETED? *If currently enrolled, indicate the highest degree received.*
    a. Primary school education
    b. Some secondary school education
    c. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)
    d. Some college credit, no diploma
    e. Trade/technical/vocational training (college diploma)
    f. Some university credit (associate degree)
    g. Bachelor's degree
    h. Master's degree
    i. Professional degree
    j. Doctorate degree
5. What is your marital status?
    a. Single, never married
    b. Married or domestic partnership
    c. Widowed
    d. Divorced
    e. Separated
    f. Other
6. How many dependent children (under the age of 18) do you have?

We are now going to ask some questions about your three most recent full-time jobs. Just a reminder, you must have worked in these for at least six months.

NB: A job is considered full-time if you worked there for more than 30 hours a week.

7. Are you currently employed on a full-time basis?
8. Are you currently retired?
9. Are you currently unemployed and looking for full-time work?
10. Are you currently attending school?
11. Are you currently on any medical or personal leaves?
12. Please indicate the job title of the current/most recent full-time job you've had. If you are currently working multiple part-time jobs, please select one of those jobs. Examples of jobs include: cashier, labourer, nurse, etc.

The following questions will be pertaining to role as a(n) [job_1].

13. How many hours a week, on average, do you work in this job? (ex: 40 hours)
14. Do you consider your job as a(n) [job_1] as self-employment?
15. How long have you been/were in this job ?
16. (*Optional*) What is the average yearly salary that you received in this job?
17. Prior to your work as a(n) [job_1], did you work before?
18. Please indicate the job title of the full-time job you had most recently before your position as a(n) [job_1].

The following questions will be pertaining to role as a(n) [job_2].

19. How many hours a week, on average, do you work in this job? (ex: 40 hours)
20. Do you consider your job as a(n) [job_2] as self-employment?

Appendix D

Personal Project Analysis

Thank you! We will now be asking about the personal projects you while you were a(n) [job_1].

All of us have a number of personal projects at any given time that we think about, plan and carry out. Some projects are focused on achievements ("get my degree") and others on process ("have a good time at the party"). Personal projects can be things we choose to do or things we have to do. Projects may be related to any aspect of your daily life, university, work, home, leisure etc. Please think of personal projects in a broad way. Here are some examples of personal projects:

- Pass my math course
- Eat less junk food
- Clean my apartment
- Clarify religious beliefs
- Go to Europe this summer
- Be a better parent
- Get promoted at work
- Pay off my mortgage

Think back to the time when you were working as a(n) [job_1]. Please take a few minutes to think of the personal projects you had at that time. We left space for you to list up to 10 projects, but you do not need to have that many!

These projects do not need to be formal, or even important - just everyday goals and activities that characterize your life at the time.

My personal projects:

Thank you! Now we are going to ask some short questions about the projects listed above.

During your time as a(n) [job_1] how important were the following personal projects to you? Each personal project has a slider. Please drag to the level that reflects your response.

0 (Not Important) to 10 (Very Important)

During your time as a(n) [job_1], would you say that your following personal projects were related to work?

Yes/ No