



Person–organisation fit, job satisfaction and intention to leave in the South African social development sector

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Background: The South African public service sector continues to lose employees due to more favourable working conditions offered by organisations in the private sector. Understanding intention to leave (ITL) can help public service managers and leaders retain their highly skilled and high performing staff.

Aim: The aim of the study was to determine the direct and indirect relationships between person–organisation fit (POF), job satisfaction (JS) and ITL in the South African social development sector (SDS).

Setting: The sample used in this study was drawn from the SDS in South Africa ($n = 100$).

Methods: Cross-sectional survey data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 27. Hayes PROCESS macro was used to test the mediating effect of JS in the relationship between POF and ITL.

Results: Results indicated that POF shared a negative relationship with ITL, independent of the indirect relationship via JS, suggesting a partial mediation effect. The size of the indirect effect of POF on ITL, through JS, was larger than the direct effect of POF on ITL.

Conclusion: The study provides support for understanding the relationships between ITL, POF and JS. The findings of this study have managerial implications as it provides insights on how to retain employees and decrease turnover intention in the South African SDS.

Keywords: person–organisation fit; job satisfaction; intention to leave; social development sector; mediation effect.

Introduction

Employee turnover intention and subsequently turnover, is one of the biggest managerial challenges for businesses and continues to threaten business sustainability globally (Schlechter, Syce & Bussin 2016). Prihandinisari, Azizur and Hicks (2020) argue that high turnover rates introduce a financial risk management issue which plagues many organisations. High turnover intention generally predicts disastrous consequences for organisations including significant costs for employee replacement, as well as operational disruptions. In South Africa, turnover intention is exacerbated by the war for talent in which organisations compete to attract and retain highly skilled employees, because of the skills deficit in the country (Potgieter 2018; Schlechter et al. 2016; Sing 2012). The reasons cited for the skills deficit include rapid economic development, constantly growing infrastructure needs, and changing age demographics with older workers retiring and leaving a skills gaps (Mabindisa 2014).

While most organisations in South Africa must deal with the issue of turnover intention, it is organisations with a lack of resources, such as funding and employee development opportunities, that must mitigate significantly higher levels of turnover intention. In comparison to the private sector, public service organisations are faced with considerably higher levels of turnover intention (Prihandinisari et al. 2020). Unfavourable work environments, dissatisfaction with one's job, and lack of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are all reasons that have been cited for high intention to leave (ITL) in the public sector (Ayalew et al. 2015; Demircioglu & Berman 2019; Langbein & Stazyk 2018). In South Africa, the public service sector is in an ongoing battle to retain high-performing employees as a number of employees are moving into the private sector due to even higher-paying jobs, better benefits and greater opportunities for development. Similarly, those employees with valuable skills are difficult to attract and are in high demand, thus increasing the

need for organisations to compete for these skills in an attempt to ensure that they provide quality services. (Kim & Fernandez 2017). While there may be discrepancies in the resources available for private and public sector organisations, the need for skilled employees who are able to drive the organisation's key strategic objectives remains the same, which presents yet another obstacle to public sector management, that is retaining skilled employees. High-turnover intention is associated with the challenges of brain drain, a decreasing workforce, loss of skills, loss of productivity, service delivery backlogs and decreased morale. All of these effects reflect poorly on the image of the public sector and on the competence of its management (Muteswa & Ortlepp 2011; Ogony & Majola 2018; Sing 2012).

One area of public service that continues to report high turnover intention amongst its employees is the Social Development Sector (SDS). The mandate of this public service is to facilitate human development and improve the quality of life for the citizens of South Africa. This mandate is achieved through a caring and integrated system of social development services and is aligned with the country's National Development Plan which focuses on forging partnerships through which vulnerable individuals, groups and communities become capable in their own development and self-reliance (Department of Social Development 2020; National Development Plan 2010). To fulfil this mandate, the SDS must attract, recruit and retain qualified and competent practitioners with diverse skill sets to meet the country's demand for social development services (Department of Social Development 2020). However, like any other public service area, the SDS is not immune to the challenges regarding turnover which negatively affects its ability to achieve its core mandate and this has severe managerial implications. According to a national report on the South African SDS, the SDS continues to report increasingly high-turnover intention and turnover rates amongst its employees across all levels, different work units and occupational categories. Reasons for employee turnover in the SDS include seeking better employment opportunities, low job satisfaction (JS), poor employee fit with the organisation, and emotionally challenging working conditions such as working in vulnerable communities (Department of Social Development 2020). All these factors contribute to high ITL and turnover. This makes investigating ITL in the SDS a crucial aspect.

While the negative effects of ITL have been discussed, there are researchers (Memon et al. 2018; Zhang et al. 2017) who propose factors that can be used to better understand the processes that lead or contribute to ITL. One such factor is Person-organisation fit (POF). Person-organisation fit reflects the extent to which employees perceive the degree of similarity between their values and those of the organisation and how they form attachments to organisations (Janse Van Rensburg, Rothmann & Diedericks 2017; Redelinghuys & Botha 2016). Employees who believe that there is congruence or fit between their values and beliefs and that of the organisation, are more likely to be committed to and

embedded in their jobs and as a result, are less likely to leave the organisation.

In addition to POF, there is strong theoretical and empirical support on the role of JS in explaining ITL (Ali & Anwar 2021; Janse van Rensburg et al. 2017). Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which employees feel that their needs and wants are attended to, and how these reflect their feelings and emotions associated with a job (Ali & Anwar 2021). Job satisfaction has been studied as a strong predictor of ITL, because when employees experience lower levels of satisfaction, they become more inclined to consider leaving their job (Hassan & Adnan 2016; Lee, MacPhee & Dahinten 2020; Zhang et al. 2017).

In addition to understanding the direct relationships between POF, JS and ITL, assessing the indirect processes in which POF may explain ITL, through JS, may provide managers and leaders in the SDS with an additional resource of knowledge on how to mitigate turnover intention. There is compelling evidence (Jin, Macdonald & Park 2018; Lee et al. 2020; Redelinghuys & Botha 2016) suggesting that JS can mediate the relationship between the POF and ITL and may serve as an explanatory mechanism in this relationship. Jin et al. (2018) argue that it is vital for researchers to explore the different perspectives on how POF may explain ITL through its influence on JS as this provides another avenue for intervention design that targets turnover intention. Understanding the indirect processes that may occur in the relationship between POF and ITL will allow for holistic interventions that consider support mechanisms such as increasing JS. By investigating explanatory mechanisms such as JS, researchers may offer a more nuanced approach to understanding the dynamic relationship between POF and ITL. As a result, there is a call for studies that explore both direct and indirect effects between POF, JS and ITL in different working populations. The current study makes an attempt to answer this call by investigating the direct and indirect relationships between POF JS and ITL amongst employees in the SDS.

Literature review and theoretical background

Person-organisation fit and intention to leave

Intention to leave is defined as an employee's intent or decision to leave an organisation and seek employment elsewhere which often leads to actual turnover behaviour (Janse Van Rensburg et al. 2017). Researchers in the field of employee retention studies (Grobler & Grobler 2016; Kakar, Sofi & Mansor 2019) provide strong empirical evidence which supports the negative relationship between POF and ITL. This negative relationship implies that when the individual experiences greater fit between themselves and the organisation, the ITL the organisation decreases (Kakar et al. 2019; Kooij & Boon 2018). According to the Person-Organisation fit theory posited by Cable and DeRue (2002), the extent to which an employee is considered to be

compatible with the organisation is determined by three dimensions that is value– congruence fit (VCF), needs–supplies fit (NSF) and demands – abilities fit (DAF).

Value congruence refers to the employee's perceptions or beliefs about the congruence between their personal values and culture of the organisation (Cable & De Rue 2002). When the individual believes that their values are compatible or supported by the organisational culture, the employee is likely to have a low desire to leave the organisation. Jin et al. (2018) assert that when an employee's values and beliefs are aligned with the organisation, there are positive psychological associations that are created between the individual and the organisation which leads to reduced intention to leave. The second dimension of POF considers the NSF which represents an employee's judgements regarding whether the rewards they receive (pay, benefits, training) in return for their service are aligned with their personal and professional needs. Employees who believe that their needs are not met by their employer are more likely to have a negative association with the organisation which fosters high- turnover intention. DAF which represents the third dimension of POF, refers to a person's perceptions of the congruence between the demands of their job and their abilities. De Crom and Rothmann (2018), argue that when the employee's work roles match their abilities and self-concept, they are actively engaged in their jobs and find new purpose in their work which is related to high job performance. On the contrary, when an employee possesses inadequate abilities or their abilities are insufficient for the job, work processes are less efficient and work outputs are of a poor quality. These employees are likely to experience high levels of work-related stress, which exacerbates the ITL.

The three dimensions of POF mentioned above are directly related to turnover intention and these relationships are supported by the Job Embeddedness Theory (JET) (Holtom, Mitchel & Lee 2006; Ngo-Henha 2018). According to the JET, when employees believe that their values are congruent with the organisation, their needs are addressed and their abilities are compatible with their work roles, they settle in their jobs and organisations. Once people make linkages and feel a sense of being settled in their job, organisational fit is experienced and they find it difficult to leave their job or organisation for a new one as this will remove them from their professional and social environment (Holtom & Darabi 2018; Ngo-Henha 2018). Based on the argument presented above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Person–Organisation Fit (POF) is negatively associated with Intention to Leave (ITL).

Job satisfaction and intention to leave

Research conducted in the field of organisational psychology has documented a consistent negative relationship between JS and ITL (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson 2005; Naidoo 2018; Wheeler et al. 2007; Zhang et al. 2017). The direction of this relationship implies that when people perceive themselves as being satisfied at work, they do not think of leaving their organisation, while those who perceive themselves as

dissatisfied consider leaving their organisation to look for work elsewhere (Buitendach & Rothmann 2009; Diedericks & Rothmann 2014). In conceptualising JS, authors have identified two dimensions of JS that is intrinsic and extrinsic JS, which explains why some people may be satisfied with their jobs while other are not (Phuong et al. 2018; Radebe 2018).

Intrinsic JS is recognised as emanating from within the individual as it emphasises psychological value and has subjective meaning. The subjective meaning and psychological value experienced by individuals are gained from the job itself and occur when individuals feel a sense of achievement, recognition, and self-actualisation from the work that they do (Chang et al. 2021). When employees believe that the job meets their emotional, psychological and subjective needs, they experience a holistic form of work-related wellbeing and are less likely to consider leaving the organisation. Similarly, when employees feel demotivated, unfulfilled and no longer value their work, they may consider leaving the organisation to find work that gives them a sense of purpose. This ITL the organisation is the final cognitive step of voluntary turnover and spurs on behavioural action to actually leave the organisation (Beheiri & Ahmed 2018).

The second dimension of JS is extrinsic or external in nature. Unlike intrinsic JS, extrinsic satisfaction stems from the work environment or factors external to the employee such as financial rewards, promotions, opportunities for career development and leadership. Phuong et al. (2018) argue that while some employees may feel the need for psychological fulfilment from their work, most employees tend to be extrinsically satisfied. This can be attributed to the fact that people primarily join an organisation to be compensated for their services and that they do seek career progress. As a result, financial compensation and opportunity for promotion amongst other external factors could play an important role in whether employees feel that their needs are being met by the organisation. An employee that identifies an incongruence between what they offer to the organisation and what they receive in return is likely to contemplate whether it is in their best interest to remain in the organisation. The relationship between JS and ITL is supported by the value-perception theory which postulates that the extent to which an employee feels satisfied with the job is dependent on their belief that the job supplies them with things that they value (Ekpendu, Egbuta & Ikechi-Ekpendu 2019). When employees perceive the employer's contribution towards them as less valuable, they begin to experience job dissatisfaction, which results in ITL, eventually leading to actual turnover behaviour. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Job satisfaction (JS) is negatively associated with intention to leave (ITL).

The mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between person–organisation fit and intention to leave

Given the effective role of POF in directly mitigating turnover intention, researchers (Jin et al. 2018) have argued that

understanding the indirect processes through which POF might explain ITL, may offer additional insight on the topic of employee turnover. As a result, this study aimed to understand the role of JS as an explanatory psychological mechanism in the relationship between POF and ITL. It has been established in the literature that value-congruence need-supplies fit and fit between the individual abilities and demands on the job may all directly explain an employee's purposeful decision to leave the organisation (Redelinguys & Botha 2016). However, there is evidence which suggests that these dimensions of POF may explain how employees experience intrinsic and extrinsic JS (Redelinguys & Botha 2016). Lack of congruence between the employee's and organisation's values (VCF) and beliefs, is expected to have a negative effect on factors relating to intrinsic JS such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, personal meaning etc. When there is a mismatch between employees' values and the organisation, they are likely to be less fulfilled and disengaged from their jobs, leading to low JS. Secondly, when an employee perceives low fit between their needs and the organisation's attempts to meet those needs (Needs-Supplies Fit), both intrinsic and extrinsic JS begins to decrease. When the employee believes that the organisation is unable to meet their external work-related needs such as financial compensation, promotions, supportive leadership etc., the employees begins to experience low extrinsic JS. Additionally, when the employee believes that subjective needs such as the need for fulfilling work, autonomy, sense of purpose, etc. are not being met by the organisation, intrinsic JS begins to decrease. Low intrinsic and extrinsic JS lead to negative job behaviours such a disengagement which may trigger negative thoughts, relating to leaving the organisation. Finally, when employees identify a discrepancy between their skills and abilities and the demands of the job (Demands-abilities fit), intrinsic needs related to achievement, self-respect and responsibility remain unfulfilled. Peng and Mao (2015) added that employees whose abilities do not meet the demands of their jobs, lack confidence, perform poorly at their jobs, experience increased stress and are unhappy in the jobs. The negative experiences result in low levels of JS which will spur on action to leave the organisation. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Job satisfaction (JS) mediates the relationship between person-organisation fit (POF) and intention to leave (ITL).

Method

A quantitative, non-experimental research method was adopted to investigate the direct and indirect relationships between POF, JS and ITL proposed in this study. Given that the study was confirmatory in nature that is to confirm the relationships found in the literature, the quantitative approach was justified. Data were collected using a cross sectional survey design (Park & Park 2016; Sukamolson 2007).

Research participants

The study population consisted of all staff working in the South African SDS. Using a non-probability purposive

sampling design, a total of 119 responses were received using an online survey system that is Qualtrics. From the 119 responses, a total of 100 responses ($n = 100$) were retained as these surveys were fully completed. The selection criteria for the study included employees in the SDS in Gauteng, South Africa and comprised employees across all age groups, genders, occupational groups and occupational levels that is from operational to executive management. Since the aim of the study was to investigate ITL in the SDS, the use of a purposive sampling method allowed the researcher to find relevant people who could provide the necessary information (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003).

The demographic breakdown of the sample can be found in Table 1. Respondents were primarily women (61.6%), and more than half of the respondents were married (61.6%), which also corresponded with the age groups that is most of the participants were aged between 40 and 55 years (59.60%). In the current sample 71.7% of respondents had a postgraduate qualification that is 4 years and above, while more than half of the respondents indicated that they had been employed in the SDS for 10 years or more (62.2%). A total of 43.3% of the respondents were employed at middle-management level, 23.2% at operational level and 18% at

TABLE 1: Demographic breakdown of participants in sample ($n = 100$).

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	28.3
	Female	61	61.6
	Prefer to describe	10	10.1
Age (years)	24-39	30	30.3
	40-55	59	59.6
	56 and above	10	10.1
Marital status	Single	26	26.3
	Married	61	61.6
	Divorced	5	5.1
	Widowed	3	3.0
	Other	4	4.0
Highest educational qualification	Grade12/standard10/matric or lower	3	3.0
	Diploma	16	16.2
	3 Year degree	9	9.1
	Honours degree	32	32.3
	Master's degree	35	35.4
Organisational level	Operational	23	23.2
	Junior management	15	15.2
	Middle management	43	43.4
	Senior management	18	18.2
	Number of years with current company	Less than 1 year	1
1-2 years		1	1.0
2-5 years		7	7.1
5-10 years		28	28.3
10-15 years		41	41.4
More than 15 years		21	21.2
Number of years to would like to remain with current organisation	Less than 3 months	26	26.3
	3-6 months	7	7.1
	6-12 months	11	11.1
	1-2 years	14	14.1
	3-4 years	11	11.1
	5 years or more	30	30.3

senior- management level. About 30.3% of the respondents indicated that they would like to remain with the current organisation for more than 5 years, while 26.3% indicated that would like to remain with the organisation for less than 3 months.

Measuring instruments

Intention to leave

The 6-item Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6) as derived from the TIS, developed by Roodt (2004), was used to measure ITL in the current study. The original TIS consisted of a 15-item scale and was later adapted to the 6-item scale (TIS-6) to ascertain the extent to which respondents intend to stay at the organisation (Bothma & Roodt 2013). The TIS-6 scale is scored on a five-point Likert-type scale with scores ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Examples of items include 'How often have you considered leaving your job?' and 'How satisfying is your job in fulfilling your personal needs?' The TIS-6 is a unidimensional scale with no sub-dimensions.

Job satisfaction

The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-20 (MSQ) , as derived from the MSQ, developed by Weiss, David and England (1967), was used to measure JS. The original Long Form MSQ consisted of a 100-item scale and was later adapted to the MSQ (Short Form) with 20 items to assess how respondents feel about different aspects of their present job and their levels of satisfaction with each aspect. The MSQ (20) contains two sub-scales that assess the intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction of the respondents. The scale is scored on a five-point intensity scale with scores ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*). Examples of items include 'The competence of my supervisor in making decisions' for extrinsic satisfaction and 'the chances for advancement on this job' for intrinsic satisfaction.

Person– organisation fit

This study used the POF Scale, developed by Cable and Judge (1996), to assess the extent to which respondents perceive their fit in their jobs and organisation. The original scale consisted of two items that measured two factors, namely indirect fit (VCF) and person–job fit (DAF). The scale was later adapted by Cable and DeRue (2002) to nine items measuring indirect fit (VCF), direct fit (NSF) and person–job fit (DAF), with three items for each sub-dimension. The POF scale is scored on a five-point scale Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Examples of items include 'My organisation's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that I value in life' for VCF; 'the attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my present job' for NSF; and 'my personal abilities and education provide a good match with the demands that my job places on me' for DAF.

Research procedure and ethical considerations

The study received ethical clearance from a large Gauteng-based public university while gatekeeper permission was received from the National Department of social development in Gauteng. An online survey, consisting of three self-report measures and a biographical questionnaire, was circulated via the employee email system. A link to the questionnaire, the letter of informed consent and the participant information were included in the email communication to all staff members. The completed questionnaires were automatically sent to the Qualtrics online survey system. The researcher did not have access to the participants' email addresses or personal information during the data collection, while the data collection process was managed by a contact person in the Department of Social Development.

Statistical analysis

The data analysis was conducted with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Before analysing the data, as related to the proposed hypotheses, the researchers tested for common method bias considering that the instruments used in the study were self-report measures; and the data were collected at one point in time. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the reliability of the measuring instruments used in the current study. Pallant's (2013) guideline of $\alpha \geq 0.70$ was used to determine the reliability of the measuring instruments although values of $\alpha > 0.80$ are preferable. Descriptive and inferential statistics were also used to analyse the sample and responses to the scales. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis were used to assess the relationships between POF, JS and ITL. Cut-off points of 0.30 and above (medium effect) and 0.50 and above (large effect), were set for the practical significance of the correlation coefficients (Pallant 2013). Hayes' PROCESS macro model 4 (Hayes 2018) was used to assess the mediating effect of JS on the relationship between POF and ITL.

Ethical considerations

The authors obtained ethical clearance from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria prior to data Collection. Ethical Clearance Number: MMD/2020/14.

In addition, gatekeeper permission was obtained from the Department of social development.

Results

Normality of data and common method bias

The author assessed the data to ensure that it was distributed normally and to identify and address any outliers. First, univariate skewness and kurtosis were assessed using SPSS. Based on the research done by Finch and West (1997) and Field (2009), the criteria used to determine whether the data assumed a normal distribution were set at 2.00 for skewness and 4.00 for kurtosis. Both skewness and kurtosis ranged between -0.093

and -1.020, indicating that the data were normally distributed. To assess, multivariate normality of data, Mardia's kurtosis co-efficient was calculated. The Mardia's skewness test statistic was 13.28 ($p > 0.0001$), and the Mardia's kurtosis test statistic was 73.29 ($p > 0.0001$), which confirmed that the data met the criterion of multivariate normality.

To assess the presence of multivariate outliers, the Mahalanobis distances were inspected. The assessment revealed one outlier. It was found that while there were slight variations in the co-efficients when the outlier was removed, these variations did not affect whether the proposed hypotheses were accepted or rejected. Additionally, the outlier did not affect the assumptions of normality hence the outlier was retained in the analysis. Several authors (Boguslavsky, 2021; Tenopir et al. 2016; Yang & Berdine, 2016) recommend keeping the outliers in data analysis. The argument is that on some occasions the outliers might simply be valid extreme observations due to random variability and reflect the inherent property of random sampling. The identified outlier was assessed to determine if it was a result of error in data entry or a genuine valid extreme observation in the sample. Because the outlier did not appear to be a result of error in data entry it was retained in the analysis.

While the possibility of common method bias in this study was acknowledged, researchers (Fuller et al. 2016) argue that the concern of common method bias in self-report measures that have proven construct validity is questionable. All measures used in the current study that is TIS-6; The MSQ-20 and the POF Scale are validated measures, which reduces the possibility of method bias. Additionally, the concern of method bias was further minimised as the researchers found that most of the reported correlations found in this study were in line with previous published findings indicating no significant discrepancy.

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha and correlations

Table 2 shows the results obtained from descriptive statistics, reliability analysis and Pearson's product moment correlation analysis. The results revealed that this sample of employees in the SDS reported moderate levels of ITL ($M = 3.25$; $SD = 0.95$), moderate levels of POF ($M = 3.38$; $SD = 0.81$) and

moderate levels of POF sub-dimensions; VCF ($M = 3.30$; $SD = 0.98$), NSF ($M = 3.11$; $SD = 1.01$) and DAF ($M = 3.70$; $SD = 1.03$), with the mean score for DAF being higher than the other two POF dimensions. Results also indicated moderate levels of JS ($M = 3.35$; $SD = 0.76$) with moderate levels of intrinsic satisfaction ($M = 3.46$; $SD = 0.79$) and extrinsic satisfaction ($M = 3.23$; $SD = 0.80$). The mean scores for intrinsic satisfaction was slightly higher than extrinsic satisfaction. It can be concluded that this sample of SDS employees experience moderate levels of ITL, POF and JS. All scales and sub-scales reported reliability co-efficients above 0.70, indicating an acceptable internal consistency of all the measuring instruments used in this study (see Table 2).

Pearson's product moment correlation analysis was used to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 proposed in this study. As indicated in the correlation analysis shown in Table 2, POF reported a significant negative relationship with ITL ($r = -0.65$; $p < 0.01$) (large effect). Person-organisation fit sub-dimensions also reported significant negative relationships with ITL; VCF ($r = -0.388$; $p < 0.01$) (medium effect), NSF ($r = -0.733$; $p < 0.01$) (large effect) and DAF ($r = -0.46$; $p < 0.01$) (medium effect). It appears that in this sample, needs- supply fit reported the strongest relationship with ITL. Results of the correlation co-efficients indicated that POF and all its sub-dimensions reported a negative relationship with ITL, providing support for Hypothesis 1 that is POF is negatively associated with ITL.

Results found in Table 2 indicate that JS reported a significant negative relationship with ITL ($r = -0.747$; $p < 0.01$) (large effect). The results also indicated towards significant negative

TABLE 3: Standardised regression coefficients for the variables: Person-organisation fit, job satisfaction and intention to leave.

Mediation model: Person-organisation fit, job satisfaction and intention to leave	Estimate	SE	Bootstrapping BC 95% CI	
			Lower (LLCI)	Upper (ULCI)
Person-organisational fit (POF) → Job satisfaction (JS) (a)	0.60**	0.07	0.45	0.74
Job satisfaction (JS) → Intention to leave (ITL) (b)	-0.70**	0.10	-0.90	-0.49
Person-organisation fit (POF) → Intention to leave (ITL) (c)	-0.35**	0.10	-0.54	-0.16
Person-organisational fit (POF) → Job satisfaction (JS) → Intention to leave (ITL)	-0.42	0.08	-0.58	-0.25

Note: ** $p < 0.01$ considered significant; SE, standard error; BC, bias corrected; CI, confidence interval.

TABLE 2: Descriptive statistics, reliabilities and correlation co-efficients ($n = 100$).

Variable	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Intention to leave	3.2533	0.95654	0.807	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Person-org fit (POF)	3.3767	0.81403	0.898	-0.653**	1	-	-	-	-	-
3. (POF) Value- congruence VCF	3.3067	0.98323	0.915	-0.388**	0.740**	1	-	-	-	-
4. (POF) Need-supply NSF	3.1167	1.00769	0.879	-0.733**	0.858**	0.451**	1	-	-	-
5. (POF) Demand-ability DAF	3.7067	1.03071	0.926	-0.461**	0.825**	0.359**	0.625**	1	-	-
6. Job satisfaction	3.352	0.76187	0.939	-0.747**	0.637**	0.429**	0.685**	0.430**	1	-
7. (JS) Intrinsic	3.4638	0.78822	0.922	-0.697**	0.633**	0.409**	0.674**	0.451**	0.976**	1
8. (JS) Extrinsic	3.2314	0.79624	0.829	-0.722**	0.597**	0.458**	0.631**	0.360**	0.954**	0.880**

Note: ** $p < 0.01$.

SD, standard deviation; α , Cronbach's al.

relationships with large effects between JS sub-dimensions and ITL; intrinsic JS ($r = -0.697$; $p < 0.01$) and extrinsic JS ($r = -0.722$; $p < 0.01$). Results of the correlation analysis indicated that JS and all its sub-dimensions reported a negative relationship with ITL, providing support for Hypothesis 2 that is JS is negatively associated with ITL.

Mediation analysis

In order to assess Hypothesis 3 that is JS will mediate the relationship between POF and ITL, all the pathways of the proposed mediation model (Figure 1) were assessed using mediation analysis (Hayes 2018). While the Minnesota JS questionnaire has both a unidimensional- and multidimensional- factor structure, the authors opted to use the unidimensional factor structure for the mediation analysis as this is the common practice observed in more than 30 years of JS research (Hirschfeld 2000). Additionally, in a study analysing the factor structure of the Minnesota JS Questionnaire, Boshoff and Hoole (1998) concluded that it is acceptable to use the instrument as a unidimensional measure. Secondly, while the POF Scale has been known for its three-dimensional factor solution, authors (Chen, Sparrow & Cooper 2016; Grobler 2016) have used the scale as a unidimensional measure. Additionally, Grobler (2016) argues that the scores of each dimension can be combined to provide an indication of overall person–environment fit in which a high score suggests a high level of POF in all three dimensions. This indicates that a unidimensional-factor structure is also acceptable as was used in the current study.

In this study, POF was indicated as the independent variable (X); ITL was indicated as the dependant variable (ITL) and JS was indicated as the mediator (JS). In order to run the mediation analysis, the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence estimates were used (Hayes 2018). Using 5000 bootstrap resamples, a 95% confidence interval (CI) of the indirect effect was obtained. The 95% confidence levels indicate that an indirect effect is significant (at $\alpha = 0.05$) and meaningful if zero does not fall within its 95% confidence interval (Pillay 2020). Results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 3 above.

The first step in assessing the mediation effect was to consider the direct effects proposed in the current study. The mediation



Notes: Value in parentheses represents the indirect effect of person–organisation fit via job satisfaction on intention to leave. BC: bias-corrected bootstrap approximation at 95% corrected confidence interval (two-sided). $N = 100$. ** Standardised path coefficients are significant at $p < 0.01$.

FIGURE 1: Results indicating the mediating effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between person– organisation fit and intention to leave.

analysis confirmed a direct effect between POF and ITL ($b = 0.35$, $SE = 0.10$, $LLCI = -0.54$ and $ULCI = -0.16$). The mediation analysis also indicated a significant direct effect between POF and JS ($b = 0.60$, $SE = 0.07$, $LLCI = 0.45$ and $ULCI = 0.74$), and finally the mediation analysis indicated a significant direct effect between JS and ITL ($b = -0.70$, $SE = 0.10$, $LLCI = -0.90$ and $ULCI = -0.49$). Once the direct effects as per the pathways were established, attempts were made to analyse the indirect effects in which POF influences ITL through its influence on JS.

The total indirect effect ($b = -0.42$, $SE = 0.08$, $LLCI = -0.58$ and $ULCI = -0.25$) as indicated in Table 3 above, was significant as zero did fall in between the confidence intervals. This provided support for Hypothesis 3 that is JS mediates the relationship between POF and ITL. It must be noted that the relationship between POF and ITL remained significant in the presence of JS which indicates that POF has a negative association with ITL independent of the indirect effect through JS. This suggests a partial mediation effect. However, it appears that the size of the indirect effect of POF on ITL, through JS, is slightly larger than the direct effect of POF on ITL on its own. Results may indicate that JS as an explanatory mechanism, adds significant value to the relationship between POF and ITL and that POF may account for more variance in ITL when JS is present in the relationship. The results for the mediation model are shown in Figure 1.

Discussion

Results of this study provide evidence of the negative relationship between POF and ITL. This implies that an increase in the levels of congruence between the employee's personal values, abilities and needs and the organisation they work for, are associated with decreasing levels of ITL the organisation. The negative relationship between POF and ITL yielded in the current study, is consistent with the findings of other researchers (Grobler & Grobler 2016; Ohlsson 2018) who reported that POF had a strong negative relationship with ITL ($r = -0.52$; $p < 0.001$; and $r = -0.57$; $p < 0.001$ respectively).

The findings of the current study indicated that VCF was negatively related to employees' ITL. These results are consistent with POF theory which maintains that people prefer to work in organisations that match their values and goals (Kakar et al. 2019). This is because an organisation and an individual will only experience compatibility with one another when there is congruence between their values, goals and culture (Grobler & Rensburg 2019; Wheeler et al. 2007). This study also found a significant relationship between the employees' need to feel that there is congruence between their abilities and the demands that the job puts on them (DAF). When employees believe that their abilities are sufficient to support their work demands, they experience a sense of self-accomplishment and are less likely to leave the organisation. Finally, results of the current study indicated that of the POF dimensions explored, NSF shared the largest negative relationship with ITL in this sample of employees from the SDS. This suggests that there is strong relationship

between employees' ITL the organisation and the extent to which they feel the organisation meets their personal and professional needs. When an employee believes that they are rewarded fairly for their contribution to the organisation, they are less inclined to consider leaving the organisation. The findings of this study can also be explained using the Attraction, Selection and Attention model (ASA) (Schneider, Goldstein & Smith 1995), which states that when individuals believe that they share mutual attraction with the organisation in terms of the values, need and abilities, they are likely to remain in the organisation. On the contrary, as reflected in the ASA model, when employees perceive a mismatch between their values, needs and abilities and what is expected of them in the organisation, they think about leaving the organisation (Cable & DeRue 2002; Cable & Judge 1996).

A strong negative relationship between JS and ITL was found in the current study. These findings are consistent with those of Radebe (2018) ($r = -0.55$; $p < 0.01$) and Redelinguys and Botha (2016) ($r = -0.43$; $p < 0.01$), who reported a negative relationship between JS and ITL. Hassan and Adnan (2016) found that when employees feel dissatisfied with their jobs, they are more inclined to make plans about leaving their organisations. Similarly, when employees experience a sense of enjoyment and are satisfied with their jobs, they are less likely to consider leaving their jobs or organisations (Redelinguys & Botha 2016; Wheeler et al. 2007).

A negative relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic JS and ITL was found in the current sample. These findings are supported by the Self-determination Theory (SDT). Van Rooyen et al. (2010), asserted that organisations which create a work climate that satisfies the needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness (Intrinsic JS), will succeed in increasing JS and retaining their staff. This suggests that when employees are allowed to operate autonomously, are working in supportive environments, and are able to use their skills and abilities in their jobs, they experience JS, and this leads to them remaining in the organisation. Similarly, when the employee believes that the organisation meets their extrinsic needs for financial compensation, good leadership and opportunities for development, they begin to feel appreciated which increases organisational commitment and JS leading them to remain in the organisation.

The results confirmed that JS mediates the relationship between POF and ITL in this sample of SDS employees. The results indicated that POF had a negative association with ITL, independent of the indirect effect through JS (a partial mediation effect). However, based on the results, it appears that the direct effect of POF on ITL in this sample is slightly smaller than the indirect effect of POF on ITL through JS. This suggests that although POF is directly related to ITL, the size of the relationship is larger when it occurs through JS, indicating that JS is a stronger explanatory mechanism in the relationship between POF and ITL than POF on its own. These findings suggest that in the current sample, employees who perceive greater fit with the organisation, also experience greater levels of JS which decreases their intentions to leave the organisation.

Findings of the current study are consistent with findings in the literature because previous studies (Janse Van Rensburg et al. 2017; Ohlsson 2018; Redelinguys & Botha 2016; Wheeler et al. 2007) found that POF predicts ITL by a large margin when it is through JS, explaining 20–45% of the variance in ITL. A plausible explanation for why the indirect effect of POF on ITL is larger through JS, could lie in the concept of organisational commitment. Organisational commitment is the desire on the part of the employee to remain a member of the organisation and influence whether the employee stays or leaves the organisation (Luthans 2011; Mafini & Dlodlo 2014). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2010), attitude, dedication and motivation are important to retain employees. These aspects of attitude, dedication and motivation are often a result of feeling satisfied in one's job and this leads to the desire to stay in the organisation. As a result, while feeling a strong fit between oneself and the organisation may in some cases determine whether the employee stays or leaves, it is being satisfied with one's job which fosters greater commitment and that ultimately explains why some people stay or leave the organisation. To support this argument, the mediation analysis in this study also found that POF had a stronger association with JS and a weaker association with ITL. This suggests that although employees experience poor fit with the organisation they will not necessarily be inclined to leave since this association is only moderate (Redelinguys & Botha 2016). Instead, poor fit is more likely expected to lead to greater job dissatisfaction which is then related to the inclination to leave the organisation.

Practical implications

Findings of this study has managerial implications for leaders in the SDS, as the results make a positive contribution to understanding the relationships between these variables, especially within a SDS context. Managers in the SDS can assist in facilitating greater POF through conducting a job/organisational assessment and determining the most suitable characteristics required for organisational/job success. This information can be used when recruiting suitable candidates for the SDS as it provides an indication of whether the candidate may fit well in the organisational culture. This can also be achieved through conducting assessments and evaluations of employees' personality, values and abilities to establish whether there is an optimal fit between the employee, the job and the organisation.

The results show that while POF is important in predicting ITL, it is a combination of POF and JS together that provides a unique explanation for turnover intention. While this study encourages management in the SDS to promote an organisational culture that enhances fit between the employee and the organisation, more attention should be placed on enhancing JS.

To promote intrinsic satisfaction, management in public SDS, providing platforms for employees to meet their three key psychological needs, namely autonomy, relatedness, and

competence could be considered. The SDS can direct attention towards five intrinsic key factors of JS, namely the work itself, individuals' quest for achievement, recognition, responsibility and advancement. This can be done in the following ways:

1. Provision of career counselling services. Career counselling can assist employees to identify factors in the work context that fulfils them and this will ensure that the quest for personal development is meaningful and focuses on aspects that will enhance intrinsic JS. Coaches and mentors can also assist employees to keep track of their progress for work fulfilment.
2. Job shadowing and job rotation opportunities may assist employees at the lower skills levels to experience greater responsibility and recognition. Allowing employees to gain experience of management roles through job shadowing and rotation will facilitate feelings of greater responsibility and achievement. This will also allow them to determine if their abilities are congruent with the demands of managerial roles to prepare them for the future.

To promote extrinsic satisfaction, the management in the SDS should ensure that the five key extrinsic factors, namely supervision, pay/compensation, organisational policies, working conditions and co-workers, are addressed:

1. Stakeholder's in the SDS could consider revisiting their compensation and benefits policies to ensure that employees are fairly rewarded. In instances where financial compensation is not feasible, rewards such as extra days leave or opportunities for development can be used. Employee reward programmes which includes opportunities for training and leadership development over and above what is offered to all employees can be offered.
2. Leadership and supervision which are aspects of extrinsic satisfaction can be enhanced through assessing leadership climate and identifying areas where leaders need development. Leadership climate surveys may be conducted by the HR department of a neutral party and the results be used to develop interventions that aim to enhance leadership capabilities.

Limitations and recommendations

While the findings of this study are supported by literature, they must be applied with caution due to the sample size. The questionnaires were emailed to all employees in the SDS, but out of 742 employees, only 119 participated in the research and only a sample of 100 responses were used. Future studies should aim to secure a larger sample size which will allow for the generalisation in findings. The study can be replicated to all provincial Departments of Social Development or to a specific group, such as social workers in the Department of Social Development at provincial and national level to determine whether the same results are obtained to allow for generalisability.

The restrictive time frames for data collection in this study also posed a major challenge to the researcher as it led to the poor response rate. The use of a cross-sectional study hindered the determination of the cause-and-effect relationship of the studied variables. A longitudinal design may have been more appropriate as it would have allowed the researcher to predict the causal order of variables and understand how the attitudes of employees in the SDS change over a period of time.

This study only looked at the mediating role of JS in the relationship between POF and ITL, but the moderating role of JS in the relationship between POF and ITL can be explored to assess whether JS works better as a moderator or mediator in the POF, ITL relationship.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to determine possible relationships and indirect effects between POF, JS and ITL within the SDS. The literature review showed public sector organisations still face challenges of ITL as evident in the increasing turnover rates. The literature also showed that POF is important to ensure that employees fit well in with organisations. When employees do not fit in organisations, job dissatisfaction is experienced and they have high ITL. It is therefore imperative for organisations to implement organisational practices that foster POF to ensure the retention of talented employees. However, should organisations not succeed in addressing POF, the solution would be to implement strategies that increase JS, because JS was found to mediate the relationship between POF and ITL. Recommendations proposed in this research can thus be used by management in the SDS and individual employee's to improve POF and JS to ensure that highly- skilled employees stay in the organisation.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

M.N.M. acted as first author (as the article is based on her mini-dissertation with D.P.N. as promotor) and wrote the first draft of this article. D.P.N. contributed towards the review, rewriting, statistical analysis and editing of the article.

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Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available in the article, while the raw data supporting the findings are available from the corresponding author, M.N.M. upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the author.

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