

The impact of social intelligence on engagement and person-organization fit: an analysis of mediation through political skill

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to measure both the effects of social intelligence (SI) and political skill (PS) on work engagement (WE) and person-organization (P-O) fit, and the role that PS plays as a mediator in the relationship between SI and the other two variables.

Theoretical framework – The model proposed in this study is grounded in the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory. In the context of this study, SI and PS are considered as job resources. The study seeks to provide insights into how these job resources contribute to employees' WE and P-O fit.

Design/methodology/approach – Using the survey method, data were collected from 246 employees working in the information technology sector in Turkey using the convenience sampling method. The obtained data were analysed using the structural equation modelling (SEM) path analysis method in the AMOS program.

Findings – The results of the study reveal that PS and SI have significant effects on WE and P-O fit, and that PS mediates the relationship between SI and the outcomes.

Practical & social implications of research – This study makes a valuable contribution to the field of management, both in theoretical and practical terms, by uncovering the impact of SI on PS and the subsequent effects of these factors on employees' P-O fit and overall WE. This study is important for two main reasons. First, no previous research was found that explicitly examines the relationship between both SI and PS and P-O fit. Second, PS is a relatively underexplored area within organizational studies, despite organizations often being perceived as political arenas.

Originality/value – This study is the first to analyse the proposed model, as no previous studies were found that explore the relationship between these variables

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simultaneously within the same model. Additionally, there is a lack of research examining the direct effects of PS and SI on P-O fit. As a result, this study is expected to address a significant gap in the management literature and contribute to the understanding of these relationships.

Keywords: Social intelligence, political skill, work engagement, person-organization fit.

1 Introduction

In order for people to understand, lead, act, and manage cooperatively within companies, SI is a required phenomenon, just as it is for people to live together in a society. Thorndike's (1920, p. 228) definition of SI as "[...] the ability to understand and manage people and to act wisely in human relations" still describes SI succinctly. PS, on the other hand, is also an essential phenomenon in organizational life, as it plays a significant role in managing people within the work environment. PS is the capacity to accurately grasp and manage interpersonal interactions in the workplace and to apply this understanding to achieve individual and/or group goals (Ferris et al., 2007). SI and PS are closely related, as PS, among other measures of social effectiveness, is rooted in early SI research (Ahearn et al., 2004).

Although there is an inherent overlap between the two constructs, empirical research (Ferris et al., 2000, 2017) has distinguished PS from other related variables of social effectiveness. Ferris et al. (2000) stated that PS is a distinct type of social skill, separate from SI, and that SI is one of the influencing factors of PS. The research conducted by Banister and Meriac (2015) also revealed a strong correlation between these two variables. The ability to adapt to the political structure of organizations, to effectively navigate social dynamics, to foster positive relationships and to achieve favourable business outcomes is closely linked to having both SI and PS. While social competence is a general ability inherent in individuals, political competence is more oriented towards organizational objectives. Hence, it can be argued that individuals who have social competence can potentially influence their political skills within the context of an organization. Although it is widely accepted in studies that PS is one aspect of SI (e.g. Treadway et al., 2004), there have been very few studies demonstrating the relationship between these two variables using numerical analyses.

Work engagement (WE) and P-O fit are also two important positive organizational outcomes. WE is a psychological attribute within an organization that refers to the enthusiasm that individuals show while carrying out their job responsibilities (Maslach & Leiter, 1997).

Extensive literature has highlighted the different dimensions of engagement, including individual, social and institutional dynamics (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Similarly, while SI and PS are recognized as individual traits, they also have social implications. P-O fit, on the other hand, encompasses a combination of shared values, personalities, common goals, and characteristics, including the skills required by the organization (Li et al., 2019). Previous studies on P-O fit have predominantly concentrated on assessing the similarities between individuals and organizations.

Henceforth, this study aims to assess the impacts of both SI and PS on WE and P-O fit based on the JD-R theory. Additionally, it seeks to examine how PS acts as an intermediary in the relationship between SI and the other two variables. According to the JD-R theory, when employees have sufficient personal resources and have access to adequate job resources, they are better equipped to navigate their social and work environments effectively. As a result, positive work outcomes are achieved (e.g., Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

The study model emphasizes that SI serves as a precursor that positively influences individuals' level of PS. Consequently, higher levels of PS are expected to contribute to increased levels of P-O fit and WE. The reason for considering PS as a mediating variable in this study is primarily based on the logical inference that individuals with high SI are likely to have high PS. It is further inferred that individuals with high PS may more easily achieve P-O fit and seamlessly be more engaged at work. The second rationale stems from previous research where PS has already been identified as an outcome or aspect of SI (e.g. Ferris et al., 2000; Treadway et al., 2004) and PS has been identified as a precursor to WE.

When examining the sub-dimensions, it becomes apparent how PS effectively acts as an intermediary, highlighting its role in mediating between SI and WE, as well as between SI and P-O fit. SI is usually defined as consisting of three dimensions (Rahim, 2014; Gini, 2006; Silvera et al., 2001). The social information dimension of SI refers to an individual's ability to perceive information such as gestures, facial expressions, body language, and emotions of others. Social awareness is associated with an

individual's ability to manage conflict, behave appropriately in their environment, and adapt to the social context. Social skills, on the other hand, relate to the ability to communicate effectively and build relationships. According to the model proposed by the study, it is evident that having these characteristics enhances individuals' PS. These sub-dimensions of SI (accurate interpretation of others' behaviour, awareness and effective communication) will reinforce the *social astuteness dimension of PS, which means that individuals can observe others astutely, interpret both others' and their own behaviour accurately, adjust their actions and behaviour in response to different conditions, and increase their interpersonal influence and capacity to establish social networks. Lastly, apparent sincerity allows individuals to reflect a sense of reliability based on their SI. These qualities enable politically skilled individuals to effectively build social relationships, resulting in positive outcomes such as increased WE and P-O fit within the proposed model. Individuals with higher levels of PS, as demonstrated through their astute observations, interpersonal influence capacities, social networking abilities, and sincerity, are hypothesized to not only achieve greater alignment with the organization (P-O fit), but these abilities are also expected to increase their engagement in their work (increased WE), which means an increase in their energy towards work (vigour), more contribution to their tasks (dedication), and more pleasure from willingly performing their work (absorption). As a result, the model includes PS as a mediator between SI and the dependent variables.*

There are numerous previous studies supporting our model that have found a correlation between both SI (e.g., Alifuddin & Widodo, 2021; Lathesh & Avadhani, 2018; Mohadesi, 2021; Mohamed, 2021; Sanwal & Sareen, 2023) and PS and positive work outcomes. These outcomes include WE (Basit, 2020), career success (Chen et al., 2021), job satisfaction (Jabid et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2019; Kolodinsky et al., 2004; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015), and employee performance (Liu et al., 2007). Additionally, several studies have demonstrated a positive correlation between SI and WE. Leaders with higher levels of SI have a positive influence on employees' WE (Katou et al., 2021), and employees' own levels of SI also have a positive impact on their WE (Yoon, 2015). Similarly, there is evidence of a positive relationship between PS and WE. Employees with higher levels of PS experience increased engagement (Basit, 2020; Bostancı, 2020; Ferris et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2019; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). Individuals with higher levels of SI and PS are better

equipped to establish and manage social connections, resulting in enhanced work integration.

This study aims to contribute new theoretical insights to the existing literature by addressing the relative scarcity of research on the impact of PS on employee behaviour. Given that employees' effective use of PS for the benefit of the organization can yield positive outcomes, understanding and investigating this area is of paramount importance. By shedding light on the role of PS in achieving positive employee outcomes, this study is expected to make a valuable contribution to the field of organizational literature.

Another important contribution of this study is its examination of the impact of SI and PS on P-O fit. While the relationship between SI, PS and P-O fit is acknowledged, research into this specific outcome has received relatively less attention. P-O fit is not solely determined by individuals' inherent traits. While certain aspects of an individual's character may remain consistent, there are situations in which individuals may need to modify their ideals, goals, or behaviours to align with the group they belong to. In this context, SI and PS emerge as crucial factors that facilitate individuals' adaptation to their environment. These factors contribute to individuals' ability to effectively navigate the organizational context, ultimately leading to an improved alignment between the individual and the organization. Surprisingly, despite the inherent connection between these variables, no previous research has been identified that specifically investigates their relationship. By addressing this research gap, the study is positioned to make a valuable contribution to the existing literature in this specific context by providing insights into the crucial role of SI and PS in organizational dynamics.

The study is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on the literature review, presenting the findings and insights from previous research related to the variables of PS, SI, P-O fit and WE. It also provides an overview of the JD-R theory and its relevance to the study model. This section thoroughly examines the relationships between the variables and presents the hypotheses of the study.

The second section of the study is dedicated to the methodology employed. It describes the processes and measures used to collect and analyse the data. This includes information on the research design, sample selection, data collection instruments and statistical analysis techniques. The section also outlines the hypothesis testing procedures that were carried out to examine the proposed relationships between the variables.

Finally, the last section of the study concludes with a discussion of the findings and their implications for management. This section provides a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the data analysis. It explores the practical implications of the findings for organizations and offers recommendations for managers and practitioners based on the outcomes of the study.

By following this structured format, the study ensures that the literature review, methodology and discussion of the findings are presented in a coherent and logical manner, allowing readers to effectively understand the research process and its implications.

2 Literature review

2.1 Political skill

According to Ferris et al. (2007), PS is defined as the ability to accurately understand and navigate interpersonal dynamics in the workplace and to use this understanding to accomplish personal and/or organizational objectives. PS is considered to be distinct from other social skills due to its specific focus on achieving organizational success (Ferris et al., 2000) and organizational effectiveness (Treadway et al., 2004).

In political organizational settings, having PS is crucial for individuals to effectively achieve their desired goals (Hung et al., 2012; Kolodinsky et al., 2004). Given the inherently political nature of such organizations, individuals who have PS are better equipped to navigate the complexities of power dynamics, build relationships, and strategically influence others to achieve their objectives. PS serves as a valuable asset in such environments, enabling individuals to navigate the political landscape and succeed in their endeavours (Bentley et al., 2015; Hung et al., 2012; Kolodinsky et al., 2004; McAllister et al., 2015). Individuals with strong PS exhibit characteristics such as self-confidence, composure and attentiveness. They are adept at building, maintaining, and gaining recognition within their social networks. Moreover, they have the ability to openly express their genuine emotions and are skilled at generating effective solutions when faced with situations that require political action. These attributes contribute to their effectiveness in navigating and influencing political dynamics within an organization (Ferris et al., 2000, 2005a; Kolodinsky, et al., 2004; Treadway, et al., 2010).

Politically skilled people are those who are cordial, supportive and reassuring. They effectively manage and control others by combining their social intuition with their ability to change and adapt to different demands. The sub-dimensions of PS were first identified by Ferris et al. (2005a) using the Political Skill Inventory (PSI), which included four sub-dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity. Social astuteness refers to having a high level of self-awareness and a good understanding of social interactions. It involves the ability to intelligently observe others and accurately interpret one's own behaviour as well as the behaviour of others. Interpersonal influence is the capacity to adjust one's actions and behaviour in response to different circumstances in order to elicit desired reactions from others through a subtle and persuasive personal style. Individuals with networking ability excel at establishing and nurturing a diverse range of contacts and social networks within and outside the organization. Lastly, apparent sincerity allows individuals to project a sense of reliability based on their SI.

The rationale for incorporating PS and its sub-dimensions lies primarily in their established validity, reliability, and widespread use in research. The Political Skill Inventory (PSI) stands out as the most widely used metric for evaluating political skill, as it is defined as a construct (Ferris et al., 2012; Zettler & Lang, 2015). Despite being a recently developed measure, extensive research has been conducted on the PSI, revealing its solid construct validity, which includes both discriminant and convergent validity (Ferris et al. 2005a, 2005b, 2007). Furthermore, the PSI has demonstrated adequate convergent validity compared to constructs associated with social effectiveness, including self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Remarkably, the PSI also provides incremental validity beyond these three constructs when used together, proving valuable in predicting managerial job performance (Semadar et al., 2006; Bing et al., 2011). It continues to be used extensively in many studies across different contexts (Matos de Moraes, et al., 2023; Munyon et al., 2015; Shi & Chen, 2012; Blickle & Schnitzler, 2010; Mospan & Gillette, 2021). Another rationale for the selection of the PSI lies in the execution of an extensive cross-cultural investigation employing these dimensions. The PSI scale, formulated using these dimensions across diverse cultures, has produced results that are both reliable and significant (Lvina et al., 2012; Shi & Chen, 2012).

There have been numerous studies linking PS to WE and other positive work outcomes. For instance, Kim et al. (2019) found that higher levels of PS reduce job tension and stress while enhancing employee performance and WE. There are other studies that find a correlation between PS and employee performance (Jawahar et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2007). Similarly, Basit (2020) reported that employees with higher levels of PS experience increased self-esteem and stronger organizational identification, which in turn contribute to higher WE. Additionally, the relationship between a proactive personality and WE is found to be strengthened by PS (Philip, 2023).

Some studies have also found that higher levels of PS are associated with increased job satisfaction, either directly or as a mediator (Jabid et al., 2021; Kolodinsky et al., 2004; Taliadorou & Pashiardis, 2015). Furthermore, several studies indicate that PS is linked to career success (Chen et al., 2021; Lu & Guy, 2018; Todd et al., 2009). These researchers have shown that individuals with higher levels of PS tend to experience greater career success. Tesdanahadi and Kistyanto (2021) found a correlation between PS and career satisfaction. Individuals with higher levels of PS tend to experience greater career satisfaction. Their ability to build relationships, communicate effectively, navigate the organizational landscape and adapt to change contributes to a more fulfilling and rewarding work experience. These characteristics of PS also promote a better fit between the individual and the organization, so developing PS can help to align an individual's values, goals and behaviours with those of the organization, ultimately enhancing P-O fit.

In summary, these studies consistently demonstrate that higher levels of PS, characterized by social astuteness, networking ability, interpersonal influence and apparent sincerity, are associated with more positive outcomes in the workplace.

2.2 Social Intelligence

Studies on SI can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s, as evidenced by works such as those of Chapin (1939), Thorndike (1920), and Vernon (1933). However, it was John Dewey (1909, p. 43) who first proposed in 1909 that “[...] ultimate moral impulses and drives are nothing more or less than SI—the power of observing and comprehending social situations”.

According to Sternberg (1985, p. 259), SI is defined as “understanding others and behaving wisely in relation

to them.” Since then, numerous studies and definitions of SI have emerged. Marlowe (1986, p. 53) described it as “[...] understanding others’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviours and being able to act in accordance with this understanding”. Gardner (2006) described it as a combination of social awareness and social ability.

In a biological context, Goleman and Boyatzis (2008, p. 75) defined SI as “[...] a set of interpersonal competencies built on specific neural circuits that inspire others to be effective”. In doing so, they emphasized the underlying biological foundations of SI.

Overall, the concept of SI has been the subject of extensive study and has been defined and explored from various perspectives, highlighting its importance in understanding and navigating social interactions. Research conducted by various scholars has revealed that SI is a multidimensional construct, as highlighted by researchers such as Kosmitzki and John (1993), Gardner (1983) and Marlowe (1986). As a result of the researchers’ studies and suggestions on the concept of SI (Rahim, 2014; Gini, 2006; Silvera et al., 2001), it is evident in the academic literature that three widely accepted dimensions of SI have emerged as prominent. These three dimensions are often used to measure individuals’ levels of SI. Using this three-dimensional structure for SI, Silvera et al. (2001) developed the Tromsø Social Intelligence Scale, which includes social information processing, social skills, and social awareness, and was later widely accepted and used by other researchers (e.g., Grieve & Mahar, 2013; Gini, 2006; Yahyazadeh-Jeloudar & Lotfi-Goodarzi, 2012; Ebrahimipour et al., 2013; Rostamian & Sadrabadi, 2016). This tool, which defines SI with three dimensions, has demonstrated strong psychometric properties and has been implemented in numerous countries with high validity and reliability scores (Chater et al., 2023; Doğan & Çetin, 2009; Rezaie, 2011; Gini, 2006; Grieve & Mahar, 2013; Park et al., 2019). The superiority of the TSIS based on these three dimensions over other measures lies in the reduction of dimensions to three, compared to the more complex previous measures. This makes the scale easier to understand and more time efficient (Silvera et al., 2001). Social information processing involves verbal and non-verbal interaction processes and includes skills such as understanding facial expressions, gestures, feelings, thoughts, body language and expectations of others. Enhancing social information processing abilities enables individuals to better manage and cope with stress and thus adapt more effectively to their environment. The social

awareness dimension of SI relates to an individual's ability to adapt to social environments and behave appropriately. Those with high levels of social awareness are adept at handling conflict and forming stronger connections with others (Sanwal & Sareen, 2023). The level of social skills is associated with one's approach and influence in social environments. As social skills improve, individuals find it easier to navigate new environments, communicate effectively with others, and build relationships.

Given these positive effects, SI has been found to be correlated with several positive work outcomes in various studies. For instance, it has been linked to employee performance (Lathesh & Avadhani, 2018; Mohamed, 2021), job satisfaction (Alifuddin & Widodo, 2021), commitment (Mohadesi, 2021), and WE (Sanwal & Sareen, 2023). Individuals with high SI have the ability to understand and navigate social dynamics, collaborate effectively, and build strong relationships, thereby enhancing their overall workplace performance. The attributes of SI contribute to heightened levels of work involvement, enthusiasm and dedication, thus increasing WE. Sanwal and Sareen (2023) noted that employees with higher levels of SI showed greater engagement, with social skills being identified as the most significant predictor of engagement. Moreover, SI, which involves social awareness and understanding of others, facilitates better interactions and engagement with individuals (Kong et al., 2012), ultimately contributing to WE. In studies conducted in Turkey, SI has been shown to have positive effects on job outcomes such as job satisfaction (Elevli & Bayram, 2019) and organizational performance (Mohamed, 2021), while also having negative effects on turnover intention (Özgeldi & Diktaş, 2018).

2.3 Work engagement

WE is a concept that captures the energy and dedication that individuals bring to their work roles (Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al., 2001). Maslach and Leiter (1997, p. 417) described WE as "a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigour, dedication, and absorption". Engaged employees derive energy from their jobs, demonstrate dedication to their work, experience psychological well-being and exhibit higher performance (Harter et al., 2002).

The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) is the most commonly used tool for evaluating WE. The original UWES consisted of 17 items and focused on

three core aspects, also derived from the original definition above: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Vigour refers to elevated levels of energy and mental fortitude during work, along with a willingness to invest substantial effort in professional responsibilities and steadfast perseverance in the face of challenges. Dedication involves a deep engagement with work tasks, accompanied by a sense of meaning, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and a readiness to face challenges. Lastly, the term "absorption" describes a state in which an individual is pleasantly and intensely focused on their task, feeling that time is passing swiftly and finding it difficult to disengage from the activity (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). In short, "engaged employees have higher levels of energy, feel enthusiastic about their work and are fully immersed in it" (Bakker, 2009: 51). However, for practical purposes, a shorter 9-item version (UWES-9) was created, which also demonstrated reliable psychometric qualities. This refinement was carried out by Schaufeli and colleagues in 2006. They also presented evidence supporting its cross-national validity, demonstrating that the three dimensions of engagement exhibit moderately strong correlations. The validity of the three-dimensional UWES-9 has been confirmed in various industrial and organizational contexts in different countries, such as Brazil (Sinval et al., 2018), Finland (Seppälä et al., 2009), Italy (Balducci et al., 2010), Japan (Shimazu et al., 2008), Norway (Nerstad et al., 2010), Russia (Lovakov et al., 2017), Serbia (Petrovic et al., 2017) and South Africa (Storm & Rothmann, 2003).

The importance of WE in organizational studies is evident as it has been consistently associated with numerous positive work outcomes in previous research. WE has been found to contribute to desired individual and organizational outcomes (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Some of these positive outcomes include improved work performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Demerouti et al., 2010; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008), increased organizational commitment (Kim et al., 2017), higher job satisfaction (Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) and reduced absenteeism (Harter et al., 2002). As employees who are highly engaged in their work demonstrate higher levels of productivity, job satisfaction and overall job performance, this leads to better outcomes for both the individual and the organization. The relationships between WE, SI and PS are discussed above and in the hypotheses section.

Engagement tends to flourish in environments where there is alignment between organizational and personal values (van Ingen et al., 2021). Employers can

foster employee engagement by effectively communicating and sharing their values with employees. When managers create a P-O fit in terms of values, employee commitment is likely to increase. However, commitment to work is not just a management responsibility. Every employee should actively contribute to the development of a vibrant and engaging work environment (Leiter & Bakker, 2010).

2.4 Perceived person-organization fit

P-O fit, also known as subjective fit (Kristof, 1996), refers to the alignment between an individual's personal qualities and their perceptions of the qualities of their work environment. It encompasses the correlation between personal values and characteristics and those of the organization (Brown et al., 2005; Boon & Biron, 2016). P-O fit is a process that influences an individual's attitude towards both the organization and the job. Kristof (1996, p. 2) defines individual-organization fit as the "[...] compatibility between individuals and organizations", which can result from mutual expectations being met, shared traits between the parties, or a combination of both. Other descriptions of P-O fit include the "[...] alignment of personal and organizational values" (Chatman, 1991, p. 459) and "[...] the overlap of personal and organizational goals and needs" (Cable & DeRue, 2002, p. 876).

This study considers P-O fit as a dependent variable due to its close relationship with SI and PS in terms of definition and content. However, there is a lack of previous research examining these three variables together. The socially adaptive nature of SI and PS specifically highlights their direct relationship with P-O fit. P-O fit has been consistently linked to numerous positive work outcomes. Perceived P-O fit is of considerable importance in organizational studies, as it has been associated with satisfaction, organizational trust (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), organizational citizenship behaviour (Cable & DeRue, 2002), motivation (Resick et al., 2013), low turnover (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Ramos et al., 2022), work fulfilment (Chen et al., 2016), strong organizational loyalty (Lau et al., 2017; Ostroff et al., 2005), job satisfaction (Chen et al., 2016; Schroeder et al., 2022), and similar factors. P-O fit is strongly linked to positive work outcomes, as individuals who are well aligned with the values, culture, and goals of the organization tend to experience higher job satisfaction, engagement, commitment, and performance, leading to increased productivity, retention, and overall organizational success.

While there are several dimensions that researchers have used to conceptualize P-O fit, the most commonly employed dimensions are values and goals (Piasentin & Chapman, 2007; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006). Higher levels of P-O fit are likely when an individual's values are aligned with those of the organization (Chatman, 1991; Piasentin & Chapman, 2007; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003). Consequently, individuals whose value preferences are similar to their organization's value orientations are more likely to have positive work attitudes (Abdalla et al., 2018).

Rather than an objective perspective that attempts to measure the alignment between an individual's values and the organization's values or characteristics, some researchers advocate for the accuracy of subjective assessments. Individuals' subjective assessments of fit capture their beliefs regarding how well they fit into their respective organizations. These studies focus on measuring how harmoniously an individual perceives him/herself with the organization, asserting that this provides a more accurate measure and that, among various measures of fit, the overall perception of fit is a more accurate predictor of individual outcomes (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001; Meyer, Hecht, Gill, & Toplonysky, 2010). The notion of a good fit is considered valid as long as the individual perceives it, regardless of whether they share similar traits or complement or are complemented by the organization (Supeli & Creed, 2013; Abdalla et al., 2018). Consequently, by adopting this perspective, this study uses Piasentin and Chapman's (2007) subjective P-O fit measures, which take into account subjective perceptions of fit.

2.5 The JD-R theory and the model

The objective of this research is to evaluate the effects of both SI and PS on WE and P-O fit. It also aims to investigate the role of PS as a mediator in the relationship between SI and the other two variables. The model presented in the study highlights that SI acts as an antecedent factor that positively influences the individual's level of PS. As a result, it is expected that higher levels of PS will lead to elevated levels of P-O fit and WE. This model is explained in the context of the JD-R theory.

Developed since the publication of Demerouti et al. (2001), the JD-R theory divides the antecedents of employee engagement into job demands and resources. The JD-R theory is often used to investigate how the workplace influences employee happiness and performance. According

to one aspect of the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), personal resources have a direct impact on employees' motivation, performance, and WE. Employees who have sufficient personal resources, in this case referred to as SI and PS, can successfully manage their immediate work and social environments, resulting in increased WE (Paek et al., 2015; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

There is a consistent correlation between SI and an employee's behaviour or performance in an organization (e.g., Brunetto et al., 2012; Ebrahimpoor et al., 2013; Rahim, 2014; Rasuli et al. 2013). Individuals who exhibit SI traits such as cooperation, self-confidence, and sensitivity are more likely to be engaged at work. The results have shown that social skills are the most important predictor of engagement and that workers with high levels of SI perform better on measures of engagement (Sanwal & Sareen, 2023). The effects of SI on WE have been studied by various researchers (e.g., Yoon, 2015). The positive effects of leaders' SI on employees' WE have been investigated (Katou et al., 2021).

H1: Social intelligence positively and significantly affects work engagement.

Various scholars have offered different explanations of SI; however, there is a consensus that it involves two fundamental aspects: first, recognizing and understanding other individuals; and second, adapting to different people and social environments (Dong et al., 2008). In other words, by definition, SI inherently involves adaptation or "fit". Furthermore, it is important to note that social adaptation is considered a component of intelligence, as highlighted by Sternberg (1985). The social awareness dimension of SI refers specifically to an individual's capacity to adapt to the social environment and to behave appropriately. As one's social awareness increases, it becomes easier to navigate social situations, provide constructive feedback, and ultimately achieve successful adaptation, resulting in a higher level of P-O fit.

H2: Social intelligence positively and significantly affects person-organization fit.

According to the previous studies, there is a positive correlation between PS and SI (Banister & Meriac, 2015; Grieve & Mahar, 2013) and SI affects PS (Ferris et al., 2000).

H3: Social intelligence positively and significantly affects political skills.

Consequently, the model includes PS as an intermediary between SI and the variables of interest. While SI is a broad inherent ability of individuals, PS is more focused on organizational goals. This implies that individuals with strong SI may have the ability to shape their PS within the organizational setting. This rationale underscores the inclusion of PS as a mediating factor in this research.

Few studies have been conducted on PS and engagement, and these have linked the relationship between these two variables to the JD-R theory (Basil, 2020; Bostancı, 2020; Kim et al., 2019). It is argued that the relationship between PS and employee engagement can be understood as a personal resource that can motivate people (Ferris et al., 2007; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

H4: PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and WE.

H4a: The social astuteness dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and WE.

H4b: The interpersonal influence dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and WE.

H4c: The networking ability dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and WE.

H4d: The apparent sincerity dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and WE.

On the other hand, there is a strong relationship between PS and P-O fit. In line with the JD-R theory, we have emphasized the relationship between SI and PS, specifically in relation to P-O fit. P-O fit, which influences behaviour and attitudes within an organization, is closely linked to PS, which represents adaptive behaviour. Individuals with strong PS have the skills of perception, adaptability, and flexibility, enabling them to easily recognize and respond to different situations and conditions. They have the ability to behave appropriately in response to these circumstances. As supported by Vigoda (2000), a stronger alignment between an individual and the prevailing political

climate – which requires PS – demonstrates an improved P-O fit. In other words, individuals with higher levels of PS are more likely to deal effectively with the political atmosphere within the organization. They understand how to navigate the power dynamics, build influential relationships and manage conflict in a way that aligns with the organization’s values and goals. This alignment between the individual’s PS and the organization’s political atmosphere leads to a better P-O fit.

Our study is also indirectly supported by the findings of Borges et al. (2016), who claimed that the extent of social networks within organizations has an impact on the level of P-O fit. This correlation indirectly reinforces our research, as the establishment of social networks is directly associated with SI, and more specifically with the networking ability sub-dimension of PS.

H5: PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and P-O fit.

H5a: The social astuteness dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and P-O fit.

H5b: The interpersonal Influence dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and P-O fit.

H5c: The networking ability dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and P-O fit.

H5d: The apparent sincerity dimension of PS significantly mediates the relationship between SI and P-O fit.

The research model of the study is shown below (Figure 1).

3 Research design and methodology

3.1 Procedure and measures

The population of this study consists of employees working in the information technology sector in Turkey. These employees mainly work as project managers, account managers and product managers. While social intelligence can be considered less important in the information technology field, the complex and tightly coupled structures of the IT projects make social intelligence and political skill important skill sets for professionals working in this field. In today’s increasingly digital business world, the ability to manage interpersonal relationships is perhaps more important than ever. People have become less

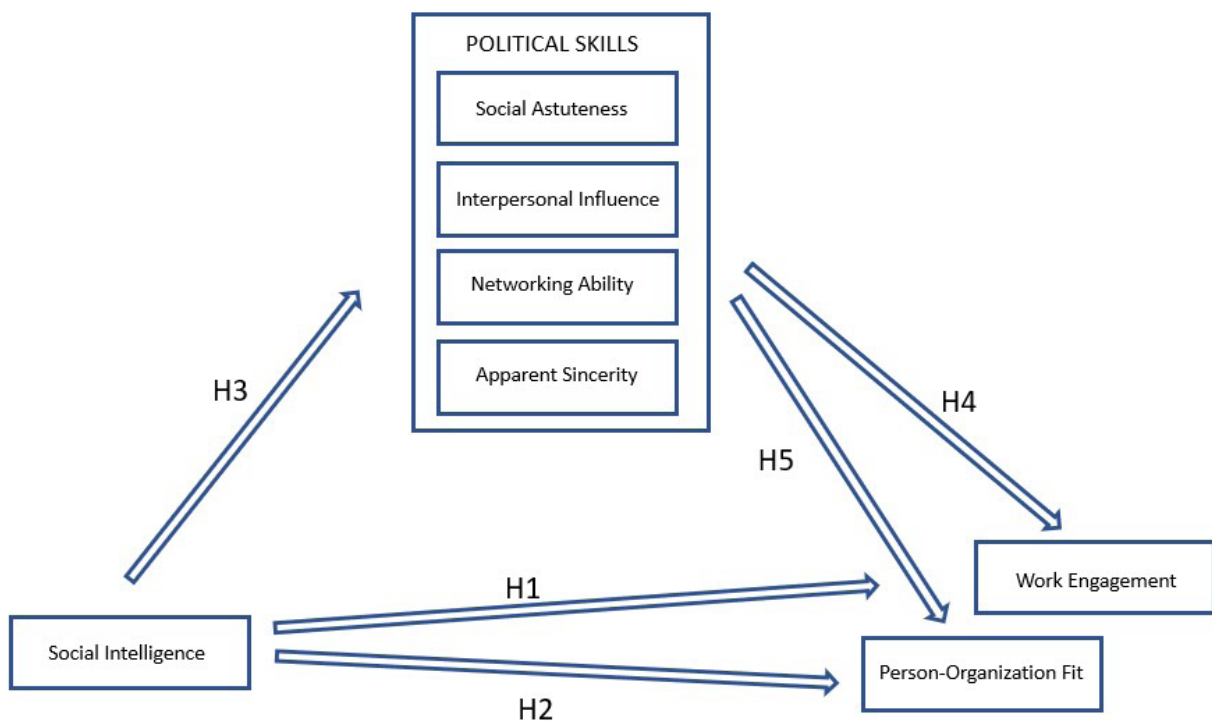


Figure 1. Research Model

physically connected and face-to-face communication within organizations has declined. This, in turn, has made understanding and managing individuals more challenging. One of the most notable examples of this change can be observed in those working in the field of information technology (IT). The reason for conducting this study on IT professionals is that, compared to other departments, they already operate in a more digital environment, leading to a widespread transition to online work and a reduction in their social interactions.

Therefore, the decline in social interactions and the transition to predominantly online work may highlight the significant impact of social intelligence and political skill on IT professionals. Based on the belief that these two variables could make a measurable difference in the work of these professionals, the study sample was selected from individuals working in this sector.

A total of 246 people working in ten different companies were selected for the study using the judgement sampling technique (see Supplementary Data 1 – Database). The questionnaires were given to each respondent after a personal explanation. This sampling technique was used by the researchers in order to address the right people who use social skills while doing their jobs. The ten companies are Turkcell, Microsoft, Ericsson, Vodafone, Mavenir, Garanti Technology, Huawei, Nokia, Netas and Koc System. The sample size of 246 respondents is sufficient for SEM analysis, as the item-to-respondent ratio is greater than 1 to 5 (Bentler&Chou, 1987; Suhr, 2006). The number of female respondents was 72 (28.3%) and the number of male respondents was 174 (70.7%). The most common age group was 34 to 41 (37%). Most of the respondents had a bachelor's degree or higher (95.5%). The participants' professional experience ranged from 0 to more than 26 years, with the largest groups having between 11 and 15 years and between 21 and 25 years of experience (236% each). Some 18% of the respondents worked in a management role, with the rest working as experts. Some 87% of the respondents worked remotely. The number of employees working in a professional role was 202 (72%) and the number working as a line manager was 44 (18%).

PS was measured using the 18-item scale adapted from the PS Inventory (PSI) by Ferris et al. (2005b) (See Supplementary Data 2 – Appendix A – Scales). The scale has four sub-dimensions, namely “interpersonal influence”, “social astuteness”, “apparent sincerity” and “networking ability”. Sample items from the scale are as follows: “I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others”;

“I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others”; “I have a good sense or understanding of how to present myself to others”; “I am good at getting people to like me”.

In order to measure SI, the final revised and 21-item shortened version of the Tromso SI Scale (TSIS) by Silvera et al. (2001) is used, which is composed of three dimensions: social awareness, social information processing and social skill. Sample items of the scale are as follows; “I can predict other people's behaviours”; “I fit in easily in social situations”; “People often surprise me with the things they do”.

Subjective P-O fit was measured using a 4-item scale developed by Piasentin and Chapman (2007), sample items of which are: “I fit in well with other people who work for this company” and “I think other people would say I fit this organization”.

Finally, WE was measured using the short version of the Utrecht WE Scale (UWES-9) developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006). Sample items are as follows: “At my work, I feel bursting with energy ” and “In my job, I feel strong and vigorous”.

The questionnaires were distributed after personal explanation of the research objectives to each respondent (see Supplementary Data 3 – Appendix B – Questionnaire in English and Supplementary Data 4 – Appendix C – Questionnaire in Turkish). This resulted in a return rate of nearly 100%. For all statements measuring perceptions, the respondents had to answer on a Likert scale ranging from 1 “Completely disagree” to 5 “Completely agree”. A back-translation method was used for the Turkish translation of the scales. For missing values, the median of nearby points was used as a cleansing method. No respondent was removed from the analysis after the outlier analysis. All the items have kurtosis values of less than 10 and skewness values of less than 3. Thus, the variables in the study were considered to be normally distributed.

In this study, the KMO of the SI questionnaire is .848 and the Cronbach's alpha is .860 for a total of 246 respondents (social information processing = .688; social skills = .857; social awareness = .721). The PS scale has a KMO of .897 and a Cronbach's alpha of .886 (social astuteness = .859; interpersonal influence = .759; networking ability = .859, apparent sincerity = .789). For the WE scale, reliability was measured as = .900. The P-O fit scale has a reliability score of .629.

3.2 Construct validity and reliability

Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were used for the measures to check the construct validity of the scales. The exploratory factor analysis showed that most of the variables are distributed as shown in the original scales, but some items (4/21) in the SI scale were removed due to low factor loadings. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (conducted with first order and second order CFA according to Hair et al. (2010)) showed that the constructs were measured as planned, with some exceptions. The interpersonal influence dimension of the PS variable had atypical effects on the latent variable. Therefore, the PS variable was analysed with three dimensions. Some items were also removed after the CFA (3/21 for SI scale; 1/6 for networking; 2/5 for astuteness). These items were affecting the model fit for the second order CFA analysis of the constructs and had loading values of less than 0.5. The AVE (average variance extracted) and CR (composite reliability) values for the variables are: SI: .55/.78; PS: .59/.80; WE: .52/.90; P-O fit: .44/.70. These values are acceptable according to Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Lam (2012). According to the hypothesized model, no multicollinearity issue was observed in this study. Common method bias analysis was performed according to the single-factor analysis method (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and was also not observed.

Before the hypothesis testing and regression analysis, all the items in the study were checked to see if they are correlated with each other. According to the correlation analysis, all variables are correlated with each other with p-values of 0.01. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the variables in this study.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations and correlations of the study variables

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Social intelligence	Political skill	Social astuteness	Interpersonal influence	Networking ability	Apparent sincerity	Work engagement	P-o fit
Social intelligence	3.82	.45	1							
Political skill	4.05	.52	.639**	1						
Social astuteness	3.84	.63	.637**	.841**	1					
Interpersonal influence	4.07	.60	.635**	.774**	.674**	1				
Networking ability	3.76	.78	.484**	.880**	.650**	.711**	1			
Apparent sincerity	4.55	.53	.317**	.645**	.331**	.428**	.343**	1		
Work engagement	4.07	.62	.263**	.474**	.387**	.430**	.408**	.319**	1	
P-o fit	4.05	.52	.242**	.391**	.333**	.337**	.310**	.343**	.477**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 Level (2-tailed).

3.3 Hypothesis testing

Figure 2 shows the output of the structural equation model – path analysis run on the AMOS program. The goodness of fit indices of the model indicate an acceptable model (CMIN/DF=1.620, RMR=0.051, SRMR=0.0699, RMSEA=0.050, PClose=0.457, TLI=0.902, CFI=0.910). An SRMR value close to 0.08 and an RMSEA value close to 0.06 are generally considered a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Other fit indices also show acceptable values according to Cangür and Ercan (2015).

Table 2 shows significant direct effects between the variables.

H1 is accepted as social intelligence significantly affects work engagement with a regression weight of 0.340 (p=.000). H2 is accepted as social intelligence significantly affects person-organization fit with a regression weight of 0.567 (p=.000). H3 is accepted as social intelligence significantly affects political skills with a regression weight of 0.857 (p=.000). The interpersonal influence dimension of PS was not confirmed by the confirmatory factor analysis of the PS construct. Therefore, the null hypotheses of H4b and H5b cannot be rejected (the alternative hypotheses H4b and H5b are rejected.) Mediation analysis was conducted using the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach. As this method was applied with AMOS, PS fully mediates the effect of SI on WE (direct effect without mediator is 0.340 with p=.000; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with p=.127), so H4 is supported. The same effect of PS is seen for the effect of SI on P-O fit. PS fully mediates the effect of SI on P-O fit (direct effect without mediator is 0.567 with p=.000; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with p=.685), thus H5 is

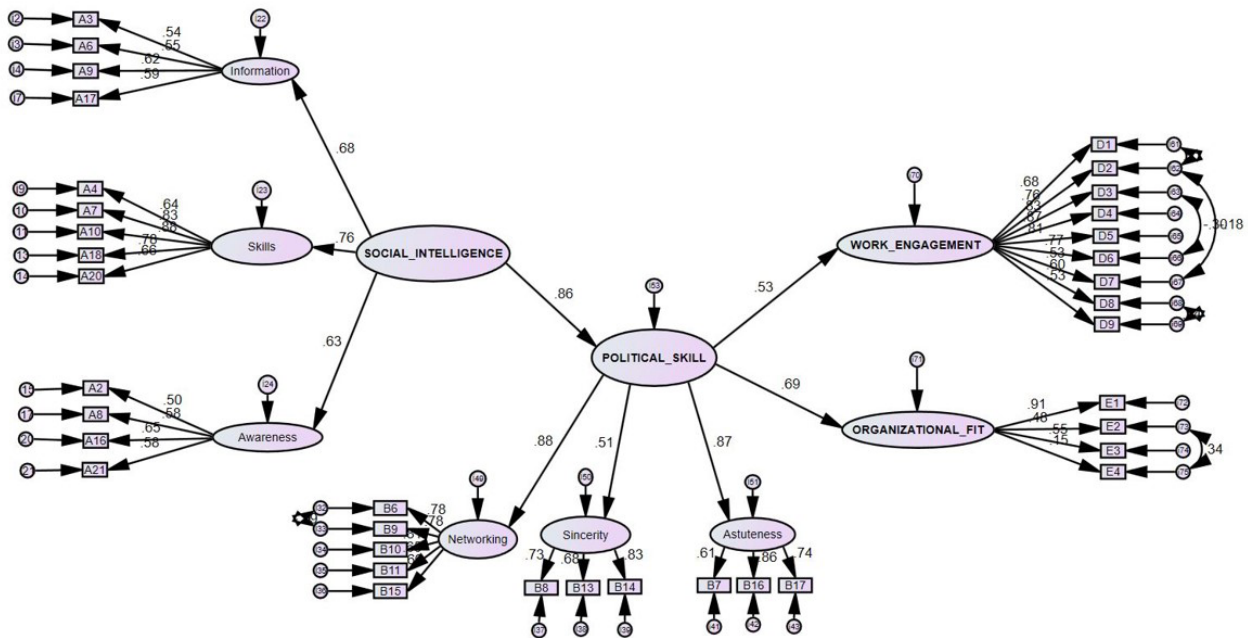


Figure 2. Path Analysis in AMOS

Table 2
Regression weights from SEM analysis

			Standard Estimate	P
SI	>	PS	.857	***
SI	>	WE	.340	***
SI	>	P-O Fit	.567	***
PS	>	WE	.526	***
PS	>	P-O Fit	.694	***
SI	>	PS – Networking	.751	***
SI	>	PS – Sincerity	.583	***
SI	>	PS – Astuteness	.806	***
PS – Networking	>	WE	.449	***
PS – Sincerity	>	WE	.365	***
PS – Astuteness	>	WE	.448	***
PS – Networking	>	P-O Fit	.602	***
PS – Sincerity	>	P-O Fit	.559	***
PS – Astuteness	>	P-O Fit	.592	***

supported. For the sub-dimensions of the PS construct, H4a is supported with full mediation (direct effect without mediator is 0.340 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with $p=.537$). H4c is supported with full mediation (direct effect without mediator is 0.340 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with $p=.574$). H4d is supported with partial mediation (direct effect without mediator is 0.357 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator is 0.249 with $p=.017$). H5a is supported with full mediation (direct effect without

mediator is 0.567 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with $p=.240$). H5c is supported with full mediation (direct effect without mediator is 0.567 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator is non-significant with $p=.067$). H5d is supported with partial mediation (direct effect without mediator is 0.567 with $p=.000$; direct effect with mediator 0.360 with $p=.002$).

4 Discussion

The primary objective of this study was twofold: first, to assess the effects of SI on PS, P-O fit and WE; and second, to explore the mediating role of PS in the relationship between SI and the aforementioned outcomes. SEM was employed using the AMOS program to analyse the proposed model. The initial analysis aimed to determine whether SI had significant effects on PS and the dependent variables, followed by mediation studies.

The concepts of PS and SI are closely related in the literature, with a consensus that SI is broader in scope than PS and that PS is more focused on organizational goals. There is a consensus that SI serves as a successor to PS, as evidenced by its use in previous studies (Ferris et al., 2000). PS has a distinct position among other skills in that it specifically aims to enhance an organization's success, which highlights its differentiation from SI. Consequently, it is suggested that PS should be considered as a mediating factor, positioned after SI and before

organizational outcomes in the relationship between SI and these outcomes.

Indeed, the current study builds upon previous research that has established the correlation between PS, SI and work outcomes based on the JD-R theory. The JD-R theory proposes that certain personal resources or assets facilitate the development of positive work outcomes. The findings of the study indicate that higher levels of SI have a positive impact on employees' WE (H1 is supported), P-O fit (H2 is supported) and PS (H3 is supported). These results are consistent with the previous research showing a correlation between SI and PS (Banister & Meriac, 2015; Grieve & Mahar, 2013; Ferris et al., 2000) and between SI and WE (e.g., Katou et al., 2021; Sanwal & Sareen, 2023; Yoon, 2015), as well as being consistent with the study of Ferris et al. (2000), which reported that SI is an antecedent of PS. Overall, the results of the current study are consistent with previous research and support the relationship between SI, PS and WE.

H4 is also supported where PS is found to be a significant, positive and full mediator between SI and WE. However due to the lack of statistically significant results in the confirmatory factor analysis, the interpersonal influence sub-dimension of PS could not be included in the hypothesis tests. It could be argued that the observed outcome is attributable to a reduction in the interpersonal influence dimension as a result of the increase in remote working among IT personnel. Therefore, H4a, H4c and H4d are supported, but H4b could not be analysed in mediation. Social astuteness and networking ability are found to fully mediate between SI and WE, while apparent sincerity partially mediates. The full mediation of the two dimensions reveals that a significant portion of the impact of SI on WE is actually due to individuals' PS. This underscores the importance of our emphasis on PS and its sub-dimensions. Therefore, it not only highlights the positive effect of high SI, but also emphasizes that elevated levels of individuals' PS contribute to increased WE. These results are also consistent with previous studies that have reported a correlation between PS and engagement (Basit, 2020; Bostanci, 2020; Ferris et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2017; Philip, 2023; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Therefore, it can be concluded that SI affects people's social astuteness, networking ability and apparent sincerity, which in turn affect WE, suggesting that all the three dimensions of PS act as mediators between SI and WE. Individuals with strong PS are capable of building

and managing connections, which in turn enhances their energy, dedication and commitment to their work.

H5 is also supported, with PS again fully mediating between SI and P-O fit. H5a, H5c and H5d are supported, while H2b could not be analysed for the same reason as above. Again, social astuteness and networking ability are found to fully mediate between SI and P-O fit, while apparent sincerity partially mediates, which also highlights the importance of the PS effect on the outcomes. That is, SI affects people's social astuteness, networking ability and apparent sincerity, which in turn affect P-O fit. While no direct studies of the relationship between SI, PS and P-O fit were found in the literature, the relationship between SI, PS and adaptability is evident. As confirmed by Vigoda (2000), supporting a more robust congruence between an individual and the current political environment – a condition that requires PS – reflects an enhanced P-O fit. In other words, individuals with higher levels of PS are better positioned to adeptly navigate the organizational political landscape. SI, on the other hand, has also been related to fit or adaptability by various researchers (Dong et al., 2008; Sternberg, 1985), as previously mentioned. The skills associated with SI, such as understanding one's own and others' emotions and thoughts, adapting easily to social environments, and displaying appropriate behaviour, are likely to enhance an individual's PS. This includes the ability to influence others, build social networks, interpret behaviour accurately and appear sincere. Additionally, individuals with strong PS are better equipped to adapt to their surroundings, leading to a better fit between themselves and the organization (P-O fit).

Overall, the model of the current study aligns with previous research and theoretical foundations, highlighting the relationship between SI, PS, WE and P-O fit. The study suggests that the development of SI and PS can positively contribute to an individual's ability to adapt, engage in their work, and experience a better fit within their organization.

The originality and theoretical contributions of the study are evident due to several factors. First, the lack of previous research on the relationship between SI and PS suggests that this study fills a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between these two variables. This contributes to the understanding of the interplay between social skills and personal resources in the workplace.

Second, the specific examination of P-O fit in relation to SI and PS is also a novel aspect of the study. While previous research has explored the individual

effects of SI and PS on various outcomes, their combined impact on P-O fit has not been thoroughly investigated. This study's inclusion of all four variables within the same model allows for a comprehensive examination of their relationships and sheds light on the role of SI and PS in influencing P-O fit.

Additionally, the differentiation of PS from other social skills is an important aspect of the study's theoretical contribution. By highlighting PS as a separate construct with a focus on achieving organizational success, the study underscores its distinctiveness and its potential to serve as a mediator in the relationship between SI and outcomes such as P-O fit and WE. This distinction adds value to the organizational behaviour and management literature by emphasizing the unique role of PS in enhancing organizational outcomes.

Overall, this study contributes to the field of organizational behaviour and management, particularly in relation to organizational politics, by examining the less studied branch of PS and its importance in enhancing P-O fit and WE. The originality of the study lies in its exploration of the relationships between SI, PS, P-O fit and WE, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of social skills, personal resources and organizational outcomes.

4.1 Managerial implications

Indeed, the results of the study highlight the importance of considering and developing employees' PS and SI in organizational management practices, and of considering SI as a precursor and driver of employees' PS. The findings suggest that organizations should pay attention to the levels of these social skills and personal resources when recruiting new employees. Furthermore, providing personal development training in these areas can help to enhance employees' PS and SI, which in turn can have positive effects on organizational outcomes.

Undoubtedly, the findings of this study require careful consideration from a managerial perspective. The noticeable interaction between SI and PS and their combined impact on P-O fit and WE emphasize the essential need for managers to adeptly navigate these complex dynamics. Of particular managerial importance is the role played by PS as a mediating factor. The managerial salience of PS mediation stems from the revelation that a discernible proportion of the influence exerted by SI on both WE and P-O fit within organizational contexts is, in fact, attributable to the intermediary role of PS.

Consequently, a nuanced understanding of this relationship is essential to highlight the importance of PS within the employee cohort.

At the same time, when viewed through an alternative lens, the antecedent relationship between SI and PS assumes paramount importance. This perspective underscores that the cultivation of PS in individuals is to a certain extent contingent upon the antecedent development of SI. Thus, it is imperative to recognize the symbiotic nature of these constructs and acknowledge that the enhancement of individual competencies in PS is inherently tied to the antecedent refinement of SI.

The study also emphasizes the importance of PS and SI as crucial components of socialization and adaptability in the workplace. This implies that organizations should focus not only on technical skills but also on developing employees' social skills and personal resources to ensure their successful integration into the work environment and their ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The study also suggests that organizations can benefit from selecting and developing individuals with strong PS and strong SI, as they increase the likelihood of a better fit between the individual and the dynamics of the organization.

Given the increasing digitalization of business operations, it is important to recognize the continued importance of human assets in organizations. Concepts such as PS and SI should be emphasized and valued in order to fully realise the potential of employees and foster positive organizational outcomes.

The study also suggests the need for further research in this area. While the current study contributes to the understanding of the relationships between SI, PS and organizational outcomes, there is still much to explore and uncover. Future research can delve deeper into the mechanisms through which SI and PS influence organizational outcomes, as well as investigate their implications in the context of the evolving digital workplace.

Overall, the study underscores the practical importance of focusing on and developing employees' PS and SI and highlights the need for continued research and attention to these concepts in organizational management.

The findings of this study provide new insights and understanding of the interrelationships between these variables, thereby enhancing the existing body of knowledge in the field. Moreover, the practical implications derived from this study can inform organizations and managers in their efforts to promote a better fit between individuals

and the organization, ultimately leading to higher levels of WE among employees.

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Supplementary Material

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Supplementary Data 1 – Database

Supplementary Data 2 – Appendix A – Scales

Supplementary Data 3 – Appendix B – Questionnaire in English

Supplementary Data 4 – Appendix C – Questionnaire in Turkish

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