Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice

ISSN: 1069-6679 (Print) 1944-7175 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/mmtp20

When values align: overall and value-specific person–organization fit in salesperson outcomes

David Brauer, Elizabeth Brauer & Emily C. Tanner

To cite this article: David Brauer, Elizabeth Brauer & Emily C. Tanner (22 May 2026): When values align: overall and value-specific person–organization fit in salesperson outcomes, Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, DOI: 10.1080/10696679.2026.2675628

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2026.2675628

View supplementary material

Published online: 22 May 2026.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 5

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=mmtp20

JOURNAL OF MARKETING THEORY AND PRACTICE
https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2026.2675628

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

When values align: overall and value-specific person–organization fit in salesperson outcomes

David Brauer[a], Elizabeth Brauer[b], and Emily C. Tanner[c]

[a]Priority Bridge, LLC., Pittsburgh, PA, USA; [b]Marketing, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, OH, USA; [c]Department of Marketing, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, USA

ABSTRACT

Person – organization (P – O) fit theory suggests that alignment between employee and organizational values affects outcomes such as retention and performance. This study examines how overall and value-specific cultural fit predict turnover and performance in business-to-business sales. Survey data from 115 sales professionals and managers, combined with six-month follow-up data on turnover and revenue, were analyzed using a compositional approach based on the Big Nine Cultural Values framework. Overall fit predicted lower turnover, while alignment on integrity offered additional insight into value-based differences. Findings extend P – O fit theory by showing how cultural alignment influences retention in sales.

Introduction

High turnover continues to undermine the effectiveness of organizations, where the constant need to recruit, train, and replace salespeople drains resources and disrupts customer relationships (Funds, 2025). Industry estimates suggest that annual turnover in sales frequently exceeds 20%, and each departure can cost firms between 150% and 200% of an employee's annual salary when lost productivity and replacement expenses are considered (Funds, 2025; Stratus, 2023). These costs extend beyond financial loss, eroding client trust, damaging morale, and weakening the continuity of customer relationships (Rutherford et al., 2012; Verbeke et al., 2011).

Sales environments are uniquely demanding: performance pressure is constant, individual autonomy is high, and results are measured over short cycles (e.g. Lussier et al., 2025; Verbeke et al., 2011). High levels of voluntary separation in sales are often linked to job stress, low satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion (Lussier et al., 2021; Rutherford et al., 2012; Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). More broadly, recent work highlights the growing importance of mental health and well-being in business-to-business sales contexts (Lussier et al., 2025). Within these contexts, organizational culture functions as both a performance driver and a stabilizing force (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). However, despite longstanding recognition that culture and fit shape organizational outcomes (Hartnell et al., 2011; Kristof, 1996), few studies have identified which specific cultural dimensions most influence salesperson retention and performance.

Person – organization (P – O) fit theory provides a useful lens for understanding these dynamics. It posits that employees are more satisfied and committed when their personal values align with those of their organization (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005); however, most research has focused on global perceptions of fit rather than examining how alignment on individual cultural values translates into measurable outcomes. This limitation is particularly important in sales settings, where culture simultaneously reinforces performance standards and social belonging. For example, alignment on execution-oriented values may enhance goal focus and efficiency, while alignment on relational or ethical values may promote loyalty and reduce turnover. Determining which types of cultural alignment matter most can therefore clarify why some salespeople thrive and others disengage.

The current study investigates how salesperson – organization cultural fit influences turnover and performance in a medium-sized U.S. based business-to-business staffing organization. Building on the Big Nine framework of cultural values (Sull et al., 2019), we distinguish between broad, overall cultural alignment and value-specific alignment on dimensions such as execution, customer focus,

CONTACT Emily C. Tanner emily.tanner@mail.wvu.edu Department of Marketing, West Virginia University, 1601 University Avenue, Morgantown, WV 26505, USA

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.
Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2026.2675628

© 2026 Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

and diversity. Using a comparative-judgment survey design and compositional data analysis grounded in the centered log-ratio (CLR) transformation (Aitchison, 1986), we link these cultural alignment measures to objective, time-lagged outcomes – turnover and average weekly revenue.

By integrating P – O fit theory with a compositional approach to culture, this research advances our understanding of how specific cultural dimensions shape employee behavior in sales contexts. Our findings show that overall person – organization fit predicts retention but not short-term performance. Among specific cultural dimensions, integrity significantly predicted turnover, suggesting that alignment on honesty and ethical conduct reduces exit risk. These insights extend the theoretical boundaries of P – O fit by illustrating that cultural alignment operates through distinct pathways depending on which values align and which outcomes are examined. The purpose of this study is to examine how salesperson – organization cultural alignment, both overall and value-specific, predicts turnover and performance outcomes, thereby extending person – organization fit theory within the context of sales organizations.

Literature review

Organizational culture

Organizational culture is "the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization" (Deshpandé & Webster, 1989, p. 4). Shared values articulate what matters most within a firm, while norms provide explicit behavioral guidance that signals how those values should be enacted (Sull et al., 2019a).

Gustafson et al. (2018) reviewed culture research in the selling and sales management literature and found that organizational climate directly influences outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and salesperson well-being. The study of organizational culture has expanded significantly, emphasizing its central role in shaping employee behavior, enhancing satisfaction, and driving organizational effectiveness (Gustafson et al., 2018).

As firms adapt to increasingly dynamic markets, understanding and leveraging organizational culture has become essential for maintaining a competitive advantage. Research consistently shows that culture functions as a core driver of organizational value by guiding collective behavior and aligning employees around shared priorities (Hartnell et al., 2011; Schein, 1985). Shared beliefs and norms not only shape internal employee outcomes but also contribute to external success by aligning the workforce with broader organizational goals (Deshpandé & Webster, 1989). These insights reveal the importance of analyzing organizational culture in relation to outcomes such as turnover, engagement, and employee well-being (Gustafson et al., 2018).

Additionally, prior research has found organizational culture can be meaningfully represented through a limited set of shared value dimensions. Sull et al. (2019a) identified nine core values, known as the Big Nine Cultural Values, that consistently distinguish high-performing organizations. These values capture how firms express culture in concrete, behavior-based terms rather than abstract ideals, offering a modern framework for linking cultural alignment to measurable outcomes.

The Big Nine Cultural Values framework (Sull et al., 2019a) offers an empirically grounded foundation for assessing organizational culture. Drawing on over 1.2 million employee reviews from more than 500 companies, the authors identified nine cultural dimensions most frequently associated with organizational effectiveness: agility, collaboration, customer, diversity, execution, innovation, integrity, performance, and respect (Sull et al., 2020). Unlike legacy typologies such as Hofstede's (1984) national culture dimensions or Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) Competing Values Framework, which emphasize societal or archetypal orientations, the Big Nine reflects firm-level, behaviorally observable values that organizations actively communicate and evaluate. Because this framework is derived from large-scale, real-world data, it offers both managerial relevance and construct validity for studying cultural alignment in modern sales contexts. Using these empirically validated values allows us to test whether alignment on the same dimensions emphasized by today's most successful organizations predicts tangible outcomes such as salesperson turnover and performance. A summary of these nine values and their definitions is provided in Table 1.

Person-Organization Fit Theory

Person – Organization (P – O) Fit Theory proposes that alignment between an employee's values and the organization's culture improves outcomes such as performance, retention, and job satisfaction (Kristof, 1996). Prior research has demonstrated that overall cultural fit leads to higher performance and lower turnover (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Verquer et al., 2003). When employees perceive value alignment, they experience reduced

Table 1. Big Nine cultural values and definitions.

Value	Definition
Agility	Team members can promptly and efficiently adapt to shifts in the market and capitalize on emerging opportunities
Collaboration	Employees cooperate effectively within their teams and seamlessly across various segments of the organization
Customer	Team members prioritize customers at the core of their actions, attentively listening to their feedback and addressing their needs with utmost importance
Diversity	The company advocates for a workplace that embraces diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that no individual faces disadvantages based on their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or nationality.
Execution	Team members are given the authority to take action, provide them with necessary resources, follow procedural discipline, and are accountable for achieving results.
Innovation	The company leads in introducing innovative products, services, technologies, or methods of operation.
Integrity	Team members consistently demonstrate honesty and ethical conduct in their actions
Performance	The company recognizes and rewards results through compensation, acknowledgment, promotions, and effectively addresses underperformance among employees.
Respect	Team members exhibit thoughtfulness and courtesy toward others, treating each other with dignity.

cognitive dissonance and greater affective commitment, which stabilizes tenure and enhances engagement (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

While traditional research treats P – O fit as a single, global perception of compatibility, newer approaches adopt a facet-level perspective that examines alignment on specific cultural dimensions. Similar to how personality research distinguishes between broad traits (e.g. conscientiousness) and narrower facets (e.g. orderliness, achievement), fit research benefits from differentiating global fit from value-specific fit (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Van Vianen, 2018). Broad fit reflects a general sense of belonging and value congruence that primarily influences attitudinal outcomes like satisfaction and retention, whereas narrow, value-specific fit emphasizes alignment on concrete cultural dimensions, such as execution, customer focus, or diversity, that are more directly tied to performance behaviors.

In sales contexts, where performance pressure and individual accountability are high, cultural alignment serves both as a behavioral compass and a retention mechanism (Pappas et al., 2023). This study conceptualizes value-specific P – O fit as the micro-alignment between an employee's prioritized values and the organization's expressed priorities on each cultural dimension. This approach allows us to test whether alignment on certain values predicts outcomes beyond overall fit. We expect that broad fit will primarily predict turnover through its influence on belonging and commitment, while value-specific fit will better explain salesperson performance, which depends on behavioral alignment with the organization's execution-oriented norms.

Research on P – O fit has consistently demonstrated that value congruence predicts outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and turnover (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011; Oh et al., 2014). Yet most prior studies rely on cross-sectional, self-report data rather than objective, time-lagged outcomes. Moreover, few studies have examined how specific value alignments influence distinct outcomes in sales, where objective metrics such as turnover and revenue can be tracked directly. Building on these gaps, the present study integrates the Big Nine Cultural Values framework (Sull et al., 2019a) with P – O Fit theory to test how both general and value-specific alignment influence salesperson turnover and performance using firm-provided data. To situate this study within the broader literature, Table 2 summarizes key research linking organizational culture, person – organization fit, and salesperson outcomes, highlighting the conceptual and methodological gaps that this study addresses through a compositional, value-based approach to cultural fit.

Conceptual model and hypotheses

Sales forces care most about two outcomes: whether salespeople stay and how well they perform (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). We argue that both hinge on cultural fit, which is defined as the alignment between salesperson values and the organization's cultural priorities, rather than employees' standalone value priorities or perceived climate (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Sull et al., 2019a). Studies link this alignment to longer tenure, greater satisfaction, and stronger performance (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Sull et al., 2019b). Because turnover and performance shape customer continuity and firm performance, the sales literature treats them as core outcomes (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). In what follows, we examine actual turnover (observed exits) and objective performance (weekly revenue) and test whether overall fit and value-specific fit relate to these outcomes in distinct ways. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model, outlining the hypothesized relationships between overall and value-specific cultural fit and their effects on turnover and performance.

Table 2. Organizational culture literature review.

Study	Focus Area	Key Findings	Relevance to Current Study
Barnes et al. (2006)	Culture → Performance, Turnover	Strong sales culture = higher value congruity, lower stress, higher job satisfaction and commitment.	Indicates that alignment between individual and organizational cultural values enhances performance and retention, reinforcing the P – O fit construct.
Boyce et al. (2015)	Culture → Performance	Culture predicts performance; performance does not change culture.	Supports a unidirectional relationship where culture predicts performance, aligning with the study's theoretical framing.
Cable and DeRue (2002)	P – O Fit → Performance	Alignment with specific values (e.g. execution) improves motivation and performance.	Provides a theoretical foundation for examining how alignment on task-proximal values, such as execution, shapes motivation and performance.
Chatman and Barsade (1995)	Culture → Performance	Culture of cooperation enhances performance when employees value cooperation.	Demonstrates that fit on specific cultural values predicts behavior, supporting the multidimensional view of cultural alignment.
Deshpandé and Farley (2004)	Culture → Performance	Innovation and customer orientation predict business success.	Illustrates that specific cultural values, such as customer focus, directly influence business outcomes.
Dugan et al. (2022)	Sales Culture → Well-being, Performance	Sales organizational culture affects individual, organizational, and societal well-being.	Expands understanding of sales organizational culture to include well-being outcomes alongside performance.
Gustafson et al. (2018)	Culture → Salesperson Outcomes	Organizational climate affects job satisfaction, well-being, and performance in sales.	Establishes that organizational culture influences salesperson-specific outcomes, supporting culture – outcome linkage.
Lopez and McMillan-Capehart (2009)	Culture → Turnover	Culture as implicit control: salesperson – organization fit reduces disengagement.	Provides theoretical grounding for turnover models based on cultural alignment as an implicit control mechanism.
Lu et al. (2023)	Culture → Performance, Turnover	Differentiates between value congruence and perceptual congruence. Both influence job outcomes.	Highlights that distinct forms of cultural alignment – overall versus value-specific— affect performance and retention differently.
Martin and J (2003)	Culture → Performance	Customer-oriented cultures increase customer-oriented selling behaviors.	Validates the inclusion of customer focus as a key cultural value influencing sales behavior.
Myer et al. (2016)	Culture → Turnover	Ethical/service climates shape attitudes and retention.	Reinforces that cultural values influence turnover through ethical and service-oriented climates.
Pappas et al. (2023)	Culture + Sales Team Norms → Turnover	Competitive, team-based cultures decrease turnover and boost performance.	Affirms that sales team culture shapes both turnover and performance in competitive environments.
Rutherford et al. (2012)	Job Stress + Culture → Turnover	Supportive leadership reduces emotional exhaustion and turnover.	Supports the role of supportive cultural values, such as respect and diversity, in reducing turnover through emotional stability.
Schwepker and Schultz (2015)	Ethical Sales Culture → Performance	Ethical climate improves value-enhancing sales performance.	Confirms that ethical organizational culture improves sales performance, underscoring its importance in sales contexts.

Note. Inclusion criteria: Peer-reviewed, empirical studies examining person – organization fit or organizational culture in relation to performance, turnover, or salesperson outcomes. Exclusion criteria: Practitioner articles, conceptual papers without empirical data, dissertations, editorials, and studies unrelated to culture – fit or sales contexts.

Broad vs. Value-specific cultural fit

Research on Person – Organization (P – O) fit often models a global judgment of compatibility, or overall fit (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Overall fit provides a sense of belonging and clarifies "how work gets done," which can stabilize tenure and organize effort (Cable & DeRue, 2002). At the same time, organizations emphasize distinct cultural priorities (e.g. execution, collaboration, customer focus, integrity, performance, innovation, agility, respect, diversity), and alignment on these value-specific dimensions can map more directly onto behavior than a single overall score (Sull et al., 2019a; Van Vianen, 2018). Following a broad-versus-narrow logic, broad constructs summarize many cues, whereas narrow, behavior-proximal constructs add predictive power (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Van Vianen, 2018). In sales, where pace, coordination, and customer orientation shape daily work, this distinction operates in practice, not only in theory.

Culture also functions as an implicit control system, guiding behavior through shared, informal norms (Lopez & McMillan-Capehart, 2009). Guided by this view, we test both overall fit (global alignment) and value-specific fit (alignment on discrete cultural values) as predictors of turnover and performance. The Big Nine values (Sull et al., 2019a) align with routine sales activities, such as planning and execution, coordination with coworkers, and serving customer needs, and together reflect how salespeople act, work with others, and engage customers.

Introduced as a contemporary, validated framework widely adopted in industry, the Big Nine (Sull et al., 2019a) bridges academic and practitioner relevance. Compared with macro-level typologies such as Hofstede's national culture dimensions (Hofstede, 1984), which capture cross-national differences, or the Competing Values Framework (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983), which classifies cultures into broad archetypes, the Big Nine isolates specific value dimensions that precisely capture how cultural alignment manifests in

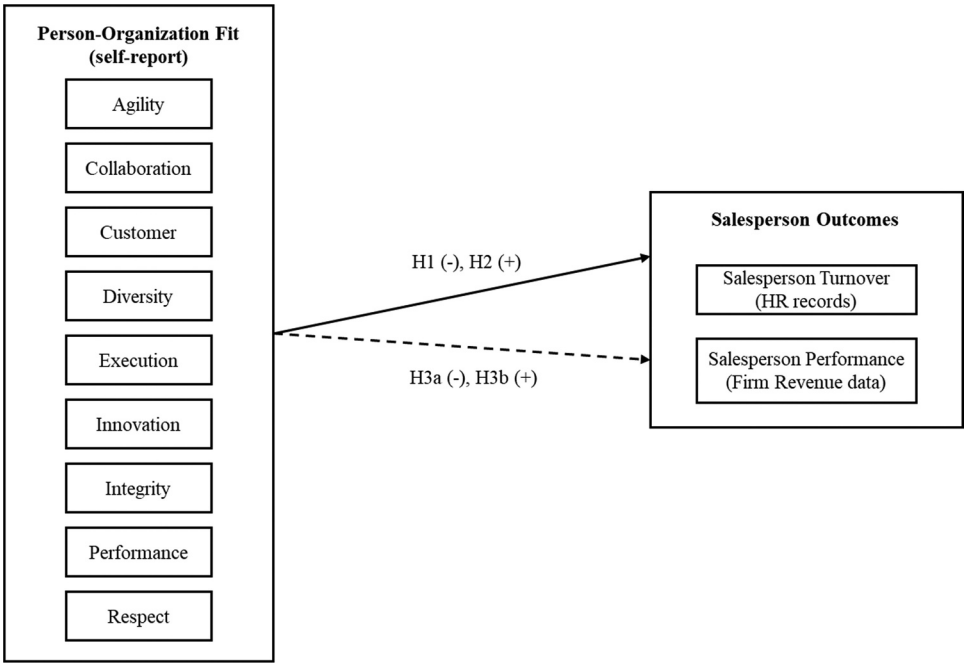


Figure 1. Conceptual model of cultural fit and salesperson outcomes.

everyday sales routines and performance expectations. This specificity enables tests of overall fit and value-specific fit within a single, managerially useful framework (Hofstede, 1984; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Sull et al., 2019a).

Overall Fit and Salesperson Outcomes

When overall fit is high, salespeople experience fewer value conflicts and less role strain, which strengthens commitment and lowers the likelihood of quitting (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014; Van Vianen, 2018). In high-accountability sales roles, even small misalignments can magnify daily stressors; by contrast, clear expectations about pace, and collaboration reduce uncertainty, dampen strain, and stabilize tenure. This mechanism is consistent with evidence that value congruence supports socio-affective attachment and decreases withdrawal cognitions across occupations, with especially salient effects in performance-visible settings like sales (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Oh et al., 2014; Van Vianen, 2018). Accordingly, we predict a negative association between overall cultural fit and salesperson turnover, stated formally as H1 below:

H1: Salesperson cultural fit with the organization is negatively related to salesperson turnover.

Although Person – Organization Fit is often associated with retention, it can also influence performance through motivational and cognitive pathways. Employees who perceive a strong cultural fit with their organization tend to align their personal goals with organizational objectives, fostering a shared sense of purpose and clarity in how success is defined (Cable & DeRue, 2002; O'Reilly et al., 1991). In sales roles, this alignment helps salespeople interpret performance standards, understand reward structures, and internalize the firm's priorities for customer relationships and execution. When values are congruent, salespeople are more likely to engage in high-effort, adaptive behaviors, such as persistence, customer orientation, and problem-solving, that directly enhance performance outcomes (Chatman & Barsade, 1995; Jaramillo et al., 2009; Panagopoulos & Avlonitis, 2008). By reinforcing identification with the organization and reducing cognitive strain from conflicting values, overall fit frees cognitive and emotional resources for problem-solving and goal pursuit.

Accordingly, we expect a positive association between overall cultural fit and salesperson performance, formalized as:

H2: Salesperson cultural fit with the organization is positively related to salesperson performance.

Value-Specific Fit and Salesperson Outcomes

Understanding which cultural values matter requires moving beyond a single overall fit score. Research on broad versus narrow predictors shows that value-specific measures often explain incremental variance

beyond global fit because they are closer to the behavioral mechanisms that drive outcomes (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Van Vianen, 2018). In sales organizations, alignment or misalignment on specific values can shape how employees interpret norms, interact with colleagues, and engage with customers.

When misalignment occurs, when employees' values deviate from the organization's priorities on integrity, ethical conduct, or collaboration, role conflict and psychological strain may emerge, increasing the likelihood of exit (Hom et al., 2017). Conversely, when alignment is strong on values such as execution – translating plans into timely, goal-directed action – or customer focus – prioritizing buyer needs and responsiveness – employees are better equipped to meet performance expectations and sustain engagement in demanding sales roles. These mechanisms enhance both stability and performance in demanding sales contexts (Jaramillo et al., 2009; Verbeke et al., 2011).

Building on this reasoning, we assess value-specific person – organization fit across the Big Nine Cultural Values to identify which dimensions most strongly predict turnover and performance, and hypothesize the following:

H3a: Salesperson fit on individual cultural value dimensions explains incremental variance in turnover beyond overall salesperson – organization cultural fit.

H3b: Salesperson fit on individual cultural value dimensions explains incremental variance in performance beyond overall salesperson – organization cultural fit.

To test the distinct effects of overall and value-specific cultural fit, we aligned our theoretical framework and measurement at the individual (salesperson) level. Overall fit represents a global index of value alignment, whereas value-specific fit captures congruence on discrete cultural dimensions. This approach is consistent with multifaceted perspectives of person – organization (P – O) fit and multidimensional models of organizational culture (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Sull et al., 2019a; Van Vianen, 2018). The following section describes the data source, sample, measures, and analytical approach.

Method

Data source and procedure

We collected data from the sales division of a medium-sized U.S. based business-to-business staffing organization to examine how salesperson – organization cultural fit influences turnover and performance outcomes. The sample included both salespeople and sales managers, all of whom carried individual sales quotas and reported their own sales performance. Although managers supervised others, they also maintained personal client accounts and made their own sales calls, which is common in medium-sized business-to-business firms (Rapp et al., 2020). Because the focal constructs concern salesperson – organization cultural fit (rather than salesperson – manager fit), and because all outcomes were individually attributable, analyses were conducted at the individual level with role (salesperson vs. manager) included as a control variable. A multilevel modeling approach was therefore not required for the hypotheses tested.

Following best practices to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), we collected predictor and outcome data at separate points in time. All sales professionals and their managers completed an online cultural values survey. Six months later, turnover and performance data were obtained from the firm's HR and financial systems, ensuring a clear temporal separation between predictors and dependent variables. The project was endorsed by senior leadership, participation was voluntary, and confidentiality was emphasized; there was a 57.2% response rate.

Sample and measures

After removing incomplete surveys, the final dataset was 115 respondents. Analytic Ns vary by analysis due to listwise deletion (correlations $N = 114$; regressions $N = 113$). In the regression sample, 72.2% were salespeople and 27.8% were managers. Role (0 = salesperson, 1 = manager), gender (0 = male, 1 = female; 43.5%), and organizational tenure (ordinal $1 \leq 1$ year to $8 \geq 8$ years: 38.3% ≤ 1 year) were included as controls. Mean tenure = 2.86 years (SD = 1.42), mean age = 31.4 years (SD = 6.7). All respondents, including managers, carried individual quotas and generated their own revenue: analyses are at the individual level (no manager-level nesting). The sample primarily represents early-career sales professionals, as the average tenure was under three years, consistent with typical early-state sales career trajectories in B2B settings (Moncrief et al., 2006).

A summary of all study variables, measurement approaches, data sources, and citations is included in Appendix A (Table A1). Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Appendix Tables A2 and A3. We operationalized cultural values using the Big Nine framework reported in Table 1: execution,

collaboration, customer, integrity, performance, innovation, agility, respect, and diversity (Sull et al., 2019a). The survey used paired comparisons on sliding scales to elicit relative value priorities, following an analytic hierarchy process (Saaty, 1980). This approach yields ratio-scaled priority weights that reflect respondents' true value hierarchies and reduces scale-use bias common in Likert items (Baumgartner & Steenkamp, 2001). Compositional data were analyzed in log-ratio space using the centered log-ratio transform (Aitchison, 1986); full computational details appear in Appendix D.

Overall cultural fit was calculated as the Aitchison distance between each individual's profile and the organizational benchmark (smaller distances = greater alignment). Value-specific fit was computed as the absolute deviation between individual and organizational scores on each value. Turnover was coded 0 = stayed, 1 = left (six months post-survey); performance was measured as average weekly revenue (USD) across the six-month observation period (M = \$8,772, SD = \$3,912). Regression analyses (OLS for revenue, logistic for turnover) were used because predictors were observed indices, and outcomes were objective metrics, consistent with fit-theory modeling recommendations (Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Parry, 1993).

This design provides objective, time-lagged outcomes that mirror how firms monitor sales results, supporting both theoretical and practical relevance.

Analytical approach

We tested hypotheses at the individual level using SPSS. For H1, we estimated a binary logistic regression predicting turnover from Overall Fit (CLR distance), controlling for role, gender, and tenure. For H2, we used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to predict average weekly revenue from Overall Fit with the same controls. For H3a and H3b, we replaced Overall Fit with the nine value-specific misfit variables to test which cultural dimensions predicted turnover (logistic regression) and performance (OLS regression).

Additionally, we conducted preliminary group comparisons using independent-samples t-tests to examine whether sales performance and tenure differed significantly by turnover status or gender. Turnover was unrelated to baseline performance but was associated with shorter tenure among those who left (Appendix C, Table C3). Regression diagnostics indicated acceptable distributional assumptions, no multicollinearity (VIF < 3.0), and good model fit; full details appear in Appendix C. Additional diagnostics are reported in Appendix C (Tables C1–C3).

Results

For H1, overall cultural fit (lower CLR distance = better alignment) significantly predicted turnover. The logistic model was statistically significant, χ^2 (4) = 23.29, $p < .001$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .27$. Employees whose values diverged more from the organizational profile were substantially more likely to leave (B = 1.61, SE = 0.43, $p < .001$, OR = 5.03, 95% CI [2.14, 11.79]). These results support H1, indicating that employees whose values diverged most from the organizational profile were considerably more likely to exit. Practically, poor fit increased the likelihood of turnover by a factor of five, highlighting the high retention cost of cultural misalignment (See Appendix B, Table B1).

For H2, overall fit did not significantly predict objective sales performance (B = 1,964.56, $p = .56$). The overall model fit was modest, $R^2 = .11$, Adjusted $R^2 = .08$, F (4,109) = 3.41, $p = .01$, driven primarily by control variables. Tenure predicted higher revenue (B = 4,704.70, $p = .007$), whereas fit, gender, and role did not (Appendix B, Table B2). Thus, the results do not support H2, suggesting that overall cultural alignment influences retention but not objective revenue outcomes.

Replacing overall fit with the nine value-specific misfit variables improved model fit for turnover (H3a). The model was significant, χ^2 (12) = 31.45, $p = .002$, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .35$. Among the nine cultural values, only integrity significantly predicted turnover (B = 1.31, SE = 0.63, $p = .03$, OR = 3.74, 95% CI [1.08, 12.85]). Greater misalignment on integrity was linked to higher exit risk. Execution ($p = .07$) showed a positive but marginal trend, suggesting partial evidence that low alignment on this value may also increase exit likelihood. This suggests that ethical congruence and operational alignment are key retention levers in sales teams. These findings partially support H3a (Appendix B, Table B3).

For performance (H3b), the model was significant, F (12, 102) = 3.43, $p = .001$, with $R^2 = .13$, Adjusted $R^2 = .10$. However, only respect approached significance (B = 9,274.33, $p = .08$), suggesting that alignment on respect may modestly enhance revenue. No other value-specific variables significantly predicted performance. Collectively, these results indicate that specific cultural values, particularly integrity, play a more decisive role in retention than in immediate sales performance. Thus, the results do not support H3b (Appendix B, Table B4).

Discussion

This study advances understanding of how person – organization (P – O) fit shapes core sales outcomes

(turnover and performance) by differentiating between broad cultural alignment and value-specific alignment. Overall cultural alignment predicted turnover but not performance, indicating that fit affects behavioral and attitudinal outcomes differently. Employees whose value profiles diverged from the organization's culture were substantially more likely to leave, supporting the view that congruence reduces cognitive strain and conflict, strengthening an employee's psychological connection to the firm (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Chatman, 1989). The strong odds ratio and high classification specificity in the turnover model further suggest that misalignment functions as an early signal of exit risk.

In contrast, overall cultural fit did not predict average weekly revenue, suggesting that alignment with broad cultural norms does not necessarily translate to higher sales productivity. This finding supports the premise that value-specific alignment – rather than generalized cultural similarity – better explains performance outcomes in role-specific contexts where behavioral expectations are tightly linked to task execution (Jansen & Kristof-Brown, 2006; Kristof, 1996). Performance in sales depends more on value-specific alignment with behaviors that drive execution. Among the nine cultural values, Integrity emerged as a significant predictor of turnover, suggesting that employees exhibiting greater incongruence with the organization's emphasis on honesty and ethical conduct were more likely to leave. After accounting for role, gender, and tenure, the remaining cultural values were not significant predictors of turnover or performance. This pattern suggests that the effects of cultural alignment are not universal but instead depend on which specific value dimensions are most behaviorally relevant to the outcome examined.

Because the study was conducted within a single organization at a specific point in time, the results should not be interpreted as universally generalizable. Instead, they provide organization-specific evidence demonstrating how firms can quantify cultural alignment and examine its link to turnover and performance outcomes. This context-bound design reflects a growing emphasis on organizational culture as an actionable, diagnostic construct rather than a universal template (Schein, 1985; Sull et al., 2019a). Accordingly, the study's contribution lies in illustrating a replicable analytic approach – not in claiming identical results across all firms.

Theoretical implications

This study makes three key theoretical contributions to person – organization (P – O) fit theory. First, we demonstrate that cultural fit operates through distinct mechanisms for retention and performance. Overall fit predicted turnover but not sales performance, showing that broad cultural alignment helps employees remain with the organization by reducing value conflict and uncertainty, rather than directly increasing productivity. This finding challenges the long-standing assumption that overall fit universally enhances all desirable outcomes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) and advances theory by distinguishing between the stabilizing effects of global alignment and the performance implications of value-specific fit.

Second, we identify which cultural values matter most for specific outcomes – a key advancement over traditional global fit approaches. Integrity emerged as the only value that significantly predicted turnover, indicating that employees whose personal values around honesty and ethical conduct were less aligned with the organization's integrity norm were more likely to leave. This finding moves beyond the generalized "fit reduces turnover" narrative by isolating which specific dimensions of cultural alignment drive retention. In doing so, it refines Person – Organization Fit theory by demonstrating that not all values matter equally; rather, ethical congruence exerts a distinct stabilizing effect on retention in sales contexts, where credibility and trust are foundational to both internal cohesion and customer relationships (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This contribution shifts the discussion from whether fit matters to understanding which values matter and why, offering firms a diagnostic tool for identifying misalignment risks before turnover occurs.

Third, we position cultural fit as a multidimensional construct that links the type of alignment to the type of outcome. Overall fit explains who stays, while value-specific alignment helps explain how employees perform once they are there. This multidimensional perspective refines theoretical precision within P – O fit research and clarifies why previous studies often report inconsistent relationships between fit and performance. By testing both overall and value-specific alignment using objective, time-lagged data, this study offers a more differentiated understanding of how fit operates in performance-driven environments such as sales.

Beyond reaffirming the well-established relationship between person – organization fit and turnover, this study contributes new insight into *why* this relationship occurs and *which* aspects of cultural alignment matter most. By differentiating between global and value-specific alignment, we show that fit is not a uniform construct but a pattern of distinct mechanisms. Integrity alignment emerged as the key stabilizing factor,

indicating that ethical congruence, not mere similarity, anchors retention in sales contexts. These findings move the literature from confirmation of fit effects toward explaining its contingencies and boundary conditions, offering a more diagnostic, value-based view of P – O fit.

Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, our findings offer practical guidance for hiring and employee retention strategies by providing clear direction for sales and organizational leaders seeking to strengthen cultural alignment as a driver of both employee retention and performance. Overall fit served as a strong foundation for stability within the sales force. Salespeople whose cultural profiles closely matched the organization's were less likely to leave, suggesting that shared values reduce ambiguity and reinforce a sense of belonging. This finding is consistent with research showing that alignment between personal and organizational values enhances commitment and satisfaction (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). For managers, assessing cultural alignment should extend beyond the hiring process. Regularly evaluating employee – organization fit can help identify early signs of disengagement, allowing leaders to intervene before turnover occurs.

Integrity was the most consistent predictor of turnover, emphasizing the role of ethical congruence in sustaining trust and long-term commitment (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). When employees perceive gaps between their personal ethics and the organization's standards, they are more likely to disengage and eventually exit. This finding aligns with prior research showing that value alignment around ethics and integrity builds stronger, more enduring employment relationships (Cable & DeRue, 2002). Managers can apply this insight by embedding integrity into performance conversations, training, and recognition systems. Modeling ethical behavior and holding teams accountable to shared standards reinforces cohesion and stability within the sales function.

Respect also approached significance in predicting sales performance, suggesting that alignment on interpersonal and relational values may enhance collaboration and client engagement. This pattern reflects earlier evidence that cooperative, respectful work climates lead to improved customer satisfaction and overall effectiveness (Deshpandé & Farley, 2004; Hartnell et al., 2011). These results indicate that cultural alignment is not a one-time concern but a continuous management responsibility. Strengthening overall fit helps retain salespeople, while reinforcing value-specific alignment – especially around integrity – creates conditions for ethical, sustainable success. By embedding cultural alignment into recruitment, development, and evaluation practices, organizations can transform shared values into measurable performance outcomes.

Limitations and future research

Although this study deepens our understanding of how person – organization (P – O) fit influences turnover and performance, several limitations highlight important opportunities for future research. The first limitation is that the study focused on one medium-sized U.S.–based business-to-business staffing firm. This setting provided a consistent cultural environment for measuring fit, but the results may not apply in the same way to other industries or job types. For instance, organizations that emphasize creativity, teamwork, or service may find that different cultural values matter more for predicting performance or retention. Future research should test these relationships across diverse industries and organizational cultures to see whether values such as integrity consistently relate to outcomes like turnover, or whether their effects depend on the work context (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

The second limitation is that we examined cultural fit only at the individual – organization level. Employees also form value alignment with their immediate teams and managers, which can shape motivation, collaboration, and job satisfaction in ways broader cultural fit cannot capture. Future studies should test how alignment with supervisors or team members interacts with organizational fit. This multilevel approach could reveal whether strong team or manager fit can make up for weaker organizational alignment, or whether alignment across all levels is needed to sustain engagement and performance (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

A third limitation concerns how performance was measured using average weekly revenue, which is a useful and objective measure of short-term results; however, it does not reflect longer-term or relational outcomes such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, or ethical conduct. Including a broader range of performance indicators would help show how cultural alignment contributes to lasting organizational success (Ehrhart, 2006; Hartnell et al., 2011).

Fourth, future research should continue to build on these findings by testing how cultural alignment functions across different contexts, levels, and outcomes. Beyond direct effects, future studies could explore alternative model structures, such as whether performance

mediates the relationship between cultural fit and turnover. For instance, fit may enhance performance, which then reduces turnover. This is a mechanism that warrants formal testing. Researchers might also investigate turnover as a joint function of both fit and performance or use dynamic indicators such as performance growth rate or volatility to capture how misalignment unfolds over time.

Future work should also expand dependent variables to include job satisfaction, engagement, and longer-term performance outcomes that extend beyond short-term revenue. Incorporating moderators such as leadership style, team culture, or psychological traits could clarify the conditions under which cultural alignment strengthens or weakens retention and performance. Longitudinal designs and larger, multi-industry samples would further enhance generalizability and reveal how these relationships evolve over time. By combining multilevel and longitudinal approaches with richer behavioral indicators, future research can build a more dynamic understanding of how cultural alignment develops and affects both individual and organizational outcomes.

Conclusion

This study advances Person – Organization Fit theory by distinguishing between the stabilizing effects of overall cultural alignment and the outcome-specific effects of value-based fit. Integrity misfit, in particular, emerged as a critical predictor of turnover, demonstrating that ethical alignment is central to workforce stability. By operationalizing cultural alignment through the Big Nine values, this research provides a replicable framework for examining how specific cultural dimensions relate to performance and retention outcomes.

Taken together, the findings refine P – O Fit theory by showing that fit yields different functional outcomes depending on its level of analysis: overall alignment fosters stability, whereas congruence on specific values shapes behavioral engagement. This differentiated view expands theoretical precision and offers a practical diagnostic tool for organizations. By quantifying alignment on both global and value-specific dimensions, firms can identify early signs of misfit, target interventions to reinforce ethical consistency, and build more stable, high-integrity salesforces.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability statement

Data is available upon request.

References

Aitchison, J. (1986). *The statistical analysis of compositional data*. Chapman & Hall.

Barnes, J. W., Jackson, D. W., Hutt, M. D., & Kumar, A. (2006). The role of culture strength in shaping sales force outcomes. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *26*(3), 255–270. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134260301

Baumgartner, H., & Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M. (2001). Response styles in marketing research: A cross-national investigation. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *38*(2), 143–156. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.38.2.143.18840

Boyce, A. S., Nieminen, L. R. G., Gillespie, M. A., Ryan, A. M., & Denison, D. R. (2015). Which comes first, organizational culture or performance? A longitudinal study of causal priority with automobile dealerships. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *36*(3), 339–359. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1985

Cable, D. M., & DeRue, D. S. (2002). The convergent and discriminant validity of subjective fit perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(5), 875–884. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.5.875

Chatman, J. A. (1989). Improving interactional organizational research: A model of person-organization fit. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*(3), 333–349. https://doi.org/10.2307/258171

Chatman, J. A., & Barsade, S. G. (1995). Personality, organizational culture, and cooperation: Evidence from a business simulation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*(3), 423–443. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393792

Churchill, G. A., Ford, N. M., Hartley, S. W., & Walker, O. C. (1985). The determinants of salesperson performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *22*(2), 103–118. https://doi.org/10.2307/3151357

Deshpandé, R., & Farley, J. U. (2004). Organizational culture, market orientation, innovativeness, and firm performance: An international research odyssey. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *21*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2003.04.002

Deshpandé, R., & Webster, F. E. (1989). Organizational culture and marketing: Defining the research agenda. *Journal of Marketing*, *53*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298905300102

Dugan, R., Ortiz Ubal, V., & Scott, M. L. (2022). Sales well-being: A salesperson-focused framework for individual, organizational, and societal well-being. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *43*(1), 65–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2022.2093733

Edwards, J. R. (2008). Person-environment fit in organizations: An assessment of theoretical progress. *Academy of Management Annals*, *2*(1), 167–230. https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520802211503

Edwards, J. R., & Parry, M. E. (1993). On the use of polynomial regression equations as an alternative to difference scores in organizational research. *Academy of Management*

Journal, *36*(6), 1577–1613. https://www.jstor.org/stable/256822

Ehrhart, K. H. (2006). Job characteristic beliefs and personality as antecedents of subjective person-job fit. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, *21*(2), 193–226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-006-9025-6

Funds, O. (2025, June 2). *Employee turnover costs vs. retention investments*. https://www.onrampfunds.com/resources/employee-turnover-costs-vs-retention-investments

Gustafson, B. M., Pomirleanu, N., & John-Mariadoss, B. (2018). A review of climate and culture research in selling and sales management. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *38*(1), 144–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2018.1426992

Hartnell, C. A., Ou, A. Y., & Kinicki, A. (2011). Organizational culture and organizational effectiveness: A meta-analytic investigation of the competing values framework's theoretical suppositions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *96*(4), 677–694. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021987

Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values* (Vol. 5). Sage.

Hom, P. W., Lee, T. W., Shaw, J. D., & Hausknecht, J. P. (2017). One hundred years of employee turnover theory and research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(3), 530–545. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000103

Jansen, K. J., & Kristof-Brown, A. L. (2006). Toward a multidimensional theory of person-environment fit. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, *18*(2), 193–212. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40604405

Jaramillo, F., Mulki, J. P., & Boles, J. S. (2009). Workplace stressors, job attitude, and job behaviors: Is interpersonal conflict the missing link? *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *29*(3), 339–356. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134310310

Kristof, A. L. (1996). Person-organization fit: An integrative review of its conceptualizations, measurement, and implications. *Personnel Psychology*, *49*(1), 1–49. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1996.tb01790.x

Kristof-Brown, A. L., & Guay, R. P. (2011). Person-environment fit. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *Apa handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 3–50). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/12171-001

Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individual's fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology*, *58*(2), 281–342. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00672.x

Lopez, T., & McMillan-Capehart, A. (2009). Elements of salesperson control: An organization theory perspective. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *24*(2), 98–107. https://doi.org/10.1108/08858620910931712

Lu, R., Chatman, J., Goldberg, A., & Srivastava, S. (2023). Two-sided cultural fit: The differing behavioral consequences of cultural congruence based on values versus perceptions. *Organization Science*, *35*(1), 71–91. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2023.1659

Lussier, B., Chaker, N. N., Clark, M. W., & Bolander, W. (2025). Mental health and well-being in business-to-business markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *126*, A3–A12. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2025.02.019

Lussier, B., Hartmann, N. N., & Bolander, W. (2021). Curbing the undesirable effects of emotional exhaustion on ethical behaviors and performance: A salesperson-manager dyadic approach. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *169*(4), 747–766. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04271-z

Martin, C. A., & Bush A. J. (2003). The potential influence of organizational and personal variables on customer-oriented selling. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *18*(2), 114–132. https://doi.org/10.1108/08858620310463051

Moncrief, W. C., Marshall, G. W., & Lassk, F. G. (2006). A contemporary taxonomy of sales positions. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *26*(1), 55–65. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134260105

Myer, A. T., Thoroughgood, C. N., & Mohammed, S. (2016). Complementary or competing climates? Examining the interactive effect of service and ethical climates on company-level financial performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *101*(8), 1178–1190. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000119

Oh, I.-S., Guay, R. P., Kim, K., Harold, C. M., Lee, J.-H., Heo, C. G., & Shin, K.-H. (2014). Fit happens globally: A meta-analytic comparison of the relationships of person-environment fit dimensions with work attitudes and performance across East Asia, Europe, and North America. *Personnel Psychology*, *67*(1), 99–152. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12026

O'Reilly, C. A., Chatman, J., & Caldwell, D. F. (1991). People and organizational culture: A profile comparison approach to assessing person-organization fit. *Academy of Management Journal*, *34*(3), 487–516. https://doi.org/10.2307/256404

Panagopoulos, N. G., & Avlonitis, G. J. (2008). Sales force control systems: A review of measurement practices and proposed scale refinements. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *28*(4), 365–385. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134280403

Pappas, A., Schrock, W., Samaraweera, M., & Bolander, W. (2023). A competitive path to cohesion: Multilevel effects of competitiveness in the sales force. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *43*(3), 222–240. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2023.2170237

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879–903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Quinn, R. E., & Rohrbaugh, J. (1983). A spatial model of effectiveness criteria: Toward a competing values approach to organizational analysis. *Management Science*, *29*(3), 363–377. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.29.3.363

Rapp, A. A., Petersen, J. A., Hughes, D. E., & Ogilvie, J. L. (2020). When time is sales: The impact of sales manager time allocation decisions on sales team performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *40*(2), 132–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2020.1717961

Rutherford, B. N., Wei, Y., Park, J., & Hur, W. M. (2012). Increasing job performance and reducing turnover: An examination of female Chinese salespeople. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *20*(4), 423–436. https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679200405

Saaty, T. L. (1980). *The analytic hierarchy process: Planning, priority setting, resource allocation*. McGraw-Hill International.

Schein, E. H. (1985). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Schwepker, C. H., & Schultz, R. J. (2015). Influence of the ethical servant leader and ethical climate on customer value-enhancing sales performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *35*(2), 93–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2015.1010537

Stratus, H. R. (2023, March 21). *Everything you need to know about employee turnover*. https://stratus.hr/resources/employee-turnover

Sull, D., Sull, C., & Chamberlain, A. (2019). Measuring culture in leading companies. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/measuring-culture-in-leading-companies

Sull, D., Turconi, S., & Sull, C. (2020, July 21). When it comes to culture, does your company walk the talk? *MIT Sloan Management Review*. https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/when-it-comes-to-culture-does-your-company-walk-the-talk/

Van Vianen, A. E. M. (2018). Person-environment fit: A review of its basic tenets. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology & Organizational Behavior*, *5*(1), 75–101. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104702

Verbeke, W., Dietz, B., & Verwaal, E. (2011). Drivers of sales performance: A contemporary meta-analysis. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *39*(3), 407–428. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-010-0211-8

Verquer, M. L., Beehr, T. A., & Wagner, S. H. (2003). A meta-analysis of relations between person-organization fit and work attitudes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *63*(3), 473–489. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0001-8791(02)00036-2