Journal of Vocational Behavior 133 (2022) 103691

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Vocational Behavior

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jvb

Daily autonomy and job performance: Does person-organization fit act as a key resource?

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Autonomy
Contextual performance
Key resources
Person-organization fit
Task performance
Diary study

ABSTRACT

In the present study, we integrate Person-Organization (P-O) fit and Job Demands-Resources theories to argue that P-O fit (i.e., value congruence between person and organization) is a key resource that facilitates the accumulation and activation of situational job resources. We hypothesize that P-O fit strengthens the well-established positive relationship between job autonomy and job performance. Measures of objective P-O fit were obtained for 43 Norwegian naval cadets before embarking on a training mission onboard a sailing ship. During the mission, we measured daily self-reported autonomy as well as peer-rated task and contextual performance for 30 consecutive days. As predicted, the results of multilevel modeling analyses showed that the relationship between daily autonomy and (a) next- (but not same-) day task performance, and (b) next- (and same-) day contextual performance is stronger positive for individuals high (vs. low) in P-O fit. Moreover, effects of the daily autonomy – P-O fit interaction were noticeable on performance several days after. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

Understanding the antecedents of job performance has always been a core challenge for work and organizational psychologists, as it deals directly with organizational efficiency and provides crucial knowledge that is useful in both personnel selection, vocational training and career development programs (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Since job performance is a multidimensional construct, understanding the processes and mechanisms involved in the various indicators of performance is necessary to ensure a broad knowledge base for such organizational purposes across different work contexts. Two of the most central components of job performance are task performance and contextual performance (Conway, 1999). Knowledge that can increase these performance components, and guide training and personnel selection, is particularly essential in operational military settings where personnel may need to interact and perform in high-pressure situations (Fosse et al., 2015).

Task performance is the proficiency with which employees carry out the actual tasks in the formal job description, or other tasks

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2022.103691
Received 24 September 2020; Received in revised form 22 December 2021; Accepted 19 January 2022
Available online 22 January 2022

that contribute directly or indirectly to the technical core of the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). In contrast, contextual performance refers to work behaviors that are vital to the efficient functioning of an organization, but that go beyond what is formally stated in the job description. It encompasses behaviors such as volunteering for extra work, persisting with more effort than expected to carry out tasks, helping coworkers, cooperation, and supporting and endorsing organizational objectives externally (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Demerouti et al., 2014; MacKenzie et al., 1991). Both task- and contextual performance can vary on the within-person level, meaning that they can vary over time for the same employee - even from one day to another (Demerouti et al., 2015). In order to understand these fluctuations in job performance, we need comprehensive knowledge about the roles and interplay of situational factors and individual characteristics, and we need to examine how these processes unfold over time, as they relate to day-to-day performance outcomes (Bakker, 2015).

Following this call, the primary aim of the present study is to investigate whether Person-Organization (P-O) fit can be conceptualized as a key resource that facilitates the daily autonomy - performance relationship. As people are attracted to organizations with members with which they perceive to share similar values, P-O fit is thought to influence career choices (Schneider, 1987b). However, as key resources are stable, personal resources that facilitate the activation and accumulation of daily job resources (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), we argue that such value congruence between the individual employee and the organization (Kristof, 1996) will also enable the favorable relationship of job autonomy with both task- and contextual performance.

We aim to make several contributions. Most importantly, by utilizing the multilevel framework of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker, 2015) to conceptualize P-O fit as a Key Resource (Hobfoll, 1989; ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), we bridge two major research streams: JD-R theory and the Person-Environment (P-E) Fit literature, of which P-O fit is an important part. This is important because the P-E fit literature is one of longest standing and most persistent paradigms for researching vocational behavior (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019). Regarding it through the lens of a modern framework like JD-R theory opens up new possibilities for application and theory development. From an applied perspective, JD-R theory remains an important framework for understanding organizational outcomes such as performance, engagement and burnout (Bakker & de Vries, 2021), while P-O fit, already considered important for understanding career choice and -development (Schneider, 1987a), is increasingly also being considered for personnel selection (Morley, 2007; Sørlie et al., 2020). In doing this, we also nuance the current understanding of the situational resource autonomy, and its desirable effects, proposing that the well-established relationship with performance might depend upon other more stable resources.

Secondly, although an important feature of any dynamic process is how it develops over time, and even though theoretical arguments for lagged effects and accumulation have been developed (Bakker, 2015; Bakker & de Vries, 2021), the temporal dimension of the JD-R framework has received little empirical attention. In the present paper, we both further develop and test these theoretical arguments, by proposing and testing lagged effects and exploring their duration. This is important because, in order to better understand such fluctuating motivational processes, we need to not only understand how the mechanism works, but also for how long it persists.

Finally, we investigate the relationship between daily variations of autonomy and performance (e.g., Bizzi & Soda, 2011; Bogler & Somech, 2004), using peer-rated performance outcomes, in an operational setting – military personnel on a training mission aboard a sailing ship. This is a well-established relationship at the general level, but since only a few studies have examined it on a within-person level (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2015; Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017), and none utilize second source performance outcomes, we still have limited knowledge about how this important mechanism works on a day-to-day basis.

In our study setting onboard the sailing ship, participants needed to work and cooperate confined in a high-pressure environment with very little external influence or room for privacy, as they sailed across the Atlantic. All sailing maneuvers are based on physical and manual processes, with no hydraulic or electronic aid. As an example, even one sailing maneuver may require 25 persons, one hour to complete, and includes hard physical labor with the prerequisite that all hands contribute. There are potentially very real consequences if teams or individuals make poor judgements or fail to cooperate, for example when climbing 50 m above deck during storm season. Since P-O fit guides both attraction towards and selection into military organizations, in which high performance demands in risky situations make exploitation of situational job resources like autonomy very important, our study provides a well-suited setting and sample to investigate this, as well as show the potential for application.

1.1. Daily autonomy and performance

Autonomy is the extent to which employees can decide themselves how their tasks are to be carried out, including control of timing and methods (Langfred & Moye, 2004; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Spector, 1986). Traditionally, the causal mechanism linking autonomy and job performance has been seen as motivational, as initially formalized in Job Characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This is because autonomy and the greater role flexibility it entails lead to higher perceived responsibility for the results of the work, making employees assume more ownership of processes in their organization, which positively affects motivation (Parker et al., 1997). According to JD-R theory, autonomy is a situational job resource that facilitates both task- and contextual performance through different motivational mechanisms like increased work engagement, commitment, and flourishing (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In support of this, a meta-analytic study has shown that autonomy relates positively to task performance across different work contexts (Christian et al., 2011).

Moreover, the greater perceived responsibility for the organization's production output which follows from autonomy also means

that completing your own tasks well will not be sufficiently satisfactory for you if your coworkers are not completing their tasks well. This should motivate you to help and support others, because ultimately their goals are also yours. In addition, the greater role flexibility associated with autonomy also means that employees have the *opportunity* to act contextually, whereas low autonomy would make it more difficult to act beyond behaviors that specifically relate to the job description. Accordingly, several empirical studies have indeed reported a positive relationship between autonomy and contextual performance, or the closely related constructs organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and extra-role performance (Bizzi & Soda, 2011; Bogler & Somech, 2004; Malik & Dhar, 2017; Muldoon et al., 2017; Nesheim et al., 2017; Park, 2016, 2018).

Despite the long line of research supporting the positive link between autonomy and job performance, the existing research has certain limitations. A first limitation is that previous studies have mainly used cross-sectional research designs, or longitudinal designs with rather long time intervals. However, autonomy can vary from day to day for the same person, and finding evidence for a relationship between persons' general level of autonomy, and corresponding performance, does not contribute knowledge concerning the effects of daily variations in autonomy. Thus we need studies that use consecutive measurements with relatively short time intervals to capture this dynamic. Two studies have found significant within-person relationships between autonomy and performance (Demerouti et al., 2015; Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017). However, both these studies utilized *self-reported* performance measures. This exemplifies a second limitation in the existing job performance literature (Delgado-Rodríguez et al., 2018; Haworth & Levy, 2001), as such measures create methodological problems such as common-method and social desirability bias (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988). Although peer-ratings are not without bias either, they are generally considered a better option for measuring task- and contextual performance, and it is important to expand upon and replicate the existing body of research using other sources of information, such as peer-ratings.

The cadets in the present study manned most crew positions on the sailing ship on its way across the Atlantic. Every new day the cadets rotated crew positions among them, so they all would gain experience with the diverse tasks required to sail a large ship. We therefore expect that all cadets will experience low as well as higher levels of autonomy. Specifically, on some days the cadets will need to execute tasks with little room for own judgment or reasoning, like keeping a rope tight, loosening a sail on order, or keeping lookout and report specific objects. On other days they will have a leadership position that gives them considerable leeway in executing tasks. Thus, this provides a good setting to study outcomes of daily variations in autonomy, and based on the reasoning above we predict these daily variations to relate positively to daily variations in both peer-rated task- and contextual performance.

However, work outcomes are often dynamic criteria that may exhibit a temporal carryover, or lagged effect (Wickham & Knee, 2013; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). For example, work engagement has already been shown to exhibit positive affective spillover effects, positively affecting life after work (Culbertson et al., 2012; Rodríguez-Muñoz et al., 2014). This suggests that the motivational potential arising from the accumulation of resources is not momentary and transient but persists beyond the current situation. This is consistent with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), which states that the acquisition and accumulation of resources is a motivating force in people's lives. Because resources, like autonomy, are needed to invest in the future accumulation of more resources, people who already have resources tend to gain even more (Salanova et al., 2010). This is called a gain spiral (Hobfoll et al., 2018). For example, a naval cadet who experiences job autonomy on a certain day, will feel free to craft a work task so that it fits well with personal abilities and preferences (Bakker et al., 2019, 2020). This may mean that the task is executed in a specific way (e.g., by using one's strengths or in collaboration with a colleague, i.e., method control) or at a self-chosen period during the day (i.e., time control). In this way, daily job autonomy may increase other job resources, including skill variety and social support. Thus, even if the following day is a day with less control over timings and methods, they will still have other resources available, positively affecting their performance. The gain spiral induced accumulated effects on performance, that emanates from a particular day's level of autonomy, could conceivably grow over the course of a few days (see also, Bakker, 2015). This lagged effect has not yet been reported on, and in a study that also used quantitative diary data to investigate JD-R theory processes, Demerouti et al. (2015) did not find substantial lagged relationships between their focal variables.

COR-theory is relatively silent about the duration of time involved in gain spirals. Indeed, in their discussion of issues relating to time in COR-theory, Halbesleben et al. (2014, p. 1348) points out that "*One of the challenges in the COR literature has been the time frame in which resource processes play out*". Nor do we have other existing theoretical or empirical frames of reference that lets us confidently hypothesize about the exact duration of this lagged effect. However, it seems evident that daily autonomy will only have a spiraling effect over a short period of time. Indeed, there is a ceiling to any effect in psychology – namely, when the maximum score on the observed variable has been reached. Moreover, the literature suggests that the positive effect of job resources such as autonomy will disappear at very high levels of resources (Stiglbauer & Kovacs, 2018; Warr, 1994). Halbesleben et al. (2014) used an episodic approach to discuss possible resource trajectories over time, suggesting that gain spirals in a work context could best be understood along a time scale on the order of magnitude of days, as opposed to e.g. minutes or years. Accordingly, we expect to not only see an effect of daily autonomy on performance the same day, but also on at least the next day, and possibly even a few days after that. While there is good theoretical reason to expect a lagged effect at least the following day, we are not able to hypothesize confidently about the exact duration, except that it likely will not last more than a few days. We therefore include investigations into the duration of these effects, as open research questions (RQ).

Hypothesis 1. Daily autonomy is positively related to (a) same day and (b) next-day peer-rated task performance.

Hypothesis 2. Daily autonomy is positively related to (a) same day and (b) next-day peer-rated contextual performance.

Research Question 1: What is the duration of the lagged effect of daily autonomy on peer-rated task performance?
Research Question 2: What is the duration of the lagged effect of daily autonomy on peer-rated contextual performance?

1.2. Person-organization fit and between-person performance

P-O fit is the notion of how well a person "fits" in the organization as a whole, rather than in a specific position. It is commonly defined as "*the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both.*" (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4–5). Combined with its positive relationship with both task- and contextual performance (Bakker et al., 2004; Goodman & Svyantek, 1999), this may make P-O fit particularly interesting to consider as a selection tool for military organizations, because their employees tend to switch positions regularly, but have their careers within the same organization.

Characteristic of research on P-O fit is the many different conceptualizations of fit, like the distinction between supplementary fit and complementary fit, and different types of complementary fit like the needs-supplies and the demands-abilities perspective. For a comprehensive review, we refer to Kristof (1996). However, value congruence has increasingly been regarded as the preferred operationalization of P-O fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). That is, P-O fit is operationalized as the degree to which individuals' and organizations' values match. This is because values are thought to be relatively stable over time, they are measurable properties of both persons and organizations, and they are meaningful because they help shape behavior (Cable & Judge, 1997).

According to the Self-Concordance model, pursuing organizational goals that are in concordance with personal core values and interests leads to greater sustained effort (Parker et al., 2010; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). A higher degree of P-O fit should be indicative of such aligned goals, and we therefore expect P-O fit to be positively related to task performance. In line with this, two meta-analyses have found P-O fit to relate positively to task performance, with $\rho = .26$ and $\rho = .13$, respectively (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). In addition, using data on employees in East Asia, a more recent meta-analytic study found a positive relationship between P-O fit and job performance in general at $\rho = .20$ (Oh et al., 2014).

Considering the relationship between P-O fit and contextual performance, one proposed reason for this is that higher P-O fit leads to greater identification with the organization (Macey & Schneider, 2008). Experiencing that your organization's values are in line with your own values leads to a greater willingness to see the organization's and your coworkers' challenges as your own, and therefore a willingness to help others in the organization. This resonates well with Goodman and Svyantek's (1999) proposition that contextual performance derives from the psychological contract between the employee and organization (Bakker et al., 2004). Shared values might provide good grounds for such an unspoken psychological contract. Consequently, three meta-analyses have reported a direct significant relationship between P-O fit and contextual performance just above $\rho = .20$ (Arthur et al., 2006; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), and several later studies have reported a direct relationship between P-O fit and contextual performance, extra-role performance, OCB or sub dimensions of OCB (Chhabra, 2016; Chung, 2017; Farzaneh et al., 2014; Jin et al., 2018; Lemmon & Wayne, 2015; Oo et al., 2018; Peng & Chiu, 2010; Wojtczuk-Turek & Turek, 2016).

Although identification with the organization would stem from the cadets' perception of fit (Edwards & Cable, 2009), we argue that it is appropriate to utilize objective rather than subjective P-O fit in the present study for two reasons. First, subjective P-O fit should be more distal and less stable than objective P-O fit, as it is the objective P-O fit that ultimately is perceived as subjective P-O fit by the cadets, and the perception might be influenced by other factors. Indeed, Cooper-Thomas et al. (2004) found that when subjective and objective P-O fit became more similar during a four-month period following organizational entry, it was because the subjective fit changed to become more aligned with the objective fit. Thus, although subjective fit might conceptually be more closely related to identification with the organization than objective fit, we reduce the risk of common-method bias and self-representation issues by focusing on objective fit. Reducing bias may also be one reason why P-O fit measured with the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP), a popular objective P-O fit measure, yields stronger relationships with important outcomes than P-O fit measured with other methods (O'Reilly et al., 1991; Verquer et al., 2003). Second, objective P-O fit is more suitable for selection purposes – an application of P-O fit that is increasingly being considered (Sørlie et al., 2020).

A cadet high in P-O fit would identify more closely with the organization and its goals, and consequently be more involved and put in more sustained effort in the daily activities aboard the ship. As a result, they should both perform better at their specific tasks and be more willing to help and support their crew mates when needed:

Hypothesis 3. P-O fit is positively related to the aggregated between-person levels of task performance across the 30-day period.

Hypothesis 4. P-O fit is positively related to the aggregated between-person levels of contextual performance across the 30-day period.

1.3. Person-organization fit, daily autonomy and job performance

ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) have argued that a special category of resources exists, termed "key resources." These are stable personal resources whose primary function is to manage and facilitate the mobilization of other resources. This is consistent with the role of trait-level moderators in the multilevel framework of JD-R theory (Bakker, 2015), that act to enhance the effects of state-level situational job resources.

Key resources can be personality traits like openness or emotional stability (Du et al., 2018), or other stable characteristics of individuals, like status and social power (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). A novel suggestion in the present study is that P-O fit also qualifies as a key resource, because a high degree of value congruence with the organization might facilitate transformation of available situational resources into performance, for two important reasons. First, the person will be more prone to exploit the opportunities job resources provide in a way that benefits the organization. This is because perceiving the organization's values to be congruent with your own motives, goals and values motivates you to act in the best interest of the organization (Bono & Judge, 2003;

Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

Furthermore, Arthur et al. (2006) reasoned that "*when there is fit, the environment affords individuals the opportunity to fulfill their needs*" (p. 787). Being part of an organization with which one has a good fit should therefore make one feel comfortable and at home, since an environment that provides the resources to satisfy basic needs will be devoid of threats and stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). Moreover, when there is P-O fit, individuals will be best able to exploit the available opportunities and be fully engaged in their work role (e.g. Kahn, 1990; Peng et al., 2014). Indeed, P-O fit has been found to relate negatively to strain, workplace bullying and role conflict, and relate positively to trust, communication, predictability, psychological capital, and work engagement (e.g., Edwards & Cable, 2009; Tong et al., 2015; Vandevelde et al., 2020). Thus, experiencing high P-O fit and trusting your organization may be akin to high levels of psychological safety (Newman et al., 2017), allowing a person to flourish and use personal strengths. Extracting the full potential out of a situational resource like autonomy would be particularly contingent upon P-O fit, since the absence of threats and stressors would remove the fear of failure and judgment when acting out of one's own agency. Adversely, in a low-fit environment with little trust and where low predictability is a source of stress, having a high degree of autonomy might only feel frustrating and magnify the fear of failure. In a military organization, it may be particularly important to have personnel high in P-O fit since this will be individuals who can more easily capitalize on available resources in difficult and unclear situations.

For instance, during a day with high autonomy an employee high in P-O fit has both the freedom to execute their tasks in the manner they choose, and the incentive to use this freedom in a way that benefits the organization. Moreover, when there is P-O fit, the employee will not be confronted with major stressors or threats, they will trust the organization to act in their best interest, and they will subsequently be able to flourish and thrive. This combination should lead to higher levels of task performance. In contrast, for an employee low in P-O fit neither the incentive to benefit the organization, nor the comfort of feeling at home is similarly present, even on a day high in autonomy where they have the freedom to execute their tasks in the way they choose. Similarly, on a day with high perceived autonomy an employee should show more contextual performance. Again, this relationship is subject to moderation by P-O fit, because of the trust in, and identification with, the organization that P-O fit entails (Edwards & Cable, 2009; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Thus, the autonomy - contextual performance relationship should be attenuated if P-O fit is low, since reduced trust and identification with the organization should make employees less motivated to help its members, and perceive to be more under stress and threats.

As an example, imagine a cadet aboard the sailing ship currently having a leadership position that gives them considerable flexibility in deciding how routine tasks are delegated to, and executed by, other crew members. Potentially, this flexibility could be used to try a slight change of routine, where the cadet sees an opportunity for improvement. The improvement could be a more efficient way of dividing and organizing tasks, benefiting other crew members and potentially giving them more time to rest or socialize. However, low P-O fit would make the cadet in the leadership position feel not at home and uncomfortable, fearful of reactions if the change does not result in improvement after all. In addition, the cadet might not identify enough with the organization to see the potential gain for crew members to be worth the risk of personal failure. In total, the perceived stressors and threats of the low-fit environment, in combination with low identification with the organization, makes them abstain from utilizing their autonomy to the best of the organization. If P-O fit is high, however, higher identification with the organization should help channel such opportunities into helping and supporting coworkers, and cadets should feel sufficiently comfortable and at home to enact on it.

Since autonomy is a highly situational job resource and contingent upon the specific task, the state-level autonomy - job performance relationship could be responsive to trait-level influences, as proposed by Bakker (2015). Though not a personality trait, but rather a construct describing a relationship between an individual and their organization, within the context of the specific organization, P-O fit can be considered a relative stable characteristic of the individual, since both the values of individual as well as those of the organization are relatively stable over time (Cable & Judge, 1997). In line with this, a central assumption in the present study is that the extent to which daily levels of autonomy transform into job performance is dependent on key resources available to the individual, specifically P-O fit. We predict these two resources to interplay, so that the greatest levels of performance occur with high autonomy and high P-O fit, and the lowest levels occur when autonomy and P-O fit are both low.

In addition, revisiting the arguments for a lagged effect of daily autonomy on performance, we also expect to see the same lagged effects of the interplay between autonomy and P-O fit. As with our main effect hypotheses, we formally hypothesize this effect to be observable at least the next day, and we include open research questions with which we investigate the duration of the effect:

Hypothesis 5. The positive relationships between daily autonomy and (a) same day and (b) next day peer-rated task performance are moderated by person-organization fit. These relationships are stronger for individuals high (vs. low) in person-organization fit.

Hypothesis 6. The positive relationships between daily autonomy and (a) same day and (b) next day peer-rated contextual performance are moderated by person-organization fit. These relationships are stronger for individuals high (vs. low) in person-organization fit.

Research Question 3: What is the duration of the lagged effect of the P-O fit × daily autonomy interaction on peer-rated task performance?

Research Question 4: What is the duration of the lagged effect of the P-O fit × daily autonomy interaction on peer-rated contextual performance?

2. Method

2.1. Sample and procedures

A total of 66 first-year cadets at a naval academy participated in a two-month training mission in which they sailed across the Atlantic Ocean twice aboard a large sailing ship in order to learn basic seafaring-, leadership-, and team skills. During this mission, they worked in shifts and were assigned different tasks relevant to sailing the ship. For each shift, the cadets were rotated among crew positions aboard, filling positions at every organizational level. This job situation is well suited to test our hypotheses because each cadet rotates jobs each shift, reducing common variance attributable to jobs and individual traits respectively. Each cadet completed a baseline trait survey including P-O fit before the mission started, and daily diary surveys for 30 consecutive days during the training mission, in which we measured our state-level variables of interest. In the daily survey, the cadets reported on their own daily autonomy, as well as the task- and contextual performance of two randomly assigned peers. The cadets reported on the performance of the same two peers for the entire data collection. The cadets are a highly selected group that are being trained for careers as commissioned officers in the Norwegian Navy. The mean age of the cadets was 23 years (SD = 2.6). Of the 66 cadets, nine were not included in our sample since they did not hand in the binder with the daily questionnaires, or handed in the binders but didn't complete the questionnaires. Also, thirteen of the trait-level P-O fit questionnaires could not be used since they had not been completed correctly. The most common reason was that some items in the P-O fit measure were listed twice by respondents, making it impossible to calculate P-O fit correctly. Because of this, the number of cadets included in our data were 43, a response rate of 65%. Of these, four were female. There was some missing data due to some cadets not having completed the daily survey on every day, resulting in 944 observations of 1247 possible (75,7%) being included in the same-day models, and 933 of 1247 possible (74,8%) being included in the next-day models.

Independently, we established an organizational reference profile for the navy, which is necessary to calculate indirect measures of objective P-O fit (Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991). To do this we received help from the central Human Resource administration of the Norwegian Armed Forces to send surveys to a randomly selected group of 200 experienced naval officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Inclusion criteria for this group included a minimum of three years' service, and officers and NCOs that had served in other branches than the navy were excluded. The questionnaires, which were administered by mail without prior notice or consent to participate, were anonymous and we did not collect any other data from this group, including demographic information. In return we received 37 responses, a response rate of 18.5%, which were averaged to create the organizational reference profile. Scores for the 40 items of the organizational reference profile were in the range [2.46, 6.76], with standard deviations between 1.40 and 2.41.

2.2. Measures

All measures in use were based on existing scales translated to Norwegian using translation and back-translation (Brislin, 1970). Measures were shortened and kept to a minimum where possible to avoid survey fatigue among the cadets, since the diary survey was completed every day for 30 days by each cadet.

2.2.1. Between-person level variable: person-organization fit

We used Cable and Judge's (1997) reduced 40-item version of the 56-item Organizational Culture Profile (OCP), in a Norwegian translation, to indirectly assess objective P-O fit (Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991). The OCP works by comparing two separate sets of data that are obtained independently: one for the person and one for the organization. Using Q-methodology, each individual cadet's response to the 40 items were correlated with the 40 corresponding items in the organizational reference profile, and the resulting coefficient was used as a measure of the cadet's P-O fit. For a more thorough explanation of how P-O fit was calculated, see Sørlie et al. (2020).

2.2.2. Within-person level variables

2.2.2.1. Autonomy. Daily levels of autonomy were measured with three items from Bakker et al. (2004; Breevaart et al., 2014), on a Likert scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 5 ("To a very large degree"). Example items are "Did you participate in decisions concerning your own tasks?" and "Did you have control over how your tasks were to be executed?". Internal consistency was $\omega = .85$, 95% CI [.84, .87] across the 30 days.

2.2.2.2. Task performance. We used the four items with highest factor loadings from Williams and Anderson (1991) to measure peer-rated task performance. Example items are "On this shift the cadet has completed her/his duties as specified in the job description" and "On this shift the cadet has fulfilled the formal demands of her/his job." This was reported on a Likert scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 5 ("To a very large degree"). Every day, each cadet was rated by two peers, independently, and the average was used as the measure. Internal consistency was $\omega = .91$, 95% CI [.90, .92] across the 30 days.

2.2.2.3. Contextual performance. Daily levels of peer rated contextual performance were measured using four items from Williams and Anderson (1991). The items used were selected based on factor loadings and situational relevance. Example items are "The cadet has helped others with a heavy work load" and "The cadet has taken the time to listen to other colleagues' worries and concerns". This was

reported on the same Likert scale from 1 ("Not at all") to 5 ("To a very large degree"), and as with task performance each cadet was rated by two peers with the mean being used as the measure. Internal consistency was $\omega = .85$, 95% CI [.84, .86] across the 30 days.

2.3. Strategy of analysis

We used the statistical package R (Version 4.0.3; R Core Team, 2020) for our analyses. Following developments in discussions on reliability measures (e.g., Cortina, 1993; Dunn et al., 2014; Morera & Stokes, 2016; Sijtsma, 2009), we used the *MBESS* package (Kelley, 2007) to calculate coefficient omega including 95% confidence intervals for our measures instead of the more traditional Cronbach's alpha point estimates. Since our data was clustered, with daily observations nested within persons, we used the *psych* package (Revelle, 2018) to calculate descriptives, including within- and between-level correlations.

We then used the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015) with a maximum likelihood estimator to test our hypotheses, specifying four linear fixed-effects models with random intercept, same-day and next-day levels of peer-rated task- and contextual performance as outcome, respectively, and P-O fit as a stable moderator (Larson & Almeida, 1999). For both the same-day models and next-day models, we first specified a null-model in which a random intercept was included as the only predictor. As the second step, our main effects models, we built upon the four null-models by including both explanatory variables, P-O fit and daily autonomy. In addition, for the same-day models, we also corrected for the previous day's level of performance, as this was specified as a change model (Larson & Almeida, 1999). In the next-day models, we corrected for the next-day level of autonomy, that is, autonomy measured on the same day as the outcome variable. As the third and final step, we included the P-O fit × autonomy interaction term in all four models. All within-person independent variables were centered on the within-person mean. P-O fit, the only between-person independent variable, was centered on the grand mean. To test under which conditional values of our moderator the slopes in our interaction term was significantly different from zero, we used the *interactions* package (Long, 2019) to calculate Johnson-Neyman intervals.

Subsequently, to answer our research questions and investigate the duration of the lagged effects, we iteratively substituted the one-day lagged outcome in our next day models with outcomes of increasing time lag, up to and including five days. We also substituted the control variable, autonomy on the same day as the outcome, accordingly for each model, up to and including five days.

To avoid rounding and transcription errors, and ensure that the reported results correspond to the performed analyses, the manuscript text and all analyses were written as a single reproducible document, using the *papaja* package (Aust & Barth, 2020).

3. Results

3.1. Descriptives

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and within-person- and between-person correlations between all study variables.

3.2. Hypothesis testing

Prior to testing the hypothesized models, we tested intercept-only null models for both same-day and next-day task- and contextual performance. These revealed sufficient variance associated with the grouping variable (ICC1 = .40, 95% CI [.30,.53] for task performance and ICC1 = .38, 95% CI [.29,.51] for contextual performance) to allow us to continue testing with our hypothesized predictive main effect models.

To test our main effect Hypotheses, 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3 and 4, we built upon the four null-models and proceeded to add daily autonomy and P-O Fit in our main effect models. In line with Larson and Almeida's discussion on change- and prospective models (Larson & Almeida, 1999), we added the previous day's level of task- or contextual performance to the same-day model, but not the next-day model. However, in the two next-day models, we corrected for daily autonomy on the same day as the outcome.

In Hypotheses 1a and 1b, we propose that the extent to which cadets perceived to have control over time and methods in their roles was positively related to how well they performed on their tasks, both the same day (1a) and on the next day (1b). As shown in the main effects models in Tables 2 and 3, autonomy was not significantly related to same-day or next-day task performance. Hence, Hypotheses 1a and 1b were not supported.

Similarly for contextual performance outcome, in Hypotheses 2a and 2b we predicted positive relationships between daily autonomy and contextual performance on the same day (2a) and the next (2b). These results are shown in the main effect models of

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of study variables.

	M	*SD*	2	3	4
1 - P-O fit	0.00	0.15	−.04	.26	.34*
2 - Autonomy	3.14	0.78		.05	.07
3 - Task performance	4.03	0.52	.07*		.60***
4 - Contextual performance	3.57	0.58	.04	.42***	

Note. Correlations below the diagonal are on the within (day) level. Correlations above the diagonal are on the between (person) level. *p < .05. **p < .01.***p < .001.

Table 2
Same-day models.

	Task performance			Contextual performance		
	Null model	Main effects	Interaction	Null model	Main effects	Interaction
[Intercept]	4.01***	4.02***	4.02***	3.55***	3.56***	3.56***
	[3.91, 4.12]	[3.92, 4.12]	[3.92, 4.12]	[3.43, 3.66]	[3.45, 3.66]	[3.45, 3.66]
P-O fit		0.52	0.51		0.81*	0.78*
		[−0.10, 1.14]	[−0.11, 1.13]		[0.13, 1.48]	[0.10, 1.46]
Daily autonomy		0.01	0.02		0.02	0.03
		[−0.02, 0.05]	[−0.02, 0.05]		[−0.02, 0.06]	[−0.01, 0.07]
Task performance prescore [control]		0.30***	0.30***			
		[0.24, 0.36]	[0.24, 0.36]			
Contextual performance prescore [control]					0.34***	0.34***
					[0.28, 0.40]	[0.28, 0.40]
P-O fit × daily autonomy			0.17			0.37*
			[−0.08, 0.42]			[0.09, 0.66]
Log likelihood	−472.33	−419.98	−419.04	−612.06	−548.37	−545.11
Akaike inf. crit.	950.67	851.95	852.09	1230.11	1108.74	1104.22
Bayesian inf. crit.	965.22	881.05	886.04	1244.66	1137.84	1138.17

Note. n = 944 on within-level, 43 on between-level. *p < .05. **p < .01.***p < .001.

Table 3
Next-day models.

	Task performance			Contextual performance		
	Null model	Main effects	Interaction	Null model	Main effects	Interaction
[Intercept]	4.01***	3.95***	3.94***	3.54***	3.51***	3.49***
	[3.90, 4.11]	[3.79, 4.11]	[3.77, 4.10]	[3.43, 3.66]	[3.32, 3.69]	[3.31, 3.68]
P-O fit		0.56	0.55		0.89**	0.89**
		[−0.07, 1.18]	[−0.08, 1.17]		[0.21, 1.59]	[0.20, 1.58]
Daily autonomy		0.03	0.03		0.03	0.03
		[−0.01, 0.07]	[−0.01, 0.07]		[−0.02, 0.07]	[−0.02, 0.08]
Next-day autonomy [control]		0.02	0.02		0.01	0.02
		[−0.02, 0.06]	[−0.02, 0.06]		[−0.04, 0.06]	[−0.03, 0.06]
P-O fit × daily autonomy			0.34**			0.34*
			[0.09, 0.60]			[0.04, 0.63]
Log likelihood	−488.44	−485.20	−481.79	−613.63	−609.51	−607.02
Akaike inf. crit.	982.88	982.41	977.59	1233.26	1231.02	1228.04
Bayesian inf. crit.	997.40	1011.44	1011.46	1247.77	1260.05	1261.91

Note. n = 933 on within-level, 43 on between-level. *p < .05. **p < .01.***p < .001.

Tables 2 and 3. We did not find a significant effect of daily autonomy on same- or next-day contextual performance. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were not supported either.

For our between-person main effect Hypotheses, 3 and 4, we predicted cadets whose values were more in congruence with the navy's values (higher P-O fit) to both perform better at their tasks (3) and exhibit more contextual performance (4) across the 30 days. As shown in the main effect models of Table 2, P-O fit was not related to overall task performance, and Hypothesis 3 was therefore not supported. However, in support of Hypothesis 4, P-O fit was related to the overall level of contextual performance (B = 0.81, 95% CI [0.13,1.48]).

In Hypotheses 5a and 5b, we predicted that the daily autonomy - task performance relationship would be positive and stronger (weaker or negative) for cadets high (low) in P-O fit, for both the same day (5a) and the next day (5b) outcomes. To test these hypotheses, we built upon the two task performance main effects models by adding the autonomy × P-O fit interaction term. As shown in the interaction model of Table 2, we did not find support for Hypothesis 5a, as there was no significant interaction between autonomy and P-O fit for same day task performance outcome. For next-day task performance, however, there was a significant interaction between P-O fit and daily autonomy (B = 0.34, 95% CI [0.09,0.60]), as shown in the interaction model of Table 3. Thus, Hypothesis 5b was supported.

Lastly, in Hypotheses 6a and 6b, we predicted cadets whose values were more in congruence with the navy's values to have a stronger positive relationship between their perceived control over timing and methods on any given day, and the degree to which they helped and supported their peers, both on the same day (6a) and the next (6b). To test these hypotheses, we built upon the two contextual performance main effects models by adding the autonomy × P-O fit interaction term. As shown in the interaction models of Tables 2 and 3, both hypotheses were supported as we found a significant positive interaction between daily autonomy and P-O fit in predicting both same day (B = 0.37, 95% CI [0.09,0.66]) and next day (B = 0.34, 95% CI [0.04,0.63]) contextual performance.

In order to provide a visual example of the interaction pattern, we plotted the slope of the main predictor at +/− 1 SD of the moderator for the model with same-day contextual performance outcome (Fig. 1). The other two significant interactions followed a

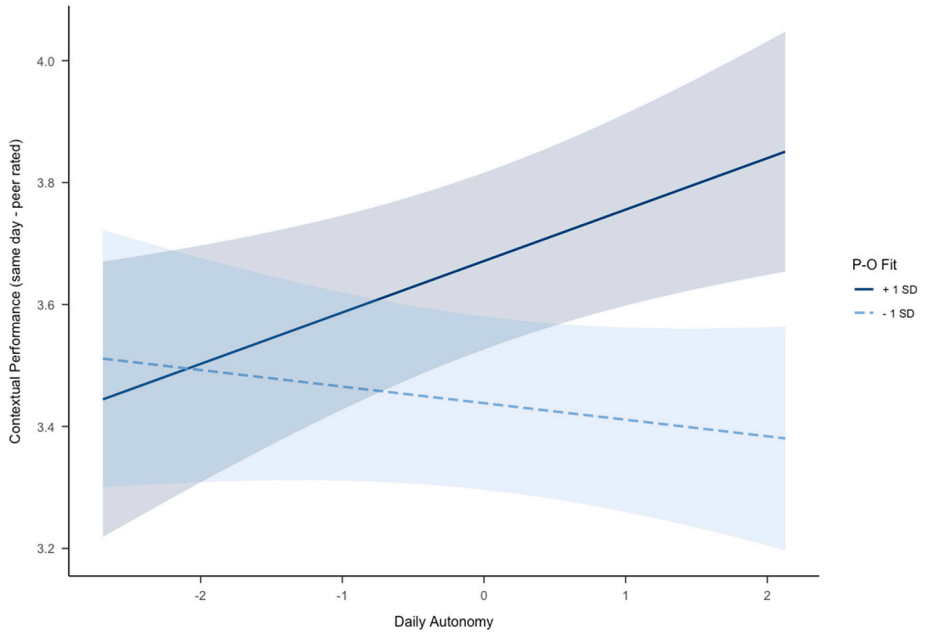

Fig. 1. Interaction of daily autonomy and P-O fit on same day's contextual performance.

comparable visual pattern.

We used the Johnson-Neyman technique (Preacher et al., 2006) to calculate the intervals of P-O fit (centered) for which the slope of daily autonomy was $p < .05$ in our models. For our next-day task performance model, this was outside [−0.43, 0.03]. Similarly, for same-day contextual performance outcome, the slope of daily autonomy was $p < .05$ when P-O fit (centered) was outside [−0.37,

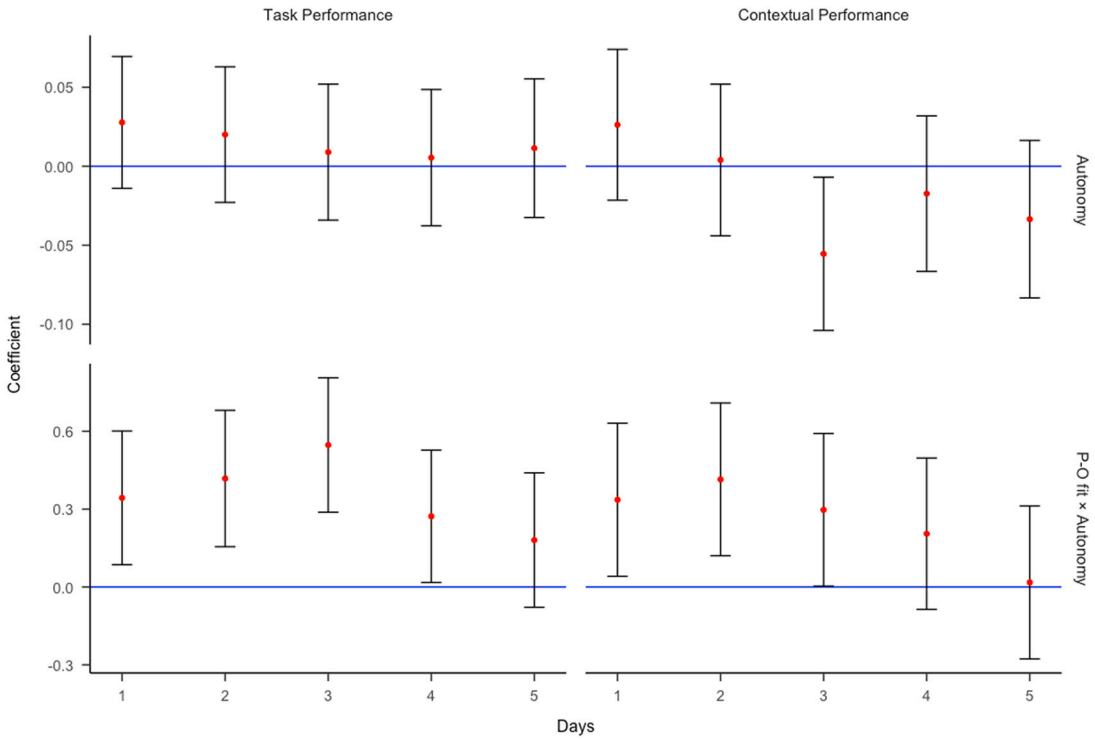

Fig. 2. Effect size of autonomy and P-O fit × autonomy on performance with increasing time lag.
Note. Figure shows unstandardized regression coefficients with 95% confidence intervals. X-axis shows number of days between predictor and outcome. Each model was controlled for daily autonomy on the same day as the outcome.

0.05]. Lastly, in our next-day model for contextual performance, the slope of daily autonomy was $p < .05$ when P-O fit was outside the interval [−0.77, 0.07]. The range of observed values for P-O fit (centered) was [−0.63, 0.30].

3.3. Research questions

Fig. 2 shows the unstandardized regression coefficients including 95% confidence intervals for both daily autonomy and the P-O fit × Autonomy interaction term, for both task- and contextual performance with iteratively longer time lags, up to five days.

With regards to RQ1, the lagged main effect of autonomy on task performance was not significant on any days tested. For RQ2, with contextual performance outcome, the main effect of autonomy was not significant on any day either, the exception being after three days, when it was negative (B = −0.06, 95% CI [−0.10,−0.01]).

However, regarding RQ3, the effect of the P-O fit × Autonomy interaction on task performance remained significant for four days, as it was B = 0.34, 95% CI [0.09,0.60] after one day, B = 0.42, 95% CI [0.16,0.68] after two days, B = 0.55, 95% CI [0.29,0.81] after three days and B = 0.27, 95% CI [0.02,0.53] after four days. After five days the effect was no longer significant.

Similarly for RQ4, the effect of the interaction on contextual performance was significant for three days, with B = 0.34, 95% CI [0.04,0.63] after one day, B = 0.41, 95% CI [0.12,0.71] after two days, and B = 0.30, 95% CI [0.00,0.59] after three days. On day four and five, this effect was not significant.

As the plot in Fig. 2 indicates, the effect of the P-O fit × Autonomy interaction on peer-rated task performance appears to grow the first three days, before fading and disappearing on the fifth day. Similarly, with regards to peer-rated contextual performance, the effect of the interaction appears to grow the first two days before starting to fade, and the effect is gone the fourth day.

4. Discussion

In the present study, we investigated how daily levels of situational autonomy are related to within-person fluctuations in task- and contextual performance both the same day and the next, as well as how P-O fit is related to between-person differences in performance across a 30 day period on board a sailing ship. Taking this further, we investigated to what extent P-O fit act as a personal key resource that potentially strengthens the daily within-person autonomy - performance relationship. As we expected resource accumulation through gain spirals to result in lagged effects, but were unable to hypothesize their specific durations, we used research questions to investigate these durations by extending the next-day models with iteratively longer outcome time lags up to and including five days.

To our surprise, the hypothesized relationships between daily autonomy and both performance outcomes were not significant. Also, higher P-O fit was generally associated with higher contextual performance, but not task performance. However, with the exception of same-day task performance, we did find that P-O fit positively moderates the relationship between autonomy and performance, thus supporting the proposition of P-O fit acting as a key resource. Also, the findings of our research questions add credence to these findings, indicating that P-O fit and autonomy interplay to result in both prolonged higher task- and contextual performance, but that the mechanism through which this affects task performance exhibits higher latency compared to contextual performance. In the following, we discuss these findings in more detail.

The lack of significant main effects of autonomy on performance in all four models tested in the present study is surprising, given that this is considered a well established relationship that has been documented on the between-person level in a range of studies spanning decades (e.g., Christian et al., 2011; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Muecke & Iseke, 2019; Spector, 1986). Fluctuations in individuals' perceptions of autonomy have also been found to relate to self-rated performance from one day to another (Demerouti et al., 2015), and even from one work episode to another (Reina-Tamayo et al., 2017). However, evidence for a relationship at the between-person level does not in itself constitute evidence for the same relationship at the within-person level, and previous findings of this relationship at the within-person level are based on self-reported performance measures, potentially making them susceptible to common method bias and the danger of inflated effect sizes (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Thus, the lack of significant main effects in the present study are interesting findings in themselves, and calls for additional studies investigating the autonomy – performance relationship at within-person level and with second source or even objective performance measures.

In light of the other findings in the present study, one possible explanation for this lack of link between autonomy and performance may be the importance of moderators of this relationship, specifically P-O fit. Bakker (2015) proposes that the autonomy - performance relationship is responsive to trait-level moderators, and, as indicated by the interaction pattern in Fig. 1, our results suggests that high P-O fit does not merely strengthen an already positive autonomy – performance relationship, but rather that the effect of autonomy on performance only occurs under the condition of high P-O fit. A cadet who experiences very low levels of P-O fit might not experience the preconditions necessary for high levels of autonomy to translate into high-quality performance, as they will have less trust in their organization, experience more threats and stressors, and not have the incentive of shared goals and values to make the sufficient effort to overcome these obstacles. Only when P-O fit is high cadets will experience their environment as safe from threats and stressors as they trust their organization to be a safe place, minimizing the fear of failure and allowing them to use their personal strengths to exploit the available opportunities. Our particular study setting, with the confined environment in which cadets are isolated with crew mates for a long period of time with hardly any external stimuli or room for privacy, might contribute to accentuate the importance of shared values with their organization. With little possibility for venting frustration outside working hours, and with the mission lasting long enough to avoid any honeymoon effects, the feeling of being at home in their organization, that derives from the psychological contract of shared values, might be especially important.

Although we did expect P-O fit to relate generally to both higher task- and contextual performance, the lack of relationship with task performance in our findings is not without precedence. Although P-O fit is indeed normally found to relate to both higher

contextual- and task performance, relationships with the latter are often slightly weaker, and sometimes nonsignificant (Arthur et al., 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). While task performance consists of behaviors that are largely explicitly expected onboard the sailing ship, contextual performance relies more on the cadets' own volition to contribute to the best of their crew mates beyond what is expected. This might make contextual performance more susceptible, relative to task performance, to influences by the degree to which the cadets experience the psychological contract of shared values with their organization.

Our hypotheses concerning an interaction between P-O fit and within-person differences in autonomy were supported for both same-day and next-day contextual performance outcome, and next-day task performance. The results of our analysis to answer our research questions contribute to shed light on the dynamic of these relationships. Again, having autonomy one day should make it easier to accumulate even more resources that are available the following day. And, taken together, our findings indicate that this resource accumulation through gain spirals does indeed happen, but is dependent upon high P-O fit, and time; Without P-O fit being taken into account, high autonomy does not seem to be sufficient to result in resource accumulation or performance. When P-O fit is low, the cadets are not able to utilize any autonomy in a way that enhances performance. This might be because being given autonomy while not feeling at home in their organization, i.e. with low P-O fit, only makes them feel frustrated and afraid to do something wrong. However, when trusting and feeling comfortable in their organization, free from stressors and threats, autonomy provides an opportunity to flourish and thrive. And since this makes them better situated to gain even more resources, the effect of the initial autonomy persists as it diversifies into other resources, before it fades out after several days. In the case of contextual performance, this seems to happen quicker, with results being noticeable the same day and lasting for an additional three days after that. For task performance, the effect is only noticeable the day after, but is then present for the same period of time, a total of four days. If high value congruence is a necessary prerequisite for these gain spirals to occur, a high-fit environment may be regarded as fertile soil in which individuals can grow and thrive, given resources. As such, the results appear to lend credence to the notion that P-O fit is a Key Resource that facilitates the activation of the situational resource autonomy. Furthermore, even with high P-O fit, this dynamic does not happen instantly but requires a few days to unfold before the effect fades again. One possible reason for the higher latency of the effect on task- than contextual performance might be that having autonomy in itself more easily lends itself to act beyond task performance behaviors like supporting and helping colleagues. The effect of autonomy on task performance might to a higher degree work through resource accumulation, as high autonomy one day diversifies into other resources like performance feedback or social support, that more easily translates to higher task performance the following day. However, more research is needed to entangle these relationships that play out as gain spirals and resource accumulation develops over time. Particularly, applying within-person designs that capture this dynamic from day to day but that include several different situational resources could make it possible to trace the effect of an initial day's autonomy on performance a few days after, mediated through e.g. social support on the days between.

4.1. Implications for research and practice

The present study proposes P-O fit as a key resource within the multilevel framework of JD-R theory. We consider this to be the most important contribution of the present study, as it corroborates the multilevel framework of JD-R theory by documenting a novel key resource acting as trait-level moderator of the relationship between a situational job resource and performance (Bakker, 2015). Beyond lending credence to this theoretical framework in general, our findings provide a personal key resource that is not a personality trait, which is what research within this field so far has tended to focus on (Bakker et al., 2019; Du et al., 2018; Hetland et al., 2018). Rather, our findings show that the values of organizational members matter, as congruence with the organization's values contribute to shape behavior and determine how organizational members capitalize on situational resources.

The practical importance of P-O fit for organizations has long been debated, as empirical research has shown generalizable but moderate or weak direct relationships with important work behaviors and attitudes (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019). However, we argue that regarding value congruence as a key resource through a JD-R lens broadens our understanding of P-O fit and its effects. Thus, a second theoretical contribution of the present study is to contribute to bridge JD-R theory and the P-E fit literature, of which P-O fit is a part. JD-R theory has become one of the most important frameworks through which we seek to understand the processes underlying concepts in the work domain like well-being, performance, burnout and engagement. P-E fit, on its side, is one of the most persistent and enduring paradigms for researching organizational behavior (Barrick & Parks-Leduc, 2019). Conceptualizing "fit" as a key resource bridges the two. This entails that P-O fit may facilitate the accumulation and activation of other situational resources as well. We have only investigated its relationship with autonomy in that respect, and more research investigating this for a broader set of situational job resources would be needed.

Third, although lagged effects through resource accumulation and gain spirals have been predicted (Bakker, 2015), there is a current lack of theory with which to specifically hypothesize the duration of these effects. Although we did not develop such theory in the present study, we believe that this first attempt at proposing and empirically investigating these temporal effects might prove useful in doing so in the future. Knowledge about the duration of resource effects will inform organization theory regarding the need to reinforce situational resources, and whether *variance* in resources like autonomy costs energy and impacts motivation. Knowledge about the role of key resources in this dynamic process will inform theory regarding the psychological function of key resources in managing situational resources such as autonomy. For example, when individuals experience a good (vs. poor) fit with their organization, they may anticipate that low levels of situational autonomy will be followed by higher levels of autonomy. Thus, P-O fit may function as a key resource and buffer the impact of temporal changes in situational resources.

The lack of significant main effects of autonomy on performance has some implications. Although well established at the between-person level, documentation of this relationship at the within-person level is still scarce, and based on self-report performance measures. If this lack of relationship at the within-person level is replicated in future studies, our understanding of the factors on which

this relationship depends might need adjustment. One such theoretical implication might be that autonomy should not unconditionally be expected to predict within-person performance, but that for such performance to be observable by others (i.e. peer-ratings) the situational resource autonomy is also dependent on other resources. Such resources might be stable personal resources like P-O fit, but they might also be other situational resources. For an in-depth discussion of possible moderators of the autonomy – performance relationship, we refer to Langfred and Moye (2004) that consider both motivational, informational and structural mechanisms through which this relationship is amplified or attenuated. Also in line with the findings of this study, a consequence could be that researchers employ study designs and methods that take the temporal dimension into account, letting the process unfold before measuring the effect. For practitioners, this would imply that awarding employees more autonomy will not unconditionally lead to immediate increases in task performance, but that the environment and temporal dimension will have to be taken into account as well.

From an applied point of view, the present study provides an added argument to consider P-O fit for personnel selection. The efficacy of predictors used for personnel selection is normally measured by the degree to which they predict important outcomes like performance, engagement or turnover intention. P-O fit has already been shown to add incremental predictive validity to both work engagement and task performance beyond both intelligence and personality, which are commonly used selection methods (Sørlie et al., 2020). Our results show a direct relationship between P-O fit and contextual performance, not task performance. More importantly however, the multilevel framework of JD-R theory posits that the value of key resources lies not only in this direct relationship, but in the degree to which they facilitate and strengthen the relationships between situational job resources and the same important outcomes. As P-O fit might also facilitate the use, and enhance the positive effect, of situational job resources, its value as a selection method might thus be higher than initially thought. In that respect, it is important that we have utilized indirect measures of objective P-O fit, as opposed to perceived or self-rated fit. This is because indirect measures of objective P-O fit is the operationalization of P-O fit which is best suited for inclusion in personnel selection test batteries, since they can be assessed indirectly and cost effectively for a large number of applicants without prior knowledge of the organization (Sørlie et al., 2020).

4.2. Methodological considerations

In this study, we used peer ratings of both task- and contextual performance, and self-reported autonomy. In addition, each cadet's performance was rated by two peers, independently, for each day, with the mean value being used as the measure. This is one of the strengths of this study, as it should contribute to minimize common method bias in our sample (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To our knowledge, this is the first study to report on the relationship between within-person differences in self-reported autonomy, and corresponding levels of peer rated task- and contextual performance. However, since the cadets work, sleep and live so closely together onboard the sailing ship, it is very likely that the rater and the rated know each other very well. As such, the peer rated performance measures could become biased by the degree to which raters like those they rate, or even their perceived degree of P-O fit.

Another methodological strength is the use of indirect measures of objective P-O fit, as this reduces the potential for common method variance in our sample. That being said, subjective measures of P-O fit would be conceptually closer to identification with the organization (Edwards & Cable, 2009), and we encourage future research to investigate both forms of fit simultaneously. The organizational reference profile which we used to calculate P-O fit for the cadets in our study was measured at the branch level. That is, P-O fit is here the value congruence between the individual cadet and the Norwegian Navy. However, the armed forces is a large and diverse organization, and we do not know if our results would have been different if we had used either a lower (i.e. the naval academy) or a higher (i.e. the armed forces) organizational level as the focal level for measuring P-O fit. Research on differences in organizational reference profiles across different levels of the organization, as measured with the OCP, seems to be currently lacking, and we do not claim to know what the optimal organizational level to measure the organizational reference profile is. Also, more knowledge about the development of P-O fit over time is needed. This concerns both how stable organizational culture is over time, as measured with the OCP, and the stability of personal preferences (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2004).

Further, the response rate for our organizational reference profile was 18,5%. This is undoubtedly low. However, the sample of 200 randomly selected naval officers and NCOs that received the questionnaire for establishing the organizational reference profile, did so without prior notice, and without having consented to participate. The Organizational Culture Profile measure can by many be perceived to be less intuitive than Likert style measures, that many are familiar with, and normally requires some explanation. These two factors taken together probably explain much of the low response rate. Since the organizational reference profile only consists of the point-value mean scores of each item of the OCP, the response rate is probably less of a problem than it would have been if variation in scores was also taken into account. However, it does leave open the question of a systematic bias in responses. As this questionnaire was administered anonymously and without demographic questions, we cannot know if this is the case with our organizational reference profile.

Though the setting and sample from which we collected data might seem ideal from the viewpoint of reducing variance attributable to specific positions, our sample is arguably an extreme case with a confined environment and forced daily rotations. One concern might therefore be that our findings are not generalizable to other more common work situations, and, pending replication of our findings in more diverse work settings, these results should not be generalized. However, in our sample 33% of the variation in autonomy was attributable to the within-person level. Other studies have found this share to be generally higher, anywhere in the range 33–65%, in a range of diverse settings and occupations (e.g., De Gieter et al., 2018; Demerouti et al., 2015; Petrou et al., 2012; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Thus, we find that even with relatively low variation in the autonomy cadets experienced from day to day in the confined environment in which we conducted our study, variation in cadets' perception of autonomy has predictable effects. The present study is therefore likely a conservative test, and we would expect similar results to be found elsewhere as well. Also, some of the effect sizes in our results are quite small, indicating that they should be interpreted with caution. However, they do form a

consistent pattern across dependent variables and days, and small effect sizes should not be dismissed as unimportant only because they are small, but be regarded as the norm, as they form the building blocks of a coherent cumulative science (Götz et al., 2022).

5. Conclusion

Letting employees influence how they complete their own tasks, including methods and timing, is generally expected to result in higher job performance. The results of this study suggests that this is not necessarily so, but that this relationship may be dependent upon other resources available to the person, and time. Specifically, P-O fit, the value congruence between the person and the organization, was found to moderate this relationship. The relationship between daily levels of autonomy and how well cadets performed at their tasks as well as how supportive they were to their colleagues, was dependent upon high P-O fit, and the effect needed a day or two to consolidate itself. In addition, P-O fit was in itself positively related to contextual-, but not task performance. More research on how P-O fit interplays with other situational resources is needed in order to establish P-O fit as a key resource. However, our evidence provides a starting point for doing this, and also underscores the importance of considering P-O fit for organizations.

Author note

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Henrik O. Sørlie: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Visualization. **Jørn Hetland:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Arnold B. Bakker:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – review & editing, Supervision. **Roar Espevik:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Data curation. **Olav K. Olsen:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Resources, Data curation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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