

Integrating the Theory of Work Adjustment and Attachment Theory to Predict Job Turnover Intentions

Journal of Career Development
2015, Vol. 42(3) 215-228

© Curators of the University
of Missouri 2014

Reprints and permission:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/0894845314545169

jcd.sagepub.com



Jason J. Dahling¹ and Ursula A. Librizzi¹

Abstract

In this study, we integrated research on the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA) and Attachment Theory to test a model predicting turnover intentions among 131 working adults in a variety of industries. Consistent with TWA, the results revealed that needs–supplies (N-S) fit was positively related to job satisfaction and that job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between N-S fit and turnover intentions from the current job. Anxious and avoidant attachment did not have direct effects on TWA constructs, but the relationship between fit perceptions and job satisfaction was moderated by avoidant attachment such that the relationship was weaker for highly avoidant employees. We discuss the implications of these results for future vocational research on work adjustment and the effects of attachment dynamics in the workplace.

Keywords

person–job fit, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, attachment styles

Understanding how employees adjust to work contexts and become satisfied with their work is of paramount importance to vocational psychologists. Work adjustment is typically studied through the lens of the Minnesota Theory of Work Adjustment (TWA; Dawis, 2005; Dawis, England, & Lofquist, 1964), which explains how person–environment correspondence contributes to job satisfaction and retention with an organization. Fifty years have passed since the first comprehensive description of TWA (Dawis et al., 1964), and researchers have applied the theory to studying a variety of work contexts and challenges, including fit perceptions among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees facing discrimination (Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005; Velez & Moradi, 2012), retirees struggling with part-time work (Harper & Shoffner, 2004), and career challenges for Latino immigrants (Eggerth & Flynn, 2012).

¹ Department of Psychology, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA

Corresponding Author:

Jason J. Dahling, Department of Psychology, The College of New Jersey, 2000 Pennington Rd, Ewing, NJ 08628, USA.
Email: dahling@tcnj.edu

Over time, the TWA predictive model has expanded to account for a variety of individual differences and other factors that have complementary effects on satisfaction and retention (Dawis, 2005). In this study, we integrate research on attachment theory with TWA to test a model in which insecure attachment styles have direct effects, and interactive effects with fit perceptions, on job satisfaction and turnover intentions (thoughts and plans about quitting one's job; Bozeman & Perrewé, 2001). While researchers have pointed out the potential utility of combining these theories (Renfro-Michel, Burlew, & Robert, 2009), no empirical research to date has tested how they operate in conjunction to predict turnover intentions. This is an important oversight, given that both theories are fundamentally concerned with how people adjust and form stable, enduring relationships. The integrative model that we test consequently presents a richer explanation of why employees differ in their ability to become satisfied with a work arrangement and decide to stay.

TWA and Turnover Intentions

TWA describes the relationship of the individual to his or her work environment with the goal of predicting job retention. The theory was developed in the early 1960s as an organizing framework for the career-related constructs that were studied by the Work Adjustment Project at the University of Minnesota (Dawis, 2005). As an extension of person–environment correspondence theory, it focuses on how two different types of person–job fit, namely needs–supplies (N-S) fit and abilities–demands fit, ultimately predict job tenure (Dawis, 2002). *Abilities–demands fit* describes the correspondence between the knowledge and skills of the individual and the demands of the job, whereas *N-S fit* describes the correspondence between the needs and values of the individual and the reinforcers that the job can supply (Dawis, 2005). Abilities–demands fit is determined by the organization, and it predicts how satisfactory the organization finds the employee. In contrast, N-S fit is determined by the individual employee, and it predicts the level of satisfaction that the employee feels toward his or her job. Employee satisfaction and satisfactoriness, in turn, predict tenure because satisfied employees choose to stay and satisfactory employees are retained by their employers. Thus, satisfaction and satisfactoriness ultimately mediate relationships between the fit types and retention with an organization (Dawis, 2005).

TWA remains an influential person–environment fit theory in psychology, and as Swanson and Schneider (2013) summarized, it offers specific, valuable recommendations for helping clients who struggle with job dissatisfaction and quitting decisions. The theory offers active and reactive strategies that clients might adopt to improve their work circumstances (Dawis, 2005), and it has proven useful for helping a diversity of client types ranging from teenagers entering the workforce to older adults transitioning into retirement (Swanson & Schneider, 2013). We focused on TWA in this study because it is the most prominent vocational theory that is specifically concerned with predicting employee retention/turnover. Like TWA, attachment theory is similarly concerned with predicting “retention” and “turnover” in the sense of maintaining or abandoning relational and collective connections. Our goal in this study was to provide a strong test that studying attachment styles would contribute to our understanding of turnover processes above and beyond existing vocational theories that predict this same criterion, so it was clear to us that we needed to examine attachment in the context of TWA to determine whether attachment research offers additional utility for vocational counselors.

Given our interest in job satisfaction and employees' volitional intentions to quit or remain with an organization, we focus exclusively on N-S fit in this study. As proposed by TWA, N-S fit is well established as a predictor of job satisfaction and turnover intentions. For example, Cable and DeRue (2002) found that employees were more likely to invest effort, develop satisfaction, and remain with their organizations if they felt that their needs were fulfilled by their jobs. Indeed, many studies have found that N-S fit is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to turnover intentions

(e.g., Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Wang, Zhan, Mccune, & Truxillo, 2011). We expect to replicate these findings consistent with the basic predictive model of TWA (Dawis, 2005):

Hypothesis 1: Job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between perceived N-S fit perceptions and turnover intentions, yielding a negative, indirect effect from N-S fit perceptions to turnover intentions.

The basic predictive model of TWA was ultimately expanded to account for “other factors” (Dawis, 2005, p. 8) beyond person–environment correspondence that have separate effects on satisfaction and tenure. Accordingly, past research has examined many individual differences that operate in conjunction with TWA, such as vocational interests (Feij, Van Der Velde, Taris, & Taris, 1999), as predictors of job satisfaction. In this study, we examine interpersonal attachment orientations as another predictor within TWA. As elaborated subsequently, attachment theory describes how secure versus insecure interpersonal attachments affect the quality of a person’s relationships across the lifespan (Bowlby, 1988). Attachments are directly concerned with a person’s willingness to commit to relationships and groups, and TWA is similarly concerned with explaining why employees choose to develop a working relationship with an employer and remain with an organization. Thus, examining attachment styles in conjunction with processes described in TWA may give greater insight as to why people become satisfied and stay at an organization beyond the fact that they perceive good fit.

Attachment Style and Work Adjustment

Attachments are close, emotional relationships that can be secure or insecure based on the quality of relationship interactions (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment theory (Ainsworth, Behar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969) is a general theory of social and emotional development that explains the close relationships an individual has and experiences, their psychological foundations, and the relationship-based consequences for that individual. Attachment styles are active across the lifespan and are most frequently manifested when a person seeks support, affection, or protection from others (Fraleay, Roisman, Booth-LaForce, Owen, & Holland, 2013).

Historically, attachment theory has recognized three types of adult attachment styles. A *securely attached* adult maintains appropriate boundaries, understands compromise, and is able to control responses to stressful events (Buelow, Lyddon, & Johnson, 2002). Securely attached adults form trusting, lasting relationships, are comfortable with others, and seek support when necessary. In contrast, an *anxious-attached* adult has an excessive need for approval from others and fears rejection, whereas an *avoidant-attached* adult fears interpersonal closeness or dependence and suppresses any need for attachment (Fraleay, Waller, & Brennen, 2000). Older research on attachment treated these distinctions as categories, but more recent scholarship focuses on continuous dimensions of anxious and avoidant attachment to assess greater variability in attachment tendencies (e.g., Fraleay et al., 2000). Individuals who have low scores on both the avoidant and anxious attachment dimensions are thought to be securely attached.

To date, most attachment research has focused on the implications of adult attachment for romantic relationships and family dynamics (e.g., Shaver & Mikulincer, 2012). However, recent research has considered how attachment styles affect adults in other interpersonal contexts, including the workplace (Gianakos, 2013; Harms, 2011; Little, Nelson, Wallace, & Johnson, 2011; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007; Richards & Schat, 2011; Van Vianen, Feij, Krausz, & Taris, 2003; Wright & Perrone, 2008). For example, Harms (2011) summarized how attachment styles impact workplace processes such as leadership emergence and effectiveness, trust development among coworkers, job attitudes and work–family balance, and the performance of discretionary helping behaviors and counterproductive work behaviors. Some mixed evidence also suggests that attachment styles predict withdrawal and

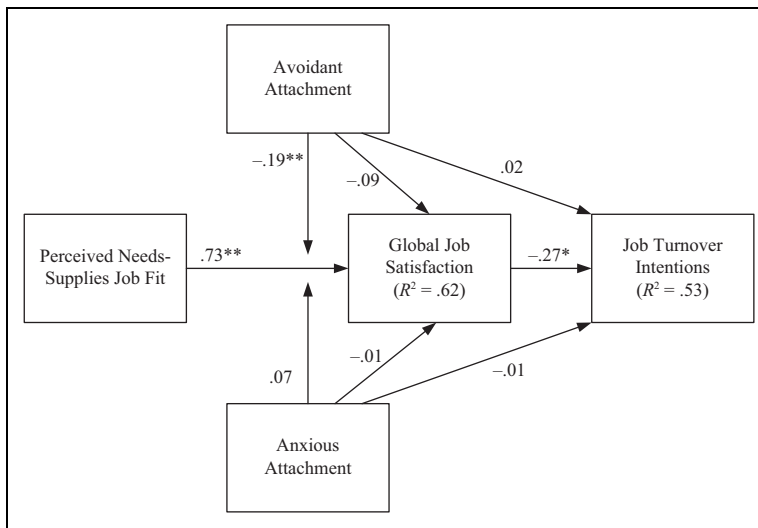


Figure 1. Results of the path analysis of the hypothesized model integrating the theory of work adjustment (TWA) with attachment theory.

Note. The direct path from perceived needs-supplies job fit to job turnover intentions is omitted for clarity ($\beta = -.50, p < .01$).

** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

turnover in the workplace; Richards and Schat (2011) found that anxious and avoidant attachment predicted turnover intentions, but Van Vianen, Feij, Krausz, and Taris (2003) found that attachment styles were unrelated to actual voluntary job changes.

As Renfro-Michel et al. (2009) noted, there is good reason to expect that attachment styles have important implications for work adjustment. They proposed that attachment styles are relevant to work adjustment processes because employee interpersonal relationships can promote or hinder work outcomes. To this end, they provided cases that illustrate how individuals with insecure attachments might struggle with satisfaction and success in a particular job. However, there is no empirical research that tests how attachment styles interact with processes in TWA.

To summarize, attachment theory explains the ways in which people interpret person–environment interactions. An individual’s attachment style is a mental guide that coordinates cognitions, goals, and behavior in interpersonal settings, such as the workplace (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2012). Secure attachment significantly relates to high overall job satisfaction (e.g., Krausz, Bizman, & Braslarsky, 2001); secure individuals can freely explore work environments and reap opportunities that they offer, and therefore they are more satisfied with work and less likely to quit than insecurely attached individuals (e.g., Hazan & Shaver, 1990; Richards & Schat, 2011). These relationships occur because attachment theory posits that securely attached individuals derive more satisfaction from close, social connections and are more comfortable with maintaining these connections.

Note that we test these ideas with respect to global, or overall, job satisfaction, rather than focusing on particular facets of job satisfaction that are specific to relationships (e.g., satisfaction with coworkers or one’s supervisor). We focused on global job satisfaction in our model (Figure 1) for several reasons. First, TWA posits that N-S fit shapes global job satisfaction, so focusing only on particular facets of satisfaction would deviate from established theory and findings on TWA (Dawis, 2005). Second, given our interest in evaluating the utility of attachment style for vocational research beyond the known effects explained by TWA, we felt that focusing only on relationship facets of job satisfaction would “stack the deck” in favor of supportive findings concerning attachment theory. Third, past

research demonstrates that attachment style does relate to overall satisfaction (e.g., Krausz et al., 2001) and facets of satisfaction that are not relationship-specific, such as job security and advancement opportunities (Hazan & Shaver, 1990). Thus, based on attachment theory, we hypothesize the following main effects of attachment style on global job satisfaction and turnover intentions:

Hypothesis 2a: Anxious attachment will be negatively related to global job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2b: Anxious attachment will be positively related to turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 2c: Avoidant attachment will be negatively related to global job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2d: Avoidant attachment will be positively related to turnover intentions.

As shown in Figure 1, Hypotheses 2a–d imply an indirect effect from attachment styles to turnover intentions via job satisfaction. Anxious and avoidant attachment may contribute to greater turnover intentions in part because these attachment styles are associated with lower satisfaction, consistent with attachment theory and past findings (e.g., Richards & Schat, 2011).

Hypothesis 3a: The relationship between anxious attachment and turnover intentions is partially mediated by global job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3b: The relationship between avoidant attachment and turnover intentions is partially mediated by global job satisfaction.

Beyond these direct and indirect effects, we propose that attachment styles will also moderate the relationship between fit perceptions and job satisfaction. Attachment theory suggests that insecurely attached adults are likely to derive less satisfaction from jobs, even when those jobs do a good job of satisfying their needs. Specifically, anxious attachment should weaken the relationship between fit perceptions and satisfaction because anxiously attached adults fear rejection and experience negative emotions, such as worry, when reflecting on their commitments. Similarly, avoidant attachment should weaken the relationship between fit perceptions and satisfaction because avoidant-attached adults are resistant to becoming connected to other people or entities (Fraley et al., 2000).

Hypothesis 4a: Anxious attachment will moderate the relationship between N-S fit and global job satisfaction. Specifically, this relationship will be weaker when anxious attachment is high.

Hypothesis 4b: Avoidant attachment will moderate the relationship between N-S fit and global job satisfaction. Specifically, this relationship will be weaker when anxious attachment is high.

Method

Participants

We recruited 150 working adults in the United States to participate in this study. As detailed in the Procedure section, we ultimately dropped 19 responses for a final sample of 131 respondents collected over a 2-day period. This final sample was 54.2% male and 7.6% Hispanic or Latino/a. With respect to race, the sample was 78.6% Caucasian, 9.9% African American, 6.9% Asian American, 3.8% American Indian or Native Alaskan, and 0.8% members of other racial or ethnic groups. The mean age of participants was 34.1 years old ($SD = 10.64$).

Participants reported a diversity of work arrangements; 77.9% of the sample worked full time in salaried jobs and 27.5% had supervisory responsibilities. All participants held only one job. The mean tenure was 5.03 years ($SD = 5.26$) and they worked an average of 39.37 hr per week ($SD = 10.82$). The most commonly selected industry categories for their current jobs included educational services (13.7%); professional, scientific, and technical services (13.7%); and retail trade (11.5%).

Measures

All of the following measures were presented in a fully randomized sequence to participants to minimize the likelihood of order effect biases.

Perceived N-S fit. Perceived fit was measured using the 3-item measure developed by Cable and DeRue (2002). Sample items include “The job that I currently hold gives me just about everything that I want from a job” and “The attributes that I look for in a job are fulfilled very well by my present job.” Responses were made on a 7-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* such that higher scores indicate greater fit perceptions. Past research indicates that the measure is predictive of outcomes such as organizational identification, job satisfaction, and occupational commitment (Cable & DeRue, 2002), and discriminant from other types of fit perceptions (Hinkle & Choi, 2009). Hinkle and Choi reported that $\alpha = .96$; in this study, $\alpha = .94$.

Job satisfaction. Satisfaction was measured with Spector’s (1985) 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS). The JSS measures satisfaction with respect to multiple facets of the job, including pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, coworker relationships, communication, and the nature of the work, yet it can be evaluated as an overall scale to measure aggregate satisfaction. Sample questions include, “I like doing the things I do at work” and “My job is enjoyable.” Responses were made on a 6-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 6 = *strongly agree*; higher scores indicate greater job satisfaction. The JSS shows good reliability and convergent validity with other measures of job satisfaction, such as the Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Spector, 1985). The JSS has been used in dozens of past studies and is predictive of many other attitudes and behaviors, such as absenteeism, turnover intentions, and organizational commitment (Spector, 1997). Spector (1997) reported that $\alpha = .91$ for the full measure across multiple samples; in this study, $\alpha = .95$.

Turnover intentions. We measured thoughts and plans about quitting using Bozeman and Perrewé’s (2001) 5-item measure of turnover cognitions. Sample items include “I will probably look for a new job in the near future” and “I do not intend to quit my job” (reverse-scored). Responses were made on a 5-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*; higher scores indicate greater intentions to quit. This measure has been used in several studies of turnover intentions and behavior, including vocational studies (e.g., Dahling & Thompson, 2013), where it is related to attitudes such as job and career satisfaction. Dahling and Thompson reported that $\alpha = .91$; and in this study, $\alpha = .93$.

Anxious and avoidant attachment. Individual differences in attachment-related anxiety and avoidance were measured with the 36-item Experiences in Close Relationships–Revised (ECR-R; Fraley et al., 2000) questionnaire. The ECR-R includes two separate 18-item measures of general anxious attachment and avoidant attachment. Sample items include “I worry a lot about my relationships” (anxious) and “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down” (avoidance). Participants were asked to respond to the questions with respect to how they generally experience interpersonal relationships. Responses were made on a 7-point scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* such that higher scores indicate greater attachment anxiety and avoidance, and lower scores indicate greater attachment security. Evaluations of the ECR-R indicate that the measure shows a stable factor structure, good internal consistency, and very high test–retest reliability (Sibley & Liu, 2004). The measure predicts many attachment-related outcomes; for example, longitudinal research indicates that ECR-R scores strongly predict daily emotional experiences in social interactions (Sibley, Fischer, & Liu, 2005). In this study, $\alpha = .96$ for anxious and $\alpha = .95$ for avoidant attachment.

Procedure

Participants were recruited from an online participant pool called Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk; <http://www.mturk.com>), a large community of over 500,000 “workers” who complete compensated, short tasks for business or research purposes. Workers on MTurk search for and freely select tasks that interest them; our study was described as a general survey of jobs and individual differences to avoid disproportionately recruiting participants with strong positive or negative job attitudes. We compensated participants US\$0.75 for a complete response, which is within the typical range of payments offered for scholarly research on MTurk (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Research on the quality of data collected from MTurk shows that the responses are reliable and yield results parallel to those found with samples recruited in person, provided that adequate steps are taken to screen responses (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012). Following best practices (e.g., Dahling, Melloy, & Thompson, 2013), we screened participants on the basis of residency in the United States and comfort with the English language, their past approval rate for work submitted on MTurk, their employment status, their overall time to complete the survey, and their attentiveness to the survey with four embedded quality-control check questions (e.g., “Please select ‘strongly disagree’ as the answer to this question”). We ultimately dropped 19 of the original 150 cases based on failure to meet one or more of these requirements, leaving 131 responses for hypothesis testing (87.33% of the original sample).

Results

Comparison of Part- and Full-Time Workers

Because 22.1% of the sample worked in part-time roles, we first conducted a series of independent means *t*-tests to determine if these participants differed from the full-time participants with respect to any of the attachment or TWA variables. Results indicated that the two groups of participants did not significantly differ with respect to anxious attachment ($t = -1.39, ns$), avoidant attachment ($t = 0.40, ns$), N-S fit ($t = 0.61, ns$), global job satisfaction ($t = 0.96, ns$), or turnover cognitions ($t = -0.42, ns$). Consequently, we combined both groups and tested the model on all participants regardless of part- or full-time work status.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs)

We next conducted a CFA to demonstrate that our self-report measures were assessing separate constructs as intended (Kline, 2011). Due to the large number of items in the anxious attachment and avoidant attachment questionnaires (18 items each), we formed parcels of 3 items each to use in the CFA (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999). Parceling is a strategy of partial disaggregation that combines small sets of items into a single indicator (Williams & O’Boyle, 2008). Thus, the anxious and avoidant attachment constructs each had six parcels that served as their indicators. We also formed nine parcels for the JSS based on its previously identified facet subscales (Spector, 1985), consistent with best practices recommended by Williams and O’Boyle (2008). The individual items for the N-S fit and turnover cognition scales served as their indicators.

The hypothesized five-factor model showed good fit to the data without allowing any residual covariances between any items, $\chi^2_{(367)} = 696.08, p < .001$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.91; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.07. However, we tested two plausible, alternative models to ascertain if our hypothesized model fit the data best. Alternative Model #1 specified that both the anxious and avoidant attachment parcels should load on a single factor reflecting a global insecure attachment construct. Results indicated that this alternative fit the data significantly worse than the hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 445.02, p < .001$.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Scale Scores.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	—	—	—								
2. Age	34.11	10.64	.03	—							
3. Work status	—	—	.14	-.18*	—						
4. Tenure (months)	60.34	63.11	-.15	.44**	-.27**	—					
5. Anxious attachment	2.77	1.40	.08	-.14	.12	-.10	—				
6. Avoidant attachment	2.63	1.04	-.05	.05	-.04	.06	.54**	—			
7. Need-supplies fit	4.51	1.59	-.08	.03	-.06	.14	-.18*	-.27**	—		
8. Job satisfaction	3.93	0.90	-.05	-.10	-.08	.04	-.19*	-.30**	.76**	—	
9. Turnover intentions	2.74	1.20	.00	-.12	.04	-.16	.14	.23**	-.71**	-.65**	—

Note. For gender, 1 = *male* and 2 = *female*; for work status, 1 = *full-time* and 2 = *part-time*.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Alternative Model #2 specified that the N-S fit and job satisfaction indicators should load on the same construct, which we tested in light of the strong correlation between these two scales (see Table 1). This second alternative also did not fit the data as well as the hypothesized measurement model, $\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 106.15, p < .001$.

We then conducted a third alternative CFA that was identical to the hypothesized model, but that included a latent method factor to diagnose the extent to which common method variance (CMV) may have biased the results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). This procedure involves conducting a CFA in which all items are fixed as indicators of both (1) their hypothesized latent constructs and (2) a single latent method factor. Loadings on the method factor were held to be equivalent to allow the model to identify (Podsakoff et al., 2003), and the method factor was fixed to be unrelated to the construct factors. The amount of variance attributable to the measurement method was estimated by averaging the squared standardized loadings of the items on the method factor (Facon, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995). Results indicated that this alternative model did not fit the data better than the hypothesized model, $\Delta\chi^2_{(2)} = 3.14, ns$, and that the method factor only accounted for 1.68% of the variability in responses. Thus, CMV posed minimal threat to our results and the hypothesized measurement model was supported relative to plausible alternatives.

Hypothesis Tests

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and correlations between scale scores. As shown in the table, the TWA constructs (fit, satisfaction, and turnover intentions) were strongly correlated. Anxious and avoidant attachment were both negatively correlated with fit perceptions and job satisfaction, and avoidant attachment was positively correlated with turnover intentions, consistent with expectations.

We tested our hypotheses using a path analysis (Kline, 2011) in MPlus 7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012). We determined that our sample size was adequate for testing hypotheses in path analysis by following procedures described by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003), given that we expected moderate effect sizes (.15), desired statistical power of .80, and statistical significance of $p < .05$. The model tested is depicted in Figure 1. Overall, the hypothesized model showed very good fit to the data (Kline, 2011; $\chi^2_{(2)} = 0.08, ns$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.01; SRMR = 0.01). Hypothesis 1 stated that job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between N-S fit and turnover intentions, consistent with established relationships posited by TWA. Figure 1 shows that fit perceptions were positively related to satisfaction and that satisfaction was negatively related to turnover intentions. We evaluated the indirect effect from fit to turnover intentions with bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals (CIs) around the estimated effect ($N = 5,000$ samples) as recommended by Shrout and Bolger (2002); unlike the

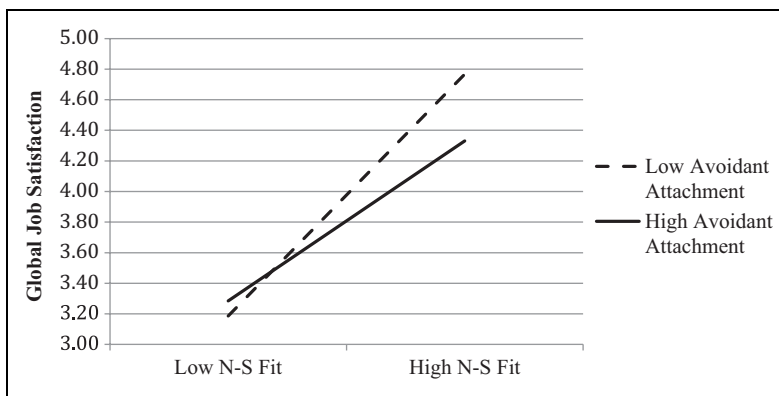


Figure 2. Interaction of perceived needs-supplies fit and avoidant attachment on job satisfaction.
 Note. N-S fit = perceived needs-supplies job fit.

Sobel test, this method of testing mediation does not assume that the indirect effect is normally distributed. Results indicated that satisfaction partially mediated the relationship as expected ($ab = -0.15$, 95% CI: $[-0.27, -0.03]$), with perceived fit retaining a significant direct effect on turnover intentions ($\beta = -.50$, $p < .01$; note that this direct effect is not depicted in Figure 1 for clarity). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported consistent with TWA.

Hypotheses 2a through 2d posited direct effects of anxious and avoidant attachment on both job satisfaction and turnover intentions. On a bivariate level, most of these hypotheses were supported; Table 1 indicates that anxious attachment was correlated with satisfaction (Hypothesis 2a), and avoidant attachment was correlated with both satisfaction (Hypothesis 2c) and turnover intentions (Hypothesis 2d). However, in the context of the broader path model shown in Figure 1, none of these direct paths retained significance due to the stronger effects of the TWA constructs upon each other. Consequently, Hypotheses 2a–2d were not supported when tested with path analysis. Hypotheses 3a and 3b stated that anxious and avoidant attachment would have indirect effects on turnover intentions via lower job satisfaction. However, these hypotheses were also unsupported given the nonsignificant direct effects of attachment styles on job satisfaction; because the attachment predictors did not relate to the mediator (satisfaction), we could not test the hypothesized indirect effects.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b stated that anxious and avoidant attachment, respectively, would moderate the relationship between perceived fit and job satisfaction. As shown in Figure 1, only avoidant attachment interacted with fit to influence job satisfaction ($\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .01$). Figure 2 illustrates the shape of this interaction, which shows the relationship between perceived fit and job satisfaction is weaker when avoidant attachment is high (simple slope $t = 7.29$, $p < .001$) than when avoidant attachment is low ($t = 11.11$, $p < .001$). Thus, while Hypothesis 4a was unsupported, we found support for Hypothesis 4b.

Finally, we reanalyzed the model shown in Figure 1 using only the coworker facet of the Job Satisfaction Scale, which concerns relationships with colleagues, as a supplemental analysis. We did not find any additional support for our hypotheses concerning attachment style in this model. Thus, there is no evidence that our use of a global job satisfaction variable, rather than a relationship-specific satisfaction variable, contributed to our unsupported hypotheses.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to integrate TWA and attachment theory to examine the direct and interactive effects of attachment styles on work adjustment. Results were fully supportive of TWA,

revealing that job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between perceived N-S job fit and turnover intentions. Mixed support was found for the effects of attachment styles; attachment styles were correlated with most TWA constructs, but failed to exhibit significant, direct effects when tested in a path analysis. However, avoidant attachment did moderate the relationship between fit and job satisfaction, indicating that avoidant individuals are more dissatisfied with their organizations even when they perceive high fit with their jobs. This interaction likely occurs because employees with an avoidant attachment are reluctant to commit to, and become satisfied with, other people or groups, even when those people or groups are capable of fulfilling the employees' needs (Fraleley et al., 2000).

An important contribution of this study is that we examined the effects of TWA and attachment variables in combination. Previous research has documented that attachment styles are related to job satisfaction and turnover intentions (e.g., Krausz et al., 2001; Richards & Schat, 2011), which we replicated on a bivariate level. However, these effects cease to be significant when examined in the context of a broader model that includes effects posited by TWA. Although further replication is needed, one potential implication of our findings is that previous results concerning attachment style and job attitudes may be overstated; attachment styles had far weaker impacts when other theoretical antecedents, like fit perceptions, were taken into account.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Our study contributes to an emerging interest in examining attachment styles in the workplace (e.g., Gianakos, 2013; Harms, 2011; Wright & Perrone, 2008). This body of research clearly indicates that insecurely attached adults face a variety of challenges related to work adjustment (Renfro-Michel et al., 2009), and additional research is needed to identify strategies to help managers and vocational counselors work with employees who are insecurely attached.

Additional research is needed to examine whether attachment style affects the abilities-demands fit portion of TWA. The expanded model of TWA posits that individual differences have effects on both satisfaction and satisfactoriness, and it may be the case that insecurely attached individuals are found to be less satisfactory by their employers because of their dysfunctional tendencies (Harms, 2011). Drawing on manager ratings of satisfactoriness and firing intentions in future research would allow for a fuller test of how attachment impacts TWA processes.

Pending successful replication, the results from our study also have important practical implications. Within organizations, measuring attachment styles can help managers recognize their subordinates' different needs and tailor their leadership style accordingly. Knowledge of attachment is also useful to help forecast retention and performance, especially on tasks that require interpersonal coordination (Harms, 2011). Further, given the enormous cost of turnover to organizations (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012), we see value in additional research examining the predictive validity of insecure attachment as a driver of turnover behavior.

Assessing attachment styles could provide counselors with insight into clients who present work adjustment challenges. Attachment theory has important implications for work success because it concerns the extent to which people easily develop trust, collaborate, and become comfortable relying on others. Attachment likely also contributes to the relationship that counselors develop with their clients; as Renfro-Michel et al. (2009) noted, counselors will likely struggle to develop trust with insecurely attached clients. Specifically, avoidant-attached adults are likely to be dismissive and distant of feedback provided by counselors, and anxious-attached adults are likely to be preoccupied and concerned about rejection or negative feedback.

Counselors also need to realize that insecure attachments may *facilitate* some work accomplishments that make clients resistant to acknowledging their problems. For example, avoidant-attached individuals are typically quite independent and comfortable managing work without much direction, which may contribute to some early career successes (Renfro-Michel et al., 2009). However, because

insecure attachment is ultimately likely to detract from satisfaction and encourage turnover, counselors should stress to clients the importance of self-awareness and encourage them to question their thoughts about dissatisfaction and quitting. As the results of our preliminary study indicate, avoidant-attached adults in particular have less-favorable reactions to jobs with very high-perceived fit. Pointing out these tendencies to clients may help them avoid bad choices to leave jobs that actually satisfy their needs.

Limitations

Despite our interesting preliminary findings, we have several limitations to acknowledge in this study that suggest the importance of further replication of our results. First, we conducted our analyses with cross-sectional and self-reported data, which may result in inflated relationships due to percept-percept bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, the variables that we examined are attitudes and personal beliefs that are best reported by the focal respondent rather than an external rater (Chan, 2009). We also evaluated the extent to which common method bias was a concern through CFA and examining the impact of a common method factor on our results (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Nevertheless, a longitudinal study on a larger sample would provide a stronger test of the model.

Second, our use of MTurk as a recruitment method may introduce some limitations to the generalizability of our findings because our sample was restricted to participants with the time and means to complete online surveys. Mason and Suri's (2012) study of the demographic composition of MTurk workers indicates that most respondents are younger adults ($M = 32$ years old) with modest average incomes (approximately U.S.\$30,000 per year). Thus, our findings may not generalize to participants who lack access to the Internet or to participants who are older and working in more advanced and lucrative jobs. We also did not collect information about other demographic variables, such as income or education level, that may have a bearing on job satisfaction or turnover intentions, or on other individual differences that may influence our findings, such as education level, objective socioeconomic status, and differential status identity (e.g., Thompson & Dahling, 2010). Future research should include these individual differences in replications of our findings among a more diverse sample recruited from a different source.

Third, we observed range restriction in our measurement of attachment styles that may have reduced our ability to detect our hypothesized direct and interactive effects (Aiken & West, 1991). As shown in Table 1, our participants reported low levels of anxious and avoidant attachment styles. Our path model may therefore understate the effects of attachment styles on job satisfaction and turnover intentions given the lack of extreme scores in this sample. Future research on larger samples with more diversity in attachment styles may demonstrate that attachment has effects that were not found in this study.

Conclusion

The results of this study provide preliminary evidence that attachment styles, and avoidant attachment in particular, qualify the effects of variables in TWA. Avoidant-attached adults have weaker positive reactions to jobs that satisfy their needs, which ultimately threatens their vocational adjustment. In practice, these results can be useful to managers to potentially forecast turnover risk and for career counselors to help clients develop self-awareness about their attachment tendencies and challenges in the workplace.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

References

- Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Ainsworth, M., Blehar, M., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss, vol.1: Attachment*. London, England: Hogarth Press.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Bozeman, D. P., & Perrewé, P. L. (2001). The effect of item content overlap on organizational commitment questionnaire-turnover cognitions relationships. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 161–173.
- Buelow, S. A., Lyddon, W. J., & Johnson, J. T. (2002). Client attachment and coping resources. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly, 15*, 145–152.
- Buhrmester, M., Kwang, T., & Gosling, S. D. (2011). Amazon's mechanical Turk: A new source of inexpensive, yet high-quality, data? *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 6*, 3–5.
- Cable, D. M., & DeRue, D. (2002). The convergent and discriminant validity of subjective fit perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 875–884.
- Chan, D. (2009). So why ask me? Are self-report data really that bad? In C. E. Lance & R. J. Vandenberg (Eds.), *Statistical and methodological myths and urban legends* (pp. 309–336). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences*. 3rd ed. Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Dahling, J. J., Melloy, R., & Thompson, M. N. (2013). Financial strain and regional unemployment as barriers to job search self-efficacy: A test of social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 60*, 210–218.
- Dahling, J. J., & Thompson, M. N. (2013). Detrimental relations of maximization with academic and career outcomes. *Journal of Career Assessment, 21*, 278–294.
- Dawis, R. V. (2002). Person-environment correspondence theory. In D. Brown (Ed.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 427–464). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Dawis, R. V. (2005). The Minnesota theory of work adjustment. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work*. (pp. 3–23). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Dawis, R. V., England, G. W., & Lofquist, L. H. (1964). *A theory of work adjustment*. *Minnesota Studies in Vocational Rehabilitation* (No. XV), pp. 1–27. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Industrial Relations Center.
- Eggerth, D. E., & Flynn, M. A. (2012). Applying the theory of work adjustment to Latino immigrant workers: An exploratory study. *Journal of Career Development, 39*, 76–98.
- Facteau, J. D., Dobbins, G. H., Russell, J. E. A., Ladd, R. T., & Kudisch, J. D. (1995). The influence of general perceptions of the training environment on pretraining motivation and perceived training transfer. *Journal of Management, 21*, 1–25.
- Feij, J. A., van der Velde, M. G., Taris, R., & Taris, T. W. (1999). The development of person-vocation fit: A longitudinal study among young employees. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 7*, 12–25.
- Fraleigh, R. C., Roisman, G. I., Booth-LaForce, C., Owen, M. T., & Holland, A. S. (2013). Interpersonal and genetic origins of adult attachment styles: A longitudinal study from infancy to early adulthood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 104*, 817–838.
- Fraleigh, R. C., Waller, N. G., & Brennan, K. A. (2000). An item-response theory analysis of self-report measures of adult attachment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 78*, 350–365.
- Gianakos, I. (2013). Counterdependence at work: Relationships with social support, control beliefs, and self-monitoring. *Journal of Career Development, 40*, 23–39.

- Hall, R. J., Snell, A. F., & Foust, M. S. (1999). Item parceling strategies in SEM: Investigating the subtle effects of unmodeled secondary constructs. *Organizational Research Methods, 2*, 233–256.
- Harms, P. D. (2011). Adult attachment styles in the workplace. *Human Resource Management Review, 21*, 285–296.
- Harper, M. C., & Shoffner, M. F. (2004). Counseling for continued career development after retirement: An application of the theory of work adjustment. *The Career Development Quarterly, 52*, 272–284.
- Hazan, C., & Shaver, P. R. (1990). Love and work: An attachment-theoretical perspective. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*, 270–280.
- Hinkle, R. K., & Choi, N. (2009). Measuring person-environment fit: A further validation of the perceived fit scale. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 17*, 324–328.
- Hom, P. W., Mitchell, T. R., Lee, T. W., & Griffeth, R. W. (2012). Reviewing employee turnover: Focusing on proximal withdrawal states and an expanded criterion. *Psychological Bulletin, 138*, 831–858.
- Kline, R. B. (2011). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Krausz, M., Bizman, A., & Braslavsky, D. (2001). Effects of attachment style on preferences for and satisfaction with different employment contracts: An exploratory study. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 16*, 299–316.
- 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*, 281–342.
- Little, L. M., Nelson, D. L., Wallace, J. C., & Johnson, P. D. (2011). Integrating attachment style, vigor at work, and extra-role performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 32*, 464–484.
- Lyons, H. Z., Brenner, B. R., & Fassinger, R. E. (2005). A multicultural test of the theory of work adjustment: Investigating the role of heterosexism and fit perceptions in the job satisfaction of lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*, 537–548.
- Mason, W., & Suri, S. (2012). Conducting behavioral research on Amazon's mechanical Turk. *Behavior Research Methods, 44*, 1–23.
- Mikulincer, M., & Shaver, P. R. (2007). *Attachment in adulthood: Structure, dynamics, and change*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Muthén, L. K., & Muthén, B. O. (1998-2012). *Mplus user's guide* (7th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Muthén & Muthén.
- 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*, 879–903.
- Renfro-Michel, E. L., Burlew, L. D., & Robert, T. (2009). The interaction of work adjustment and attachment theory: Employment counseling implications. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 46*, 18–26.
- Richards, D. A., & Schat, A. C. H. (2011). Attachment at (not to) work: Applying attachment theory to explain individual behavior in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 96*, 169–182.
- Shaver, P. R., & Mikulincer, M. (2012). Attachment theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds), *Handbook of theories of social psychology* (vol. 2, pp. 160–179). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Shrout, P. E., & Bolger, N. (2002). Mediation in experimental and nonexperimental studies: New procedures and recommendations. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 422–445.
- Sibley, C. G., Fischer, R., & Liu, J. H. (2005). Reliability and validity of the revised experiences in close relationships (ECR-R) self-report measure of adult romantic attachment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 31*, 1524–1536.
- Sibley, C. G., & Liu, J. H. (2004). Short-term temporal stability and factor structure of the revised experiences in close relationships (ECR-R) measure of adult attachment. *Personality and Individual Differences, 36*, 969–975.
- Spector, P. E. (1985). Measurement of human service staff satisfaction: Development of the job satisfaction survey. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 13*, 693–713.

- Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction: Application, assessment, causes, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Swanson, J. L., & Schneider, M. (2013). Minnesota theory of work adjustment. In S. D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling: Putting theory and research to work* (2nd ed., pp. 29–54). New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Thompson, M. N., & Dahling, J. J. (2012). Perceived social status and learning experiences in social cognitive career theory. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 80*, 351–361.
- Van Vianen, A. E. M., Feij, J. A., Krausz, M., & Taris, R. (2003). Personality factors and adult attachment affecting job mobility. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 11*, 253–264.
- Velez, B. L., & Moradi, B. (2012). Workplace support, discrimination, and person organization fit: Tests of the theory of work adjustment with LGB individuals. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 59*, 399–407.
- Wang, M., Zhan, Y., McCune, E., & Truxillo, D. (2011). Understanding newcomers' adaptability and work-related outcomes: Testing the mediating roles of perceived P-E fit variables. *Personnel Psychology, 64*, 163–189.
- Williams, L. J., & O'Boyle Jr., E. H. (2008). Measurement models for linking latent variables and indicators: A review of human resource management research using parcels. *Human Resource Management Review, 18*, 233–242.
- Wright, S. L., & Perrone, K. M. (2008). The impact of attachment on career-related variables: A review of the literature and proposed theoretical framework to guide future research. *Journal of Career Development, 35*, 87–106.

Author Biographies

Jason J. Dahling received a PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron. He is currently an associate professor in the Department of Psychology at the College of New Jersey, where he coordinates the Industrial/Organizational specialization. His research, teaching, and consulting expertise is in self-regulation, particularly as it applies to performance management, emotional labor, and career decision-making processes. In his personal time, he enjoys traveling, running, and cooking.

Ursula A. Librizzi received her BA in Developmental Psychology from the College of New Jersey. She is currently working at PayJunction, a financial software company in Santa Barbara, California. In her current role, she organizes the sales team operations and is gaining experience in marketing, internal operations, and research. Her work has sparked research interests in individual differences and performance management. She enjoys surfing, taking photos, and continuing to explore California.