Criterion-Related Validity of a Measure of Person-Job and Person-Organization Fit

Andrew J. Hambleton

Farmers, Auckland

Thomas Kalliath & Paul Taylor

University of Waikato, Hamilton

The Omnia Profile® is a popular tool used by organizations throughout New Zealand to assess job applicants' person-organization fit (P-O fit), person-job fit (P-J fit), and overall compatibility in personnel selection. Despite its popularity, however, this selection instrument has received virtually no prior research attention. The present study investigated the criterion-related validity of the Omnia Profile® using three criterion variables (job performance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment). It was carried out using a predictive validity strategy in two private-sector organizations (one in New Zealand and one in Australia). Results indicated that, contrary to expectation, the P-O fit measure correlated significantly with job performance, but not with attitudinal measures; and the P-J fit measure correlated significantly with both job satisfaction and organisational commitment, but not job performance. Combined overall compatibility scores failed to predict job performance (as used in practice), though they did predict attitudinal criteria. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

Organisations are using new selection methods in the interest of avoiding the increased cost and time in dismissing employees unfit for the position. Increasingly, firms are basing their selection decisions on standardized techniques and tests that practitioners believe will aid them in selecting the best person for the position and for the company. In the present study, we test the criterion related validity of the Omnia Profile®, a popular selection instrument that assesses applicants' 'fit', based on measures of both person-job fit (P-J fit) and person-organization fit (P-O fit).

The Omnia Profile® is reported to be a widely used fit measure for staff selection in New Zealand and Australia.[1] The test's distributor, The Omnia Group Inc., have indicated that, to date, the Omnia Profile® is used by over 10,500 client organizations in 20 countries (The Omnia Group Inc., 1987). The Omnia Group (NZ) Ltd reported that, in Australasia, the profile is regularly used as part of a standardized selection process by 150 organizations. In what follows, we review P-J and P-O fit literature germane to personnel selection instrumentation, and then review theoretical antecedents of the Omnia Profile® instrument.

P-J Fit and P-O Fit

The investigation of person-job fit has been a central concern in organisational research extending back 50 years. In a major review of person-job fit literature, Edwards (1991) came to the conclusion that the vast majority of empirical P-J fit research has focused on the fit between employee desires (i.e., the person side of the fit index) and job supplies (i.e., the job side of the fit index). With a few exceptions, most studies reviewed showed consistent positive relationship between P-J fit and work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organisational commiment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Holland 1997; Locke, 1976; Tziner, 1987). The relationship of P-J fit with job performance has been less consistent, with a mixture of positive (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Tziner, 1987), and negative results (London & Klimoski, 1975; Porter & Lawler, 1968).

Many researchers have suggested that it is imperative to take into account the organization as a whole (including the organization's culture, climate, goals, etc.) and how the candidate will fit within it (Barrett, 1995; Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). For instance, Bowen et. al (1991) have argued that selecting people whose personalities are compatible with the organisational culture creates a flexible workforce with employees who can be moved easily between jobs. In a major review of person-organisation fit literature, Kristof (1996) came to the conclusion that empirical results supporting positive consequences for P-O

fit predicting job satisfaction and organisational commitment was extensive (Boxx, Odom, & Dunn, 1991; Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). There was also emerging empirical support for P-O fit predicting job performance (Barrett, 1995; Tziner, 1987), although the support is not as extensive as P-O fit predicting attitudinal outcomes.

Practitioners have adopted a number of fit measures to assess fit, such as employment interviews for P-J fit (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990), and tests such as Performance Priority Survey (Barrett, 1995) for assessing P-O fit. The Omnia Profile® is a tool used to assess both person-job and person-organization fit. Next, we shall review information available through published sources about the Omnia Profile® instrument.

The Omnia Profile®

The Omnia Profile® claims to be a tool that assesses both person-job and person-organization fit. It employs adjective checklists that are used as a self-definition process where applicants select as many (or few) of the adjectives they believe best describe them. These adjectives are based on Carl Jung's (1933) two 'Active' (Assertiveness and Gregariousness) and two 'Passive' (Pace and Conformity) behaviours used to define non-pathological behaviour and were designed so that they corresponded to the four constructs shown in brackets above. Each of the four constructs contains two extreme (opposite) personality traits, for example, the construct 'Assertiveness' has two extreme traits of Aggressiveness and Cautiousness. The two extreme traits represent ends of the same scale that the authors of the Omnia Profile® call 'Assertiveness'. The four constructs are measured by comparing how many adjectives in the checklist the subject selects belong to one of the extreme traits compared to the number of adjectives selected that belong to the other extreme trait of the same construct. Thus, the Omnia Profile® is ipsative in nature, in that the personality profile of each individual is created by using only within-person comparisons (between the subject's own strengths and weaknesses) and not comparisons with a norm group as used by normative personality tests. The resulting personality profile is used to calculate both P-O fit and P-J fit indices through the measures of similarity to defined job and organization characteristics. The resulting personality profile of the applicant is presented as an eight-bar graph, each pair of bars representing each extreme of the constructs.

Job and organization characteristics are measured using questionnaires completed by organization representatives including human resources managers and line managers. They rate the job on a Likert Scale against defined job factors. Similarly, the organization's representatives complete an organization survey that uses factors similar to those used for the job analysis but worded to relate to the organization as a basis for scoring individuals' P-O fit.

The Omnia Profile® creates three fit indices based on job and organization scores (1) a P-O fit index, called the *Omnia Environmental Compatibility Rating* (OECR),

created through the comparison and relative similarity of the two scales – the subject and the organization (P-O fit); (2) a P-J fit index called the *Omnia Vocational Compatibility Rating* (OVCR), derived by comparing the similarity of the subject and job characteristics; and (3) a combined overall compatibility index, called the *Omnia Compatibility Rating* (OCR), computed by averaging the OECR and OVCR ratings. The formula employed by the Omnia Group to compute the three fit indices was not available to the authors. The formula and the computation process used are a closely guarded secret, protected by copyright. For all three measures, the higher the similarity found for the applicant with either the job, the organization or both, the higher the resulting fit index. These scores, particularly the OCR Fit Index, are used by employers to make decisions pertaining to employee selection, promotion and transfer (The Omnia Group Inc., 1986). Next, we examine the theoretical support for the constructs underpinning the Omnia Profileâ instrument.

Personality in Sales Selection

The Omnia Profile® is principally a personality measure, and while it differs from typical personality tests in that scores are derived from a combination of both applicants' and organisational representatives' responses, the validity of the instrument for predicting performance can be viewed as largely dependent on the job-relevance of the personality constructs measured. As with many applications of the Omnia Profile®, the jobs used for the present study were sales positions, and so the relevance of this instrument can be judged by comparing the constructs it measures (assertiveness, gregariousness, pace, and conformity) to personality constructs that previous research has found salient for the selection of salespersons.

A growing body of meta-analytic research has identified the relevant personality constructs for sales jobs. In the largest meta-analysis of the predictors of job performance for salespeople to date (Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer & Roth, 1998), potency (a sub dimension of extraversion) and achievement (a sub dimension of conscientiousness) were found to be the strongest personality trait predictors of both objective sales performance (with validities of .26 and .41 respectively) and subjective measures of sales performance (with validities of .28 and .26 respectively). Similarly, Barrick and Mount (1991), in their meta-analysis, also found that conscientiousness and extraversion were the best personality predictors of sales performance. A recent study focusing specifically on life insurance sales-related positions, McManus and Kelly (1999) found extraversion to be the most salient personality predictor of task performance, while conscientiousness, and to a lesser extent the other three "Big Five" dimensions, were better predictors of contextual performance. In sum, meta-analytic research suggests that extraversion and conscientiousness appear to be most critical to sales performance when objective sales measures were used and the two sub-dimensions of potency and achievement have been found most salient when both objective and subjective measures were used.

When comparing the traits measured by the Omnia Profile® to the findings from prior studies, there appears to be only a limited overlap between constructs. Two of the Omnia Profile® constructs, assertiveness and gregariousness, are clearly related to extraversion, although the other two (pace and conformity) appear to bear little relation to personality dimensions which have been found through previous research to predict sales job performance (i.e., potency, achievement, and conscientiousness). None of the four Omnia Profile® constructs appear to tap 'conscientiousness' or its sub-dimension 'achievement' which are not only critical personality constructs for both task performance and contextual performance in sales positions (Vinchur et al 1998), but also for a wide range of jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Thus, Omnia Profile® constructs would appear to have limited theoretical support for predicting sales performance.

Empirical Support for the Omnia Profile®

Considering the widespread use of the Omnia Profile®, the amount of research that has focused on the Omnia Profile® has been minimal. Although research has examined the internal consistency of the scales used by the Omnia Profile® (coefficient alpha = .82) and test-retest reliability (.65 for four to nine months post first administration) no criterion-related validity studies have been reported (Hurst Associates Inc., 1987). Hence, evidence of Omnia Profile's criterion related validity is of interest to both researchers and practitioners who use the Omnia Profile® to make personnel decisions.

The Present Study

Our review of P-J and P-O fit literatures suggests the following expectations for the present study. There appears to be strong support for P-J and P-O fit predicting attitudinal outcome variables such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. The underlying rationale supported by numerous studies is based on the belief that if individuals are able to behave in a manner consistent to their natural disposition and preferences, then they are less likely to feel stress and more likely to work in the environment with greater enjoyment. This argument has found support in studies such as Chatman (1991) and O'Reilly et al (1991) who found validity coefficients of .32 with P-O fit predicting job satisfaction and .39 predicting organisational commitment. While the focus of previous fit research has been as a predictor of attitudinal variables, there is less extensive empirical support for P-J and P-O fit as predictors of job performance. For example, Caldwell and O'Reilly, 1990, found a correlation of .38 between P-J fit and job performance and Barrett, 1995, obtained a correlation of .38 with P-O fit as the predictor. This empirical evidence supports the premise that the more an individual's natural disposition and most comfortable behaviours match those of the required by the job tasks and the values and culture of the organisation– the better the individual should be able to perform in the job.

To sum up, we expected to obtain strong validity coefficients for the Omnia P-J fit measure (i.e., OVCR) predicting two attitudinal outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and organisational commitment), and moderate to high validity coefficients for the Omnia P-J fit measure predicting job performance. Secondly, we expected to obtain strong validity coefficients for the Omina P-O fit measure (i.e., OECR) predicting two attitudinal outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and orgnisational commimtent), and moderate to low validity coefficients for the Omnia P-O fit measure predicting job performance. Lastly, the present study also included the use of a third predictor variable – the OCR Fit Index, a combined overall compatibility index. The OCR Fit Index is computed by averaging the scores obtained for P-O fit and P-J fit, and hence the index contains both influences equally. It is this measure that is used widely in practice for selection decisions. We expected that higher levels of fit, as reflected in higher scores for the OCR Fit Index, would result in higher levels of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance.

Method

Sample

The sample was drawn from the existing sales staff of one Australian and one New Zealand private sector organization, who had been employed 6-18 months prior to the study. The two companies were selected because they were primarily sales-oriented, with sales people making up the largest proportion of employees for both companies. One organization was a recruitment company that operates throughout Australia and New Zealand, and the sample consisted of 70 account executives. The second organization was a life insurance firm and the sample consisted of 64 sales officers. The predictive data and job performance data was obtained from company records. The two criterion measures, namely organizational commitment and job satisfaction, were obtained through questionnaires mailed to account executives and sales officers through external mail. The completed questionnaires were returned through internal mail or fax. The demographic profile of the samples is presented in Table 1.

Measures

Predictive variables

Omnia Profile® scores for P-O fit (OECR scores) and P-J fit (OVCR scores) were provided by both firms and had been collected at the time of the subjects' employment. Since, in practice, many organizations use the OCR Fit Index score in making selection decisions, a third predictive variable that combined the two fit indices was also used in this study. In both organizations, job and organization data were collected using the Omnia Profile® questionnaire completed by three organization representatives including the human resources manager, and two line managers.

Criterion measures

Job performance, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment were used as criterion variables in the present study, measured as follows:

Job performance. The job performance measure used in this study was each participant's annual sales commission, which was viewed by top management in both organizations as the primary performance indicator for the sales staff.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured by the Faces Scale of job satisfaction, developed by Kunin (1955), in which the response categories consist of drawings of faces that vary in emotional expression, from positive to negative. The measure provides an assessment of overall job satisfaction. The single item scale was chosen for its simplicity, and because recent evidence suggests that such measures are effective substitutes for larger, multi-item scales (Wanous, Reichers & Hudy, 1997).

Organisational commitment. Organisational commitment was measured using the 15-item Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982). The response format uses a 7-point Likert scale with anchors from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree. Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979) have reported internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) ranging from .82 to .93 with a median of .90 for the OCQ measure. In the present study we obtained a Cronbach's alpha of .91 for the OCQ measure.

Data Collection

Omnia Profile scores and sales commission data were collected from personnel records held by both organizations. Job satisfaction and organisational commitment data were collected through a mailed questionnaire. Response rates of 92.5% for job satisfaction and 89.5% for organisational commitment were obtained for the mailed questionnaire.

Results

Table 2 presents the criterion-related validities of Omnia fit indices with respect to the three criterion variables included in the study.

P-J Fit. Contrary to expectations, the P-J fit index failed to significantly predict job satisfaction (.24), organisational commitment (.22) or job performance (.02) for the recruitment firm. For the insurance company, P-J fit significantly predicted job satisfaction (.44), but failed to significantly predict organisational commitment (.25), or job performance (-.16)

P-O Fit. Contrary to expectations, the Omnia P-O fit index failed to significantly predict attitudinal measures (job satisfaction = .12; organisational commitment = .05) or job performance = .13) for the recruitment company. However, the results for insurance company was somewhat different. We obtained significant criterion related validity of P-O fit predicting job performance in the insurance company (.38), while failing to predict attitudinal outcomes (job satisfaction = .02; organisational commitment = .23).

Combined Fit Index. The criterion-related validity of the combined fir index scores predicting job performance was near zero (.03) for the recruitment firm, and negative (-.14) for the insurance company. The combined index performed better at predicting attitudinal outcomes in the recruitment

Table 1. Sample Demographic Information

Demographic Variables		Insurance Company	Recruitment Firm
Sex	Male:	12	49
	Female:	58	13
Mean Age		28	39
Education	Post Graduate	9	4
	Graduate:	16	14
	No Tertiary:	45	46
Usable Sample Sizes		70	64

firm (.37 and .28), while failing to predict either attitudinal or performance outcomes for the insurance company (.20 and .17).

Discussion

Overall, the results of the present study provided only marginal support for the criterion-related validity of the Omnia Profile® in predicting sales staff performance and attitudes. Contrary to our expectation and to previous empirical findings, the Omnia P-J and P-O fit indices failed to predict both attitudinal outcomes and job performance in the recruitment firm. However, P-J fit predicted job satisfaction in the insurance company and P-O fit predicted job performance in the insurance company.

The combined fit index, which is the measure focused on in practice, showed poor criterion related validity when predicting job performance in both samples and moderate criterion related validity when predicting job satisfaction and organizational commitment in one sample (recruitment firm). Next, we discuss theoretical and measurement issues arising from the results of the study.

Table 2. Criterion-Related Validity of the Omnia Fit Indices

Omnia Fit Indices	Criterion Variables		
	Job Performance	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment
Recruitment Firm:			
P-O Fit	.13	.12	.05
P-J Fit	.02	.24	.22
Combined Fit Index	.03	.37**	.28*
Insurance Company:			
P-O Fit	.38**	.02	.23
P-J Fit	-.16	.44**	.25
Combined Fit Index	-.14	.20	.17

Note: Combined Fit Index is the mean of P-O and P-J fit indices.
*p<.05; **p<.01.

Theoretical and Measurement Issues

The lack of even modest relationships between the combined fit index scores and objectively-measured job performance is disappointing. Criterion-related validity requires; (1) that the predictive measure has construct validity, i.e., that it accurately measures the underlying predictor construct; and (2) that the predictor construct is linked to job performance—a link typically established through job analysis (Binning & Barrett, 1989). Thus, the cause of the weak criterion-related validity found in this study could be due to either poor measures of the intended constructs, or mis-specification of those constructs as critical requirements for the job. With neither evidence of the construct validity of the instrument nor the ability to determine, more specifically, how the importance of constructs are established within the Omnia Profile®, it is difficult for us to identify the specific causes or possible solutions to the problem. However, the pattern of validities found here (strongest relationships between P-O fit and task performance; and between P-J fit and work attitudes), and the lack of consistency found between the results of the two samples suggests that one problem may lie in how information is collected and analysed from the organisational representatives which forms the basis for computing the P-J and P-O fit indices from applicants' responses.

Another potential problem we identified earlier is that the constructs measured by the Omnia Profile® are somewhat different from those recently identified as critical to sales and other jobs. In particular, the Omnia Profile® is deficient in measuring conscientiousness, a personality variable which has become recognised as one of the most salient constructs for most jobs (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). The Omnia Profile® could thus be improved by: (1) revising constructs tapped, in light of recent research on the most salient personality constructs which predict job performance (e.g., including items designed to tap conscientiousness related constructs); (2) establishing construct validity of the Omnia Profile® in measuring those dimensions; and (3) clarifying what information is obtained from organisational representatives to determine Omnia P-J and Omnia P-O fit indices.

A further methodological problem concerning the construct validity of the Omnia Profile® is the use of difference scores to create the fit indices. Edwards (1994) has identified a number of methodological problems with the use of difference score based fit measures which undermine their use. Edwards (1994) points out that when conceptually distinct component measures such as person-job, and person-organization measures are collapsed to form a difference score index (i.e., P-J and P-O fit indices) to predict outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job performance, the following methodological problems arise: (1) the index cannot be unambiguously interpreted unless component variances are the same; (2) the index conceals the distinct contributions of each component measure to the prediction of the outcome measure; (3) the index explains less variance than the original component measures; and (4) the implied

constraints of the difference score model are often rejected, which suggests that additional variance can be explained by relaxing constraints imposed on the model. The methodological issues raised by Edwards (1994) is germane to both Omnia P-J fit and P-O fit measures, as the Omnia Profile's use of the fit indices may not represent the fit contructs they are intended to measure (see Edwards, 1991 & 1993, for a full discussion).

The use of ipsative scales represent a further problem because Omnia Profile® scores are used to determine which candidate/s to employ from the pool of applicants. As researchers have shown, the use of ipsative scales to compare individuals is dubious (Closs, 1996). It may be argued that the Omnia Profile® is only used to compare an individual to both job and organization factors and not directly to other candidates. However, in practice, managers make comparisons between applicants based both on the profile of each candidate and the fit scores obtained by each to determine which of the candidates best meet the requirements of the role. Closs (1996) argues that the use of ipsative scales to compare individuals is a practice that is "... not only lacking in validity but positively harmful and should be discontinued" (p.46). The use of ipsative measures by the Omnia Profile® may have contributed to undermining the effectiveness of the predictor variable and therefore may have effected the strength of the relationships found in this study.

We were concerned that criterion-related validities we obtained may have been attenuated due to range restriction. We were able to compute validities corrected for range restriction, as we had access to Omnia Profile® scores for the entire applicant pool. Correcting the obtained validities for range restriction resulted in negligible changes to validity estimates and no changes to overall conclusions. For instance, the validity coefficients of P-J fit predicting job satisfaction, after correcting for range restriction, was .38, compared with .33 uncorrected. Similarly, the range-restricted validity for P-J fit predicting organizational commitment was .29, compared with .24 before correction. Similar, minor increases in obtained validities were noted for other measures (i.e., P-O fit and the combined fit measures).

We obtained considerable variation in the results across the two organisations. The combined fit index predicted job satisfaction and organisational commitment in the recruitment firm. However, the same result was not evident for the insurance company. Omnia P-O fit predicted job performance and Omnia P-J fit predicted job satisfaction in the insurance company. Again, similar results were not obtained for the recruitment company. There appears to be no substantive difference in the two jobs, both jobs focus the majority of their time on selling (cold calling, sales proposals and presentations, sales and client meetings, other account management tasks), and servicing the potential and existing customers. Both companies described the primary purpose of each job to be on selling. Although employees in the insurance company are predominantly female and on average 10 years younger than their mostly male counterparts in the recruitment firm. However, are

unable to attribute the difference in results to this demographic difference, as the small sample size introduces possibility of sampling error which reduced the confidence in these results.

Conclusions

The findings of this study were, at best, mixed and were largely inconsistent with expectations stemming from how the Omnia Profile® is used in personnel selection practice. Given the substantial differences in results found across the two organisational samples, further validation research on the instrument is clearly warranted. The present study focussed solely on sales roles in two companies, so further validation research would be useful on how effectively the Omnia Profile® predicts performance in other roles.

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Note 1. The authors have not verified the claims made regarding usage.

Address for correspondence:
Dr Thomas Kalliath
Department of Psychology
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton