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Understanding dynamic change in perceptions of person–environment fit: An exploration of competing theoretical perspectives

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Summary

The longstanding assumption in person–environment (PE) fit research is that perceived fit embodies the subjectively experienced match between personal and environmental attributes and hence triggers affect and behavior (i.e., normal causation perspective). This argument is however increasingly debated, with some scholars suggesting that the causal flow may also run from affect and behavior to perceived fit (i.e., reverse causation perspective), and others even arguing that perceptions of PE fit are not substantially different from how people feel and think about their environment (i.e., synchronous relationship perspective). In this research, we propose that these three competing perspectives correspond with different assumptions on how PE fit perceptions dynamically change over time (i.e., by means of comparative reasoning, logical deduction, or heuristic thinking). We empirically validate these three competing perspectives by teasing out the causal ordering of the within-person relationships between perceptions of fit and workplace affect and performance. In two separate diary studies, one with weekly (N = 153) and one with daily (N = 77) repeated measures, support was found for the synchronous relationship perspective with heuristic thinking as the plausible underlying process. This research contributes to the PE fit literature by providing new insight into the dynamic nature of perceived fit.

KEYWORDS

affect, perceived fit, performance, person–environment fit, within-person change

1 | INTRODUCTION

Person–environment (PE) fit theory is one of the most pervasive guiding frameworks for scholars and practitioners alike and is key to our understanding of employees' emotions, attitudes, and behaviors in the workplace (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Schneider, 2001). The term *person–environment fit* was first coined by French and colleagues in 1974 (French, Rodgers, & Cobb, 1974) and builds upon Lewin's equation $B = f(P, E)$, which defines human behavior (B) as a function of both the person (P) and the environment (E) (Lewin, 1951). *Perceived fit* comprises an individual's subjective perception of fit and is commonly found to be a strong predictor of outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, work performance, and turnover (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Despite the established character of the perceived fit construct, many challenging questions remain, in particular those relating to how fit experiences develop and change over time (e.g., Boon & Biron, 2016; Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013; Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Yu, 2009). With this research, we wish to examine how fit perceptions temporally relate to work-related affect and performance on the within-person level, with the goal of gaining more insight into the dynamic nature of perceived fit.

Although the longstanding assumption has been that perceived fit embodies the cognitive representation of fairly stable PE discrepancies (e.g., French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982; Harrison, 1978), empirical studies illustrate that fit perceptions are dynamic (Gabriel, Diefendorff,

Chandler, Moran, & Greguras, 2014) and tap into different cognitive processes than have been assumed thus far (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006). An alternative view therefore proposes that subjective experiences of fit are influenced by affective and behavioral factors (e.g., DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Gabriel et al., 2014; Yu, 2009), which suggests that employees develop perceptions of fit on the basis of how they feel and behave in the workplace. Still, others (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012) argue that perceptions of fit substantially overlap with employees' affective reactions to the workplace. To date, however, little work has been done to empirically validate these different perspectives, and a theoretical logic on why factors other than (changes in) P and E influence individuals' perceptions of fit is still missing (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). What adds to the problem is that none of the alternative perspectives can be credibly verified with the commonly adopted between-person study designs that dominate the PE fit landscape. As a consequence, we still only have a limited understanding of why PE fit perceptions are dynamic and how they change over time. Answering these questions imply a temporal research paradigm and necessitates an important methodological shift from a between-person level to a within-person level of analyses (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003; Roe, 2008).

The goal of this research is to gain insight into how PE fit perceptions (i.e., person–organization [PO] fit and person–job [PJ] fit) dynamically change on the within-person level by examining its dynamic interplay with work-related affect and behavior (i.e., self-perceived task performance and organizational citizenship behavior). As such, this research contributes to the PE fit literature in three important ways. First, we develop theory on three different cognitive mechanisms that may underlie changes in perceived fit (i.e., comparative reasoning, logical deduction, and heuristic thinking), which can improve our understanding of how and why PE fit perceptions change over time. Second, we test the primacy of these mechanisms by teasing out the directionality of the within-person relationships between PE fit perceptions, affect, and performance (i.e., normal causation, reverse causation, and synchronous relationships), which also has important implications for understanding the nomological network of the perceived fit construct (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009). Finally, we provide a within-person test of these relationships with data collected from two separate samples with a weekly and daily interval, which contributes to the development of a body of knowledge on temporal fluctuations in perceived fit (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2014). Developing a clear picture of how and why PE fit perceptions temporally fluctuate provides important insights into the malleability of perceived fit and is a vital step towards effectively managing the benefits and drawbacks associated with changes in experienced fit.

2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 | The person–environment fit model

PE fit can be broadly defined as the compatibility between a person and his or her work environment (Kristof, 1996). Conceptually, PE fit represents an umbrella concept consisting of multiple subtypes of fit, such as PO fit, PJ fit, person–group fit, person–supervisor fit, and person–vocation fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Although positively related, these different subtypes of fit are considered to be separate constructs that have unique effects on outcome variables because they tap into different aspects of the work environment (Edwards & Billsberry, 2010; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In this research, we focus on PO and PJ fit because these types of fit are most commonly examined (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). PO fit is typically measured in terms of value congruence between a person and his or her broader organization, whereas PJ fit is usually operationalized along two dimensions, that is, needs–supplies (NS) fit and demands–abilities (DA) fit. The DA dimension assesses the degree of congruence between individuals' knowledge, skills, and abilities and their job requirements, whereas the NS dimension assesses the congruence between individuals' needs, desires, and preferences and the supplies and rewards that come along with the job (Kristof, 1996; Muchinsky & Monahan, 1987).

Kristof-Brown and Billsberry (2013) recently argued that PE fit theory can be divided into two dominant and inherently different portrayals of fit. One paradigm focuses on the interaction between identifiable personal and environmental characteristics (referred to as the *PE fit* paradigm), whereas another paradigm focuses on the subjective perception of fitting in (referred to as the *perceived fit* paradigm). The PE fit paradigm departs from a theoretical deconstruction of the concept of fit and looks at the exact combination of separately measured personal and environmental features. This paradigm thus builds on the work of early fit theorists such as Lewin (1951), French (French et al., 1974), and Caplan (1987), who portrayed fit as the outcome of an interplay between personal and environmental characteristics. Here, fit is determined in an indirect or atomistic way by explicitly comparing person and environment to determine whether or not there is a match (Edwards et al., 2006). This may take the form of objective or actual fit, when the person and environment are measured from distinct sources, or subjective fit, when individuals are asked to report separately about themselves and their environment (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013). Conversely, in the perceived fit paradigm, 'fit' is defined as a personal evaluation of the degree of congruence between a person and his or her work environment. As such, perceived fit measures follow a direct approach in that they directly capture to what extent individuals perceive a fit with their organization or job.

A major advantage of the perceived fit approach is that it allows individuals to apply their own weighting scheme when judging their levels of fit. For instance, when evaluating fit with the job, some individuals might attach more importance to the potential for interpersonal contact with colleagues and customers, whereas others may attach more importance to the potential for personal growth and development. These differences in weighting schemes are not captured by indirect measures of fit. Not surprisingly, perceived fit has been identified as a more proximal determinant of individuals' attitudes, decision making, and behavior because it better connects with their true experiences of fit (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013).

2.2 | Dynamic change in perceived fit: Three competing perspectives

Various studies on PE fit (e.g., Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Verquer et al., 2003)

showed that persons who better fit their work environment are generally more satisfied and deliver better performance than do persons that are mismatched to their work environment. Although fit researchers converge on the point that perceived fit is positively associated with favorable work experiences, different perspectives on the nature of this relationship prevail within the PE fit literature. The traditional, *normal causation perspective* holds that an individual can only experience fit in the absence of perceived discrepancies between personal values, abilities, and needs on the one hand and organizational culture, demands, and supplies on the other hand (French et al., 1982; Harrison, 1978; Kristof, 1996). Implied in this view is that temporal changes in affect and behavior are a causal outcome of changes in perceived fit. However, the validity of this traditional perspective is becoming increasingly debated, and an alternative view posits that employees' sense of fit is influenced by how they feel and behave in the work environment (e.g., DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Gabriel et al., 2014; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009). This *reverse causation perspective* thus predicts that affect and behavior causally precede perceived fit, which implies that fit perceptions temporally change in response to changes in affect and behavior. Others (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012), however, have explicitly questioned whether fit perceptions are any different from people's affective reactions to the workplace given that the correlations between fit perceptions and affective attitudes tend to be so high. This *synchronous relationships perspective* thus suggests that fit perceptions cannot be temporally disentangled from people's workplace experiences. In what follows, we will argue that each of these perspectives imply a different cognitive logic regarding how fit perceptions dynamically change over time, and articulate how these logics are grounded in different understandings of the nomological network of the perceived fit construct.

In this research, we focus on the dynamic relationship between PE fit perceptions, work-related affect, and two types of workplace behavior, that is, task performance and organizational citizenship behavior directed towards the organization (OCB-O). This choice is first of all grounded in the knowledge that affect, task performance, and OCB-O are dynamic phenomena and hence suitable for a within-person research paradigm (Beal & Ghandour, 2011; Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009). Second, affect and performance are recognized as relevant constructs in the nomological network of the perceived fit construct on the within-person level (e.g., DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Gabriel et al., 2014). The interplay between fit and work-related affect has received substantial attention in the PE fit literature and has more or less resulted in a theoretical divide among fit scholars, with on one side those who claim that affect can be a meaningful predictor and/or outcome of subjective fit experiences (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2014; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009) and on the other side those who follow an "affect-as-information" (Schwarz & Clore, 1983) logic arguing that affect contaminates the perceived fit construct (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012). This current ambiguity about the place of affect in the nomological network of the perceived fit construct makes it a prime construct of investigation in telling apart the causal ordering of within-person effects and their related cognitive change processes. As for performance, interrelationships with PE fit perceptions on the within-person level are less well documented. Yet it is true that on the stable, between-person level, task performance and OCB-O are generally seen as outcomes instead of antecedents of perceived fit (e.g., Cable & DeRue, 2002; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). By including variables in our analysis that are traditionally seen as outcomes of perceived fit, we want to transcend the 'fit-and-affect' debate and produce a more comprehensive test of the proposed within-person relationships and their implied cognitive change processes.

2.2.1 | Normal causation through comparative reasoning

In its most traditional form, PE fit represents the optimal alignment between relevant personal (P) and environmental (E) features. Fit scholars (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; French et al., 1982; Harrison, 1978; Kristof, 1996) have proposed that perceptions of PE fit are directly derived from the 'objective' alignment between P and E. The corresponding theoretical logic is that individuals first form subjective impressions of the objective self and the objective environment (referred to as 'atomistic' reasoning) and subsequently compare both elements to detect PE discrepancies (referred to as 'molecular' reasoning; Edwards et al., 2006). A core assumption of the PE fit model is that through such a process of comparative reasoning, perceptions of PE fit will eventually influence outcomes (Edwards et al., 2006; Kristof, 1996). For example, and in a PJ fit context, it is assumed that employees will first form separate impressions about, for example, job demands and personal abilities and subsequently compare both to detect any existing discrepancies. Employees can be expected to become dissatisfied in case of a perceived mismatch between personal abilities and work demands. However, in the absence of such perceived PE discrepancies, satisfaction should remain unaffected.

Applied to a dynamic, within-person framework, traditional models on PE fit would thus assume that PE fit perceptions change in response to any interfering or probing event that prompts a conscious reassessment of P and/or E elements (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Shipp & Jansen, 2011). For instance, changes in perceived P could follow from a training after which someone develops a more positive impression of his or her knowledge, skills, and/or abilities, whereas changes in perceived E could result from fluctuating impressions of work demands (e.g., a sudden increase in workload) or work resources (e.g., increased support from a colleague). Self-regulation theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998) further predicts that a perceived increase in PE discrepancies will negatively influence affect and performance. In contrast, a perceived decrease or perceived absence of PE discrepancies will produce positive effects (Gabriel et al., 2014; Johnson, Taing, Chang, & Kawamoto, 2013).

In sum, comparative reasoning is consistent with a normal causation perspective where changes in PE fit perceptions causally precede changes in affect and performance. Because such a comparative reasoning process necessarily requires a high level of effortful control (Diamond, 2013), once accomplished, conscious reassessments of PE fit can be expected to have a sustained impact on future affect and performance (e.g., Baumeister, Masicampo, & Vohs, 2011). Thus, if comparative reasoning is the dominant process driving temporal change in PE fit perceptions, the following hypothesis should hold:

Hypothesis 1. *Perceptions of PE fit at time T−1 predict work-related affect and work performance at time T.*

2.2.2 | Reverse causation through logical deduction

In recent years, evidence has started to accumulate that people also draw from their affective and performance experiences in the workplace in order to determine their level of fit (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Follmer, Talbot, Kristof-Brown, Astrove, & Billsberry, 2017; Gabriel et al., 2014; Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009). This notion implies a reverse causation perspective, where affect and work performance causally precede perceptions of fit. Affect and mood states are well known for their pervasive influence on perceptual judgment (Brief & Weiss, 2002; Forgas & George, 2001). Although few empirical studies have explored its presumed relationship (see Gabriel et al., 2014, as an exception), ample theoretical justification exists for such an affect-based fit perspective (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009). Likewise, and in line with self-perception theory (Bem, 1967), which proposes that people develop attitudes and judgments from observing their own behavior, there is emerging support for the idea that work performance can also influence how people experience their fit (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Follmer et al., 2017).

The core argument advanced here is that consciously experienced shifts in affect and performance may lead individuals to reconsider their level of PE fit. It has been suggested that for such a process of logical deduction, people rely on fit-related syllogisms (Gabriel et al., 2014). Syllogisms generally follow a three-line format (Smyth, Collins, Morris, & Levy, 1994), in which a general statement or major premise (e.g., "People who fit in feel happy") is combined with a specific statement or minor premise (e.g., "I feel happier than before"), from which a general conclusion can be deducted (e.g., "I fit in better than before"). The major premise directly refers to the mental models or lay theories on PE fit people have constructed for themselves. These lay theories help people to define what it means to fit in (e.g., "People who fit in are happy and productive") and help them to make rational sense of their changing work experiences. As is true for comparative reasoning, the process of logical deduction also represents a form of conscious judgment (Baumeister et al., 2011; Smith & DeCoster, 2000). The crucial difference between both processes, however, lies in the level of effortful control required to cause a shift in perceived fit (Diamond, 2013), which is less demanding in the case of logical deduction. Here, PE fit perceptions are not assumed to change by means of separate reassessments of P and E elements. Instead, change in PE fit perceptions is triggered by considering shifts in holistic work experiences.

In sum, logical deduction embodies an alternative cognitive process that may equally well explain changes in perceived fit. Following the logic of reverse causation that characterizes this process, changes in workplace affect and performance can be expected to trigger changes in perceptions of PE fit later on in time. Hence, if logical deduction applies, we expect the following hypothesis to be true:

Hypothesis 2. *Work-related affect and work performance at time T−1 predict perceptions of PE fit at time T.*

2.2.3 | Synchronous relationships through heuristic thinking

So far, we have argued that individuals may consciously readjust their perceptions of PE fit by comparing and contrasting separate reassessments of P and E elements (comparative reasoning), or by making rational sense of changes in affect and performance experiences (logical deduction). The third process crucially differs from these first two by assuming that changes in PE fit perceptions do not require explicit effortful control but instead can unfold in a nonconscious way through a process of automatic self-regulation (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Implied in this view is that PE fit perceptions would go up and down with affect and performance in a synchronous fashion, which also embodies the argument that PE fit perceptions temporally overlap with employees' affective responses to the workplace (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012). We argue that the cognitive process underlying such synchronous relationships is heuristic thinking.

Heuristics are rules of thumb or 'cognitive short-cuts' rooted in evolutionary processes that help individuals to simplify decision making when facing complex judgments or incomplete information (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). In the context of PE fit, a heuristic perspective makes sense if one considers that people have a limited cognitive ability to process complex information (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Smyth et al., 1994). Indeed, many of the fit judgments we make cannot be based on objective or complete information about changes in P or E elements considering the fact that such information is frequently unavailable. Likewise, continuously evaluating trends in work experiences would also quickly prove too cognitively demanding. Under such conditions, our cognitive limitations force us to simplify decision making and process information heuristically (Kahneman & Tversky, 1972; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). In an heuristic model, individuals look for readably available evidence for (lack of) PE discrepancies that matches their lay theories on PE fit. From an evolutionary perspective, affect and performance are important fit cues because they tap into primal human concerns for belongingness (e.g., preventing social exclusion) and social status (e.g., protecting one's in-group status). Indeed, affect and performance could be seen as heuristic substitutes for PE fit because they readably inform individuals about their current level of adjustment (Frijda, 1988; Johnson et al., 2013; Schwarz & Clore, 2003). Because such fit cues provide up-to-date information that is easy to interpret, they do not require conscious processing and instantly guide PE fit judgments (e.g., "I feel happy; I am fitting in" or "I am not performing well; I am not fitting in").

In short, in a heuristic model, affective and performance cues represent some of the essential features of evidence of PE fit. Because these fit cues are meant to provide quick and timely updates on people's current PE fit status, they should only be momentarily related to PE fit perceptions. That is, we would not expect these synchronous effects to carry over across situations because older fit cues become irrelevant when they are replaced by newer ones. Thus, if heuristic thinking applies, we expect the following hypothesis to be true:

Hypothesis 3. *Work-related affect and work performance only show synchronous (i.e., momentary) relationships with perceptions of PE fit.*

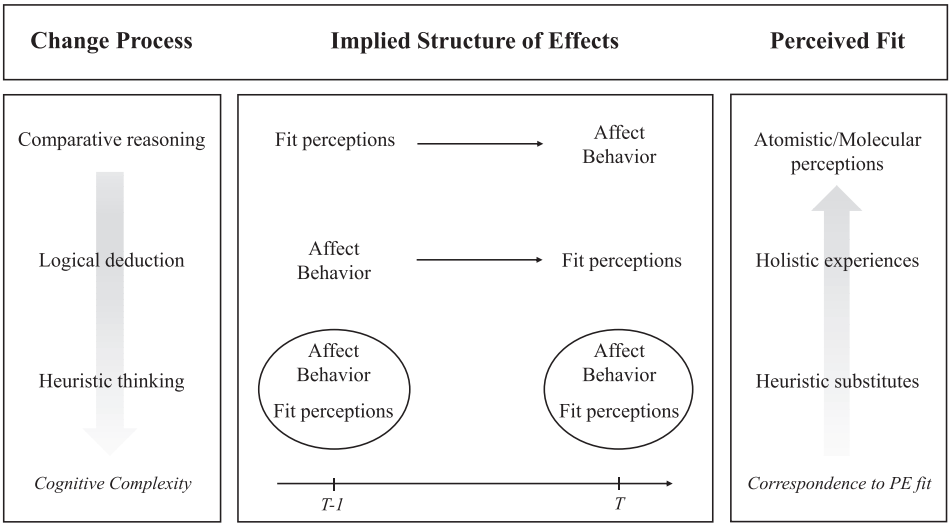

FIGURE 1 Three competing perspectives on dynamic change in fit perceptions

3 | OVERVIEW OF STUDIES

The goal of this research is to create a better understanding of the dynamic nature of perceived fit by investigating the within-person relationships between PE fit perceptions and affect and performance. Above, we have outlined three alternative perspectives on these relationships, namely, normal causation (Hypothesis 1), reverse causation (Hypothesis 2), and synchronous relationships (Hypothesis 3). We have derived that each of these perspectives corresponds with a different logic on how PE fit perceptions temporally change, namely, comparative reasoning, logical deduction, and heuristic thinking. These three cognitive processes represent different modes of information processing that range from highly complex and demanding (comparative reasoning), to moderately complex (logical deduction), to low complexity (heuristic thinking). Further, these different cognitive processes have important theoretical currency, as they vary in their distance to traditional models of PE fit. Comparative reasoning resembles the closest representation of standard PE fit thinking, in that it is assumed that individuals consciously compare and contrast changes in P and E elements when forming perceptions of fit. Logical deduction represents a simplification of this process because fit judgments are viewed to result from carefully inspecting changes in holistic work experiences. Last, heuristic thinking is furthest removed from traditional PE fit thinking given that affect and performance are considered to be heuristic substitutes for PE fit. Figure 1 provides a summary of these competing theoretical perspectives.

In order to test these alternative hypotheses, we have conducted two separate diary studies, one with weekly and one with daily collected data, and have performed data analyses on the dynamic, within-person level. This approach differs from more conventional longitudinal studies on PE fit that concentrate on the stable, between-person level, and which typically focus on how selection and socialization practices influence perceived fit (e.g., Cable & Judge, 1996; Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen, & Anderson, 2004). Whereas these between-person studies compare individuals who perceive high versus low PE fit, our within-person design compares individuals to themselves over time and can thus help to uncover how and why fit perceptions dynamically change across situations (Fisher & To, 2012; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010).

4 | STUDY 1: WEEK-TO-WEEK DYNAMICS IN PE FIT PERCEPTIONS

4.1 | Method

4.1.1 | Procedure and participants

The alumni network of the university and the extended network of the researchers were used in order to recruit a heterogeneous sample of participants from various industry sectors in Belgium. This was done in order to facilitate generalization and external validity of the research findings (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014; Tims, Derks, & Bakker, 2016). We specifically targeted employees who worked at least part-time (i.e., at least 50% of full-time employment) and held exactly one paid job. Hence, employees with more than one paid job, self-employed employees or project workers, and employees who worked less than half-time were not eligible to participate. Respondents first received a general questionnaire in which they were asked to report about their demographic characteristics, job and organizational tenure, occupational position, and general level of perceived fit, OCB-O, and task performance. During the next 12 weeks, respondents were asked to report weekly about their levels of fit, affect, OCB-O, and task performance. Weekly questionnaires were sent out by e-mail on Friday at 4 p.m. Scores for the substantive variables were only recorded if participants did not miss more than two working days during the reference period (i.e., the past working week). Because some respondents were not always at work on Friday afternoon and others did not have access to their professional work mail over the weekend, respondents were allowed to fill out each questionnaire until Monday 2 p.m. of the next working week.[1] Nonetheless, respondents were strongly encouraged to fill out the questionnaires upon receiving them in their

[1]A series of *t* tests indicated that differences in timing of response did not result in significant differences between respondents for any of the substantive variables.

mailboxes. A maximum of two reminders were sent out each week. Depending on their personal response rate, participants were entered into one of the several drawings for a gift certificate.

The sampling procedure resulted in 215 eligible participants. Of this sample, 40 cases were removed because participants had less than 3 months of organizational tenure. Socialization research typically suggests that the first 3 months are most turbulent for newcomers (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013), which makes it hard for newcomers to develop a clear understanding of their fit with the organization. Because the organizational onboarding process is a very specific phase that employees travel through (see Louis, 1980), it is not necessarily representative of employees' workplace experiences later on.[2] In addition, 22 cases were removed because these participants indicated to have changed positions (i.e., internal job transition) or employers (i.e., external job transition) over the course of the study. This resulted in a final sample of 153 respondents and 1,468 out of a maximum of 1,836 (153 participants × 12 measurement occasions) usable data points, which equals a response rate of 80%. Of this final sample, more than half of the respondents were female (53.6%). Mean age of the sample was 36 years (*SD* = 10.33), ranging from 20 to 62 years. The majority of the respondents identified as professional knowledge workers (43.8%), whereas 34.6% identified as administrative personnel and 21.6% as manager. More than two in three respondents were full-time employed (86.9%), whereas 13.1% worked in a part-time system. Average organizational tenure was 8.3 years (*SD* = 9.18), and average job tenure was 5.5 years (*SD* = 6.44).

4.1.2 | Weekly diary measures

Weekly fit perceptions, OCB-O, and task performance were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Weekly affect was measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). All items were worded in the past tense, and participants were explicitly instructed to report to the questions with the past working week in mind (Fisher & To, 2012). Items were randomized within and across weekly questionnaires to rule out potential order effects.

Perceived fit was operationalized in terms of perceived value congruence (PO fit), and perceived DA fit and NS fit (PJ fit), each measured with the three-item scale by Cable and DeRue (2002). Examples of sample items are "I felt my values matched my organization's values and culture" (value fit), "I felt that my abilities and training were a good fit with the requirements of my job" (DA fit), and "I felt the attributes that I look for in a job were fulfilled very well by my present job" (NS fit). Average Cronbach's α scores are .95 for value fit ($SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.02), .93 for DA fit ($SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.01), and .95 for NS fit ($SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.01).

Affect was measured with six items derived from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000). Three criteria guided our choice of items. First, the final set of items had to represent the two-dimensional structure of the JAWS, meaning that we wanted to preserve a balance between low pleasure/high pleasure items and low arousal/high arousal items. Second, we wanted to select affect items that could be expected to fluctuate between reports. For instance, frustration, being a milder state, varies more over time than does anger, which rarely occurs. Third, we intended to build on previous diary studies on PE fit and affect with items derived from the JAWS (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2014). This resulted in the following balanced set of items: feeling satisfied (high pleasure, low arousal), feeling relaxed (high pleasure, low arousal), feeling joyful (high pleasure, high arousal), feeling anxious (low pleasure, high arousal), feeling frustrated (low pleasure, high arousal), and feeling bored (low pleasure, low arousal). Respondents were asked how frequently they have experienced each of these affective states in the workplace during the past working week. The high pleasure and reverse-scored low pleasure affect items were collapsed into one composite measure of work-related affect ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .76, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.04).

Performance was operationalized in terms of OCB-O and task performance. *OCB-O* was measured with three items from the behavioral index by Dalal et al. (2009). The choice of items was made on the basis of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of the original six-item scale that was administered at the beginning of the study. We selected two of the three items with the highest factor loading (i.e., "defended organizational policies" and "spoke highly about my organization to others"), in addition to the item "volunteered for additional work tasks", because these three items were judged to best represent the definition of extra role behavior (we omitted the item "persisted enthusiastically in completing tasks" because the item refers to an affective state rather than a specific type of extra role behavior). This reduced three-item OCB-O measure significantly correlated (r = .69, p < .001) with the original six-item scale by Dalal et al. (2009) and showed good overall reliability ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .75, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.05). *Task performance* was measured with the seven-item scale by Williams and Anderson (1991) and showed good scale reliabilities ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .78, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.05). A sample item is "I adequately completed assigned duties".

4.2 | Analytical strategy

In multilevel studies where measurement occasions are nested in persons (i.e., due to the fact there are multiple measurements per person), measures usually exhibit variability within persons (σ_2) and between persons (τ_{00}). Within-person variability refers to how much a variable changes over time when comparing with oneself (e.g., "this week I experience more fit than last week"). Between-person variability refers to how much a variable changes over time when comparing with others (e.g., "last week person A experienced more fit compared to person B, but this week person B experienced more fit compared to person A"). The intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC1) denotes the percent of the total amount of variance that is within person and was computed using the formula $\sigma_2/(\sigma_2 + \tau_{00})$. Although there are no specific cutoff points to decide when ICC1 values are high, a value above .10 can already be seen as meaningful within-person variation that may be worthy of multilevel investigation (Hox, 2010). For this sample, ICC1 values were .23 (value fit), .28 (DA fit), .23 (NS fit), .34 (affect), .30 (OCB-O), and .48 (task performance). These results indicate that a substantial proportion of the observed variance could be attributed to within-person fluctuations, which justifies a multilevel

[2]Post hoc analyses indicated that the omission of these 40 cases did not significantly change the final results of the multilevel analyses.

approach (Hox, 2010). In conformity with recommendations by Enders and Tofighi (2007), all Level 1 predictor variables were centered relative to each individual's mean score on the respective predictor scale. This within-person centering removes all between-person variation from the predictor variables (i.e., respondents' within-person fluctuations have a mean of zero), which means that predictor estimates now represent individuals' deviations from their own mean score (Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2011). In addition, a time covariate (ranging from 1 to 12, referring to the survey number completed by a respondent) was modeled in all within-person analyses in order to control for linear trends in the data. All multilevel analyses were conducted in Mplus. Pairwise deletion was used to treat missing data, which is the recommended setting in Mplus because it maximizes data points by using all the data that are available (Muthén & Muthén, 2013).

4.3 | Results

4.3.1 | Multilevel confirmatory factor analyses and measurement invariance

We first tested whether value fit, DA fit, NS fit, affect, OCB-O, and task performance represent distinct constructs. To this end, we performed a series of multilevel CFAs on the person–mean-centered scale items of these variables. We compared our hypothesized six-factor model (MM1) with three alternative models: (a) a three-factor model with PE fit, affect, and performance as distinct factors (MM2); (b) a five-factor model with PO fit, PJ fit, affect, OCB-O, and task performance as distinct factors (MM3); and (c) a common method variance (CMV) model for which each construct loaded on a higher order common method factor (MM4). All latent factors were allowed to correlate. As reported in Table 1, our six-factor model (MM1) provided an excellent fit to the data (Kline, 2005). Moreover, model fit was significantly better than all other alternative models, including the CMV model. All items loaded significantly on their respective latent constructs.

In addition, we tested for measurement invariance across time (Lang, Bliese, Lang, & Adler, 2011). Configural invariance was first tested by specifying models with the same factor structure but unconstrained factor loadings. Next, metric invariance was tested by specifying factor loadings as invariant across time. Almost all of the observed changes in CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR were smaller than recommended cutoff values by Cheung and Rensvold (2002; $\Delta CFI \leq .01$) and Chen (2007; $\Delta RMSEA \leq .010$ and $\Delta SRMR \leq .025$), suggesting adequate stability on both the configural and metric levels across time.

4.3.2 | Descriptive results

Table 2 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, zero-order (i.e., average between-person) correlations (N = 153) and person–mean-centered correlations (N = 1,836). All correlations between PE fit perceptions and affect and performance are positive and significant.

4.3.3 | Hypothesis testing

The results of the multilevel analyses are reported in Table 3. We first turn to the results of the normal causation analyses, in which we tested whether employees' level of affect, OCB-O, and task performance during week T can be predicted by their level of value fit, DA

TABLE 1 Fit statistics for Study 1 measurement models

Models	Factors	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p*
MM1	*6 factors*	*457.69*	*260*	*<.001*	*.97*	*.96*	*.02*	*.03*				
MM2	3 factors	1,465.48	272	<.001	.79	.77	.06	.07	MM2–MM1	1,007.79	12	<.001
MM3	5 factors	771.57	265	<.001	.91	.90	.04	.04	MM3–MM1	313.88	5	<.001
MM4	CMV factor	517.71	269	<.001	.96	.95	.03	.04	MM4–MM1	60.62	9	<.001

Note. Final models in italics. N = 2,316. CMV factor = common method variance factor model.

TABLE 2 Means, standard deviations, and correlations of Study 1 variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Value fit	5.08	1.04	—	.34**	.50**	.36**	.31**	.16*
2. DA fit	5.59	0.81	.61**	—	.49**	.31**	.19**	.24**
3. NS fit	5.25	1.03	.69**	.84**	—	.44**	.30**	.25*
4. Affect	3.92	0.46	.61**	.55**	.66**	—	.25*	.32*
5. OCB-O	4.49	1.14	.70**	.48**	.60**	.52**	—	.23**
6. Task performance	5.78	0.59	.57**	.54**	.48**	.53**	.42**	—
a. Age (years)	36	10.33	.18*	.28**	.24**	.20*	.11	.15
b. Gender (male)	46.4%	—	−.14	−.18*	−.12	−.09	−.06	−.10

Note. Zero-order correlations are presented below the diagonal (N = 153); person-centered correlations are presented above the diagonal (N = 1,836). Demographics are included for information purposes only. Gender was coded as 0 = female and 1 = male. DA fit = demands–abilities fit; NS fit = needs–supplies fit.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 3 Weekly relationships between fit perceptions and affect and performance (Study 1)

	Normal causation model		
Model variables	**Affect *T***	**OCB-O *T***	**Task performance *T***
Linear trend	.05	−.01	.04
Affect *T*−1	.11***		
OCB-O *T*−1		−.02	
Task performance *T*−1			.02
Value fit *T*−1	−.01	.05	.01
DA fit *T*−1	.02	.01	.001
NS fit *T*−1	.08	.01	−.04
R^2	.03*	.003	.003
	Reverse causation model		
Model variables	**Value fit *T***	**DA fit *T***	**NS fit *T***
Linear trend	−.04	−.01	.03
Value fit *T*−1	.02		
DA fit *T*−1		−.02	
NS fit *T*−1			−.01
Affect *T*−1	.01	.01	.04
OCB-O *T*−1	.01	−.01	.002
Task performance *T*−1	.04	.03	.03
R^2	.01	.001	.03
	Synchronous relationship model		
Model variables	**Value fit *T***	**DA fit *T***	**NS fit *T***
Linear trend	−.06	−.07*	−.04
Affect *T*	.30***	.23***	.36***
OCB-O *T*	.22***	.09**	.17***
Task performance *T*	.01	.13*	.09*
R^2	.17***	.12***	.22***

Note. Standardized coefficients. N = 1,836. Predictor variables are within-person centered. DA fit = demands–abilities fit; NS fit = needs–supplies fit.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

fit, and NS fit during the previous week *T*−1. The results indicate that none of the *T*−1 PE fit variables significantly predict affect, OCB-O, and/or task performance during week *T*. These results thus fail to provide empirical support for Hypothesis 1, meaning that changes in PE fit perceptions are unrelated to changes in affect and performance one week later.

Next, the results of the reverse causation analyses are discussed. Through these analyses, it is tested whether employees' level of affect, OCB-O, and task performance during week *T*−1 predicts their level of value fit, DA fit, and NS fit during week *T*. As can be seen from Table 3, the results provide no evidence for such reverse causation effects. Thus, Hypothesis 2 is not supported by our data, indicating that changes in affect, task performance, and OCB do not trigger changes in PE fit perceptions one week later.

Finally, we examined whether levels of affect, OCB-O, and task performance during week *T* predict how individuals experience their fit during the same week *T*. As can be seen from Table 3, weekly affect and OCB-O are significantly related to perceptions of value fit (β = .30/.22, p < .001), DA fit (β = .23/.09, p < .001/.01), and NS fit (β = .36/.17, p < .001) during the same week. For task performance, significant relationships are found with DA fit (β = .13, p < .05) and NS fit (β = .09, p < .05) during the same week. Overall, these results provide support for Hypothesis 3 and indicate that changes in PE fit perceptions momentarily overlap with changes in workplace affect and performance.

4.4 | Discussion Study 1

The results of Study 1 provide clear support for the synchronous relationship perspective, of which the data suggest that it has primacy over the other two theoretical perspectives. That is, changes in PE fit perceptions were unrelated to changes in affect and performance one week later, thereby invalidating the normal causation perspective. At the same time, changes in affect and performance were also found to be unrelated to changes in PE fit perceptions during the next week, which also invalidated the reverse causation perspective. Instead, our temporal analyses indicated that weekly changes in affect and performance temporally overlap with weekly changes in PE fit perceptions. Overall, these results indicate that employees are likely to experience higher levels of PE fit on the weeks in which they experience higher levels of affect and perceive themselves as better organizational citizens and highly proficient performers. Furthermore, the pattern of associations between PE fit perceptions, affect, and performance corroborates results from earlier studies, in that affect is found to be closely associated with all types of fit perceptions (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Gabriel et al., 2014), whereas task performance is most

proximally related to the dimensions of PJ fit (i.e., DA fit and NS fit; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and OCB-O is most closely associated with perceived value fit (Kristof-Brown, Li, & Schneider, 2016).

5 | STUDY 2: DAY-TO-DAY DYNAMICS IN PE FIT PERCEPTIONS

In Study 1 (above), we opted for a weekly repeated measures format because "the past working week" represents a clearly defined and meaningful temporal unit that appeared well suited to capture respondents' situational fluctuations in PE fit, affect, and performance (e.g., Bakker & Bal, 2010; Sonnentag, Mojza, Binnewies, & Scholl, 2008). One potential caveat related to this choice is that the lack of evidence in favor of any temporal effects (via either normal causation or reversed causation) may relate to the weekly time interval used in Study 1, which may have been too long such that the temporal effect of the *T*−1 independent variable(s) on the dependent variable at time *T* decays before it can be properly captured. In Study 2 (below), we therefore collected diary data from a separate sample with a *daily* interval in order to counter the alternative explanation that factors related to the choice of a particular time lag (e.g., retrospective bias or temporal spacing) might have distorted our results.

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Procedure and participants

The data collection procedure for Study 2 was identical to the procedure for Study 1, with the notable difference that questionnaires were now sent out daily instead of weekly. Surveys were distributed by e-mail at 4 p.m. during 10 consecutive working days. Because daily diary studies can be quite burdensome to participants with nonresponse and dropout as an undesirable consequence (Fisher & To, 2012; Ohly et al., 2010), we limited the number of questionnaires to a maximum of 10 while keeping each questionnaires as short as possible. Daily perceptions of PE fit, affect, OCB-O, and task performance were captured on eight out of 10 measurement occasions, that is, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of the first and second weeks. General background information about the respondents and their employing organizations was collected on day five (i.e., Friday of the first week). In order to check the validity of our shortened performance scales, the original measurement instruments for OCB-O (six items) and task performance (seven items) were administered on day 10 (i.e., Friday of the second week).

A total of 77 participants agreed to take part in our daily diary study. All respondents met the inclusion criteria (i.e., at least part-time employment, one paid job, not being self-employed), and none of them changed positions or employers over the course of the study. Our sample generated a total of 525 out of a maximum of 616 (77 participants × 8 measurement occasions) usable data points, which resulted in a response rate of 85.2%. The demographics of the respondents of Study 2 were comparable to those of Study 1. Again, more than half of the respondents were female (52.6%). Mean age of the sample was 36 years (*SD* = 11.83), ranging from 21 to 59 years. More than half of the respondents were professional knowledge workers (53.9%), whereas 32.9% identified as administrative personnel and 13.2% were managers. The large majority of the respondents were full-time employed (86.8%), whereas 13.2% worked in a part-time system. Average organizational tenure for this sample was 7.3 years (*SD* = 9.32), and average job tenure was 5.3 years (*SD* = 7.11).

5.1.2 | Daily diary measures

We relied on the same scales that were used for our weekly diary study. However, and in order for the same items to make sense in a daily context, respondents were asked to base their judgments on the past working day. Furthermore, the number of task performance items was reduced from seven to four in order to decrease the burden for participants. We therefore factor analyzed the original Williams and Anderson (1991) scale that was administered prior to the start of the weekly diary study and selected the three positively worded items with the highest factor loading (i.e., "I performed the tasks that were expected of me," "I adequately completed assigned duties," and "I met the formal performance requirements of the job") plus the reverse-scored item "I failed to perform essential duties." All items were measured with a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*) and were again randomized within and across questionnaires to rule out potential order effects.

Daily value fit ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .93, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.02), DA fit ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .89, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.04), NS fit ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .93, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.04), affect ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .76, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.06), OCB-O ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .68, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.07), and task performance ($\overline{X}_{(\alpha)}$ = .71, $SD_{(\alpha)}$ = 0.06) all showed evidence of adequate scale reliabilities. Our reduced three-item OCB-O measure correlated .62 (p < .001) with the original six-item scale by Dalal et al. (2009). Our shortened four-item measure of task performance correlated .70 (p < .001) with the original seven-item Williams and Anderson (1991) scale. ICC1 values were .21 (value fit), .40 (DA fit), .21 (NS fit), .62 (affect), .63 (task performance), and .45 (OCB-O).

5.2 | Results

5.2.1 | CFA, measurement invariance, and descriptive results

Results of the CFA are reported in Table 4. Our hypothesized six-factor model with value fit, DA fit, NS fit, affect, OCB-O, and task performance as separate constructs provided a good fit to the data and fitted the data significantly better than did the three alternative models including the CMV model. All items loaded significantly on their respective latent constructs.

Next, our analysis of measurement invariance indicated that our measures show adequate stability across time on both the configural and metric levels. Apart from a few minor deviations, all of the observed changes were smaller than recommended cutoff values (Chen, 2007; Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Hence, we can have confidence that the same variables are being assessed in a similar manner across time.

Finally, Table 5 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, zero-order correlations (N = 77), and person–mean-centered correlations (N = 616). All correlations between PE fit perceptions and affect and performance are positive and significant.

TABLE 4 Fit statistics for Study 2 measurement models

Models	Factors	χ^2	*df*	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	Comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p*
MM1	*6 factors*	*329.63*	*195*	*<.001*	*.92*	*.91*	*.03*	*.05*				
MM2	3 factors	530.11	206	<.001	.82	.80	.05	.07	MM2–MM1	200.48	11	<.001
MM3	5 factors	380.59	199	<.001	.90	.88	.04	.06	MM3–MM1	50.96	4	<.001
MM4	CMV factor	347.95	204	<.001	.92	.91	.03	.06	MM4–MM1	18.32	9	<.05

Note. Final models in italics. *N* = 616. CMV factor = common method variance factor model.

TABLE 5 Means, standard deviations, and correlations of Study 2 variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Value fit	5.11	1.21	—	.41**	.37**	.24**	.15**	.09**
2. DA fit	5.46	0.86	.56**	—	.45**	.26**	.18**	.21**
3. NS fit	5.05	1.08	.60**	.84**	—	.24**	.18**	.12**
4. Affect	5.27	0.68	.45**	.44**	.40**	—	.19**	.19**
5. OCB-O	4.40	1.00	.63**	.47**	.57**	.63**	—	.25**
6. Task performance	5.64	0.66	.32**	.42**	.43**	.45**	.30**	—
a. Age (years)	36	11.83	−.17	.09	.09	.06	−.04	.17
b. Gender (male)	47.4%	—	−.05	−.17	−.17	−.02	−.05	−.27*

Note. Zero-order correlations are presented below the diagonal (*N* = 77). Within-person-centered correlations are presented above the diagonal (*N* = 616). Demographics are included for information purposes only. Gender was coded as 0 = female and 1 = male. DA fit = demands–abilities fit; NS fit = needs–supplies fit.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

5.2.2 | Hypothesis testing

The results of the multilevel analyses are reported in Table 6. We first discuss the results for the normal causation analyses. As can be seen from Table 6, none of the fit variables at *T*−1 were significantly related with OCB-O or task performance at *T*. Table 6 further shows a significant relationship between both value fit (β = .16, $p < .05$) and NS fit (β = −.28, $p < .01$) at *T*−1 and affect at *T*; however, because the model for affect did not reach significance ($R^2 = .09$, $p > .05$), these effects should not be taken into account. We thus have to reject Hypothesis 1.

Next, we turn to the result of the reverse causation analyses. As can be seen from Table 6, neither affect at *T*−1 nor OCB-O at *T*−1 was significantly related with any of the fit variables at *T*. We did find a significant relationship between task performance at *T*−1 and value fit (β = .35, $p < .001$) and NS fit (β = .24, $p < .01$) at *T*. However, for NS fit, the model did not reach significance ($R^2 = .07$, $p > .05$), which means that the latter result should not be taken into account. All in all, these results only provide very weak support for Hypothesis 2.

Finally, the results for the synchronous relationships perspective are discussed. It was found that affect and OCB-O were significantly related to value fit (β = .20/.10, $p < .001/.05$), DA fit (β = .19/.10, $p < .001/.05$), and NS fit (β = .21/.12, $p < .001/.05$). For task performance, a significant relationship was found with DA fit (β = .13, $p < .05$). Altogether, these results provide solid support for Hypothesis 3.

5.3 | Discussion Study 2

The results of Study 2 largely replicate the results of Study 1, in that again robust support was found for the synchronous relationships perspective, but this time on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, the results failed to provide support for the normal causation perspective and, with one notable exception, also for the reverse causation perspective. These results thus indicate that daily changes in PE fit perceptions temporally overlap with daily changes in affect and performance. Only one significant temporal relationship emerged, namely, between task performance and perceived value fit. This result indicates that changes in task performance on one particular day trigger a positive reassessment of value fit perceptions during the next day. This is an intriguing finding, which may be tentatively explained by considering the dynamic social context in which value expression usually takes place (Blustein, 2011). It is well known that trust, interpersonal attraction, and clear communication are important signals that value fit exists (Edwards & Cable, 2009). People who perform well are more likely to receive reinforcing feedback from significant others (e.g., managers or more tenured staff members) in the form of validation and praise, indicating that their behavior is in line with company expectations. This feedback may in turn signal competence-based trust (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995) and interpersonal liking, and as such accentuate to employees that they are a good cultural fit. Moreover, such external validation usually follows a lagged pattern, in that validation is given after performance is displayed. Up to this point, however, this explanation is speculative and in need of further research.

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

The goal of this research was to investigate how PE fit perceptions dynamically change on the within-person level by contrasting three competing perspectives on the positive relationship between PE fit perceptions and affect and performance, namely, normal causation

TABLE 6 Daily relationships between fit perceptions and affect and performance (Study 2)

	Normal causation model		
Model variables	**Affect *T***	**OCB-O *T***	**Task performance *T***
Linear trend	.02	−.06	.01
Affect *T*−1	−.06		
OCB-O *T*−1		−.27***	
Task performance *T*−1			−.19*
Value fit *T*−1	.16*	.01	.01
DA fit *T*−1	−.06	−.05	.10
NS fit *T*−1	−.28**	.03	−.01
R^2	.09	.08*	.04
	Reverse causation model		
Model variables	**Value fit *T***	**DA fit *T***	**NS fit *T***
Linear trend	−.06	.17*	−.003
Value fit *T*−1	−.05		
DA fit *T*−1		−.18*	
NS fit *T*−1			.11
Affect *T*−1	−.15	−.05	.01
OCB-O *T*−1	−.11	−.04	−.04
Task performance *T*−1	.35***	.07	.24**
R^2	.13**	.07	.07
	Synchronous relationship model		
Model variables	**Value fit *T***	**DA fit *T***	**NS fit *T***
Linear trend	−.02	.02	−.03
Affect *T*	.20***	.19***	.21***
OCB-O *T*	.10*	.10*	.12*
Task performance *T*	.02	.13*	.05
R^2	.06**	.09***	.07*

Note. Standardized coefficients. N = 616. Predictor variables are within-person centered. DA fit = demands–abilities fit; NS fit = needs–supplies fit.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

(PE fit as temporal antecedent of affect and performance), reverse causation (affect and performance as temporal antecedent of PE fit), and synchronous relationships (strictly correlational relationships between PE fit and affect and performance). Results from two diary studies, one with weekly (N = 153) and one with daily (N = 77) repeated measures, indicate that PE fit perceptions are mainly synchronously related to affect and performance.

6.1 | Implications for the PE fit literature

6.1.1 | Within-person dynamics in PE fit perceptions

The results of both studies suggest that the synchronous relationships perspective has primacy over the normal causation and reverse causation perspective, indicating that changes in PE fit perceptions are only momentarily associated with changes in affect and performance. This finding sheds more light on the potential causes and consequences of fluctuations in PE fit perceptions. First, our findings indicate that change in PE fit perceptions cannot be fully attributed to prior changes in affect and performance, which challenges the reverse causation perspective (e.g., Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007 ; Yu, 2009). Interestingly, most of the temporal relationships between PE fit perceptions at time *T*−1 and time *T* were insignificant too, which indicates that change in PE fit perceptions on one particular day or week can also not be attributed to change in PE fit perceptions on the prior day or week. Please note that this does *not* imply that PE fit perceptions are unrelated over time.[3] In fact, post hoc analyses indicate that the correlation between PE fit perceptions over time ranges from .67 to .85 on a day-to-day basis and from .75 to .82 on a week-to-week basis (p < .001 for all correlations). Although this correlational analysis suggests that PE fit perceptions tend to follow a relatively stable baseline trend over time, our temporal analyses indicate that when fit perceptions are dynamic (i.e., deviate from this trend), these dynamics cannot be very well explained by prior changes in PE fit perceptions, affect, or performance. All in all, these findings indicate that the main reason for why PE fit perceptions situationally fluctuate should likely be sought in what is going on at that very moment rather than in what has been going on during past moments.

Second, our results also indicate that changes in PE fit perceptions have no temporal impact on affect and performance, which defies the normal causation perspective that pervades the PE fit literature to date (Edwards et al., 2006; Kristof, 1996). These findings again emphasize that affect, performance, and PE fit perceptions might be more

[3]Because Level 1 predictor variables are within-person centered, predictor estimates represent daily or weekly deviations from mean scores and not just daily or weekly scores (see Ohly et al., 2010).

momentarily intertwined than has been assumed thus far. One possible explanation is that affect and performance are determined by objective PE fit rather than perceived fit, which itself might be an outcome of the PE fit process just like work experiences are (Ostroff, 2012). If true, than this would mean that PE fit perceptions are anchored in people's work experiences rather than being a true antecedent to these work experiences, which also makes it more plausible that individuals tune their fit judgments on the basis of their immediate experiences in the workplace (heuristic thinking) instead of engaging in an effortful and complex process of comparing and contrasting change in P and E elements (comparative reasoning) or evaluating trends in past work experiences (logical deduction). Alternatively, these various cognitive processes may work in tandem (Baumeister et al., 2011; Kahneman, 2011), such that heuristic thinking is the default way or 'autopilot mode' by which people manage PE fit judgments until a probing (e.g., contemplating a career move) or interfering (e.g., an unexpected setback) event occurs, which prompts individuals to reassess PE fit via effortful control. However, all of this remains speculative, and rather than providing answers that are definitive and complete, we have raised questions that merit further inspection.

6.1.2 | The nomological network of the perceived fit construct

Teasing out the directionality of the relationships between PE fit and workplace affect and performance also has important implications for understanding the nomological network of the perceived fit construct (Kristof-Brown & Jansen, 2007; Yu, 2009). Our findings indicate that affect, performance, and PE fit perceptions temporally overlap, which can be understood from an evolutionary perspective where affect and performance cues are shorthand for an individual's safety and in-group status (Barkow, Cosmides, & Tooby, 1995). As suggested by others (e.g., Edwards et al., 2006; Ostroff, 2012; Yu, 2009), affect seems to play a primordial role in this process. However, temporal overlap does not necessarily imply conceptual redundancy. First, the results of our CFAs clearly indicate that perceptions of PE fit cannot be conceptually equated to affect. The ICC1 scores further support this argument, as they indicate that affect generally shows more within-person variability than do PE fit perceptions. Thus, it seems that individuals can also decouple their PE fit judgments from their affect. Second, PE fit perceptions seem to incorporate more than affect alone. That is, a similar pattern of relationships was found for OCB-O and task performance, over and beyond the relationship with affect. This indicates that the relationships between affect and perceived fit should be interpreted from a heuristic perspective rather than an 'affect-as-information' perspective (Schwarz & Clore, 1983), which nuances the critiques that affect contaminates the perceived fit construct. The conclusion is not that PE fit perceptions are biased by affect per se but rather that fit perceptions are a natural by-product of affect and vice versa (e.g., Klag, Jansen, & Lee, 2015), and that both are hard to disentangle on the within-person level (see also Gabriel et al., 2014). Possibly, PE fit perceptions represent a summative work experience, which include, but cannot be simply equated to, affective experiences in the workplace.

6.2 | Future temporal research on perceived fit

In general, more temporal research is needed in order to fully understand the close relationship between work experiences and PE fit perceptions, for instance, by investigating feedback loops in shorter and longer time frames.[4] First, a signal contingent approach could be used to uncover whether spiraling effects (i.e., mutually reinforcing relationships between PE fit perceptions and work experiences) exist in shorter time frames, which might provide additional insights into how individuals build associations between PE fit perceptions and related work experiences. Evidence from an experience sampling study in which participants were signaled multiple times a day tentatively suggests that such complex bidirectional relationships may exist, at least as far as PE fit perceptions and affect-based variables are concerned (Gabriel et al., 2014). Through these mutually reinforcing relationships, fit and affect may appear to be inextricably interconnected in the mind of the individual (e.g., "I feel happy because I experience fit; I know I fit because I feel happy"), which might explain their heuristic association in longer time intervals (e.g., "I feel happy; I fit"). Second, bidirectional relationships between work experiences and perceived fit could also be considered in more extensive time intervals (e.g., months and years). For instance, perceiving suboptimal PE fit may lead employees to actively manage their work experiences (e.g., through job crafting), which in turn may gradually alter their baseline experience of PE fit. Such structural feedback loops would be theoretically supported by the theory of work adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984), which proposes that both normal and reverse causation paths are part of a larger adjustment process.

6.3 | Recommendations for practice

Our results first indicate that an occasional dip in affect or performance is unlikely to have long-lasting consequences for employees' PE fit perceptions and vice versa. In contrast, however, people who regularly feel unhappy or unproductive at work will likely perceive a structural lack of PE fit. It is hence important that managers design work environments in such a way so that they structurally reinforce positive affect and successful performance, because it is in these environments that people are most likely to experience high levels of PE fit. This can for instance be done by creating an empowering working climate that supports thriving at work (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005), or by designing healthy jobs (Parker, 2014) that provide sufficient resources to meet performance goals (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007) and stimulate prosocial behavior (Grant, 2007). Second, our findings support the idea that people tend to process PE fit-related information heuristically. The caveat here is that people save effort with heuristics, but at the cost of accuracy (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). That is, people might base judgments on recent, unique, or inconsistent information (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1973), because such information is highly salient and easier to retrieve than information about base rate experiences (Kahneman, 2011). The PE fit perceptions that people arrive at through heuristic reasoning may therefore not always be valid representations of their 'actual' or 'objective' fit with the

[4]We thank an anonymous reviewer for this insightful suggestion.

workplace (see also Yu, 2013). Managers and employees are therefore advised to look beyond isolated experiences or microfluctuations in fit and instead focus more on robust (trends in) baseline perceptions of PE fit when making PE fit-related decisions.

6.4 | Limitations

Our study has some limitations related to its focus and repeated measurement format. First, the use of self-report measures might raise concerns regarding common method bias. Yet we believe this risk is severely restricted in our study for a multitude of reasons (Conway & Lance, 2010), most notably because the results of our CFA explicitly evidence against the presence of common method bias. More so, the pattern of results that emerged from our analyses strongly argues against a common method bias logic. Should method bias be an issue, we would naturally expect to find strong synchronous relationships between all pairs of independent and dependent variables, including task performance and value fit (Studies 1 and 2) and task performance and NS fit (Study 2). Further, self-report measures were deemed most appropriate here for the subjective processes under investigation (Spector, 1994), and all measures showed evidence of high construct validity. Finally, we took various precautions during the data collection to proactively prevent common method bias to occur (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), such as assuring confidentiality to reduce social desirability when responding, and separating the substantive variables in different blocks.

Second, the nature of our data does not provide conclusive proof for any of the proposed cognitive processes (i.e., comparative reasoning, logical deduction, or heuristic thinking). Although our data speak to the likelihood of heuristic thinking as the cognitive process underlying these synchronous relationships, it may not be the sole process here. In particular, heuristic thinking may partly overlap and/or work in tandem with the other suggested cognitive processes, such that synchronous relationships may still result from some form of effortful control. In theory, these synchronous effects can still be explained by a shift in perceived P or E elements, a consciously experienced shift in affect, or a deliberate performance decline that takes place over the course of a single day or less. Thus, additional work on these underlying cognitive processes is warranted.

Finally, in this research, we were interested in the relationship between general work-based affect and perceptions of PE fit. The choice for a general affect measure was motivated by earlier suggestions that negative affect is related to misfit rather than (low) fit (see Gabriel et al., 2014). However, the emotions literature also suggests that collapsing negative and positive emotions items into one affect variable can gloss over important distinctions and relationships, and future diary studies on fit and affect may thus benefit from separating positive from negative affect.

7 | CONCLUSION

The exploration of perceived fit is still in its infancy (Kristof-Brown & Billsberry, 2013), and researchers have yet to develop a clear understanding of how and why perceptions of PE fit dynamically change over time. Results from two separate diary studies, one with weekly (N = 153) and one with daily (N = 77) repeated measures, indicate that perceptions of PE fit temporally overlap with affect and performance experiences in the workplace. Fit researchers are encouraged to consider the role work experiences may play in establishing perceptions of PE fit.

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