

## ALIGNING PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES: A MULTIFACETED EXPLORATION OF EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES IN THE FIRST YEAR OF EMPLOYMENT

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**Purpose:** This study investigates the alignment between employees' expectations and experiences during their initial year of employment, focusing on person-organization fit (P-O fit) and values congruence. It aims to identify factors influencing employee work value preferences and explore negative experiences encountered in the early stages of employment.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study conducts a comprehensive literature review and surveys 300 newly employed individuals. The survey, designed to capture insights into values congruence and conflict dynamics, utilizes a structured questionnaire. Additionally, the Critical Incidents Technique (CIT) is employed to analyze specific instances of positive and negative experiences reported by respondents.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that while job seekers actively seek organizational values information, discussions on personal and organizational values are lacking during job interviews. Although most employees initially do not report conflicts between personal and organizational values, such conflicts are more prevalent in micro and small companies, particularly among individuals in independent or specialist roles.

**Practical Implications:** The study offers actionable recommendations for organizations to strengthen values alignment and mitigate conflicts, including integrating values discussions into recruitment and onboarding processes, fostering inclusive work environments, providing conflict resolution training, and regularly assessing values alignment.

**Originality/Value:** This study contributes to the understanding of values congruence and conflict resolution dynamics during employees' first year of employment. By employing a mixed-methods approach, it provides nuanced insights and practical implications for human resource management and organizational behavior.

**Keywords:** work values, person-organization fit (P-O fit), values congruence, organizational values, recruitment.

**Category of paper:** research paper.

## 1. Introduction

The study investigates the alignment and disparities between employees' expectations and actual experiences during their initial year of employment. The focus lies on exploring the concept of person-organization fit (P-O fit) and values congruence, analyzing the potential conflicts arising from discrepancies between an employee's personal values and those upheld by their employer (Priyadarshi, Premchandran, 2018).

In today's fast-paced and competitive job market, the task of attracting and retaining skilled employees poses escalating challenges (Lee, Yen, 2013). Consequently, comprehending the factors valued by employees in the workplace becomes imperative for employers striving to craft a compelling employer value proposition that resonates with the needs and aspirations of their workforce (Kollmann et al., 2020).

Through an exhaustive review of existing literature and empirical analysis, this article identifies pivotal factors influencing employee work value preferences. These include the importance of having supportive managerial figures, collaborating with trustworthy colleagues, and receiving fair compensation (Sökmen et al., 2015; Yusliza et al., 2020; Zingheim, Schuster, 2006). Additionally, the article scrutinizes the primary clusters of negative experiences encountered by employees in their inaugural year of employment.

The insights gleaned from this study carry substantial implications for various domains, including human resource management, organizational behavior, employee engagement, and retention. Employers stand to benefit from this knowledge by crafting a compelling employer value proposition that not only attracts and retains top-tier talent but also fosters a positive work culture and fosters alignment with organizational values.

The authors employed the Scopus and Web of Science databases to conduct a comprehensive literature review in the field of study. After refining the results, they meticulously analyzed the content of abstracts and utilized the VOSviewer software tool to construct and visualize bibliometric networks, revealing strong relationships among the fields examined in this article (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Co-occurrence analysis for the selected literature.

Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer results.

A detailed exploration of specific relationships is presented in subsequent sections, where the authors elucidate critical theories and definitions linking personal and work values, values congruence, P-O fit, and the significance of the first year of employment.

## 2. Operationalization of the concepts used in the study

To ensure clarity and precision in the study, the authors have meticulously operationalized the key concepts under scrutiny. By delineating the operational definitions of work values, person-organization fit, and values congruence, they aimed to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the intricate dynamics at play within the realm of organizational behavior.

### Values and Work Values

Values represent fundamental components of human behavior and decision-making processes, embodying individuals' deeply ingrained beliefs and attitudes that influence their identity and behaviors in various contexts, including the workplace (Ros et al., 1999). Interdisciplinary research across psychology, sociology, and management underscores the pivotal role of values in shaping attitudes and behaviors. For instance, studies have revealed that employee values significantly impact job satisfaction, motivation, and retention (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Schwartz's theory of fundamental values categorizes values into ten distinct groups that exhibit relative stability across diverse cultures and demographics, encompassing self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). Understanding employees' values facilitates the creation of a work environment aligned with their preferences, leading to enhanced job engagement, commitment, and performance (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Co-occurrence analysis for employees' values, organizational commitment, and work engagement.

Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer results.

On the other hand, work values denote individuals' beliefs and attitudes concerning various work-related aspects, including job security, compensation, work-life balance, and meaningful work. These values guide employees' preferences, expectations, and behaviors in the workplace. Theoretical frameworks such as the theory of work adjustment (Dawis, 2005) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) offer insights into the role of work values in shaping job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and retention. Critical work values identified in investigated research encompass work-life balance, fair compensation, growth opportunities, meaningful work, and positive work culture (Van Vianen, 2000). Employees perceiving alignment between their work values and organizational practices are more likely to exhibit job satisfaction and commitment (Straatmann et al., 2020), contributing to organizational retention strategies (Yusliza et al., 2020).

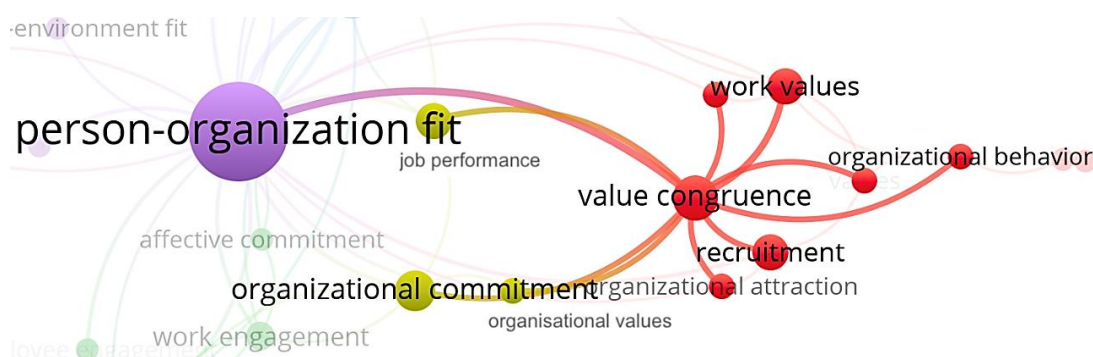
### Person-Organization Fit

Person-organization fit (P-O fit) is a pivotal concept in organizational behavior, reflecting the degree of compatibility between individuals and organizations regarding their values, goals, and personality traits. Acknowledged for its significance in recruitment, selection, and retention strategies, P-O fit correlates positively with job satisfaction, commitment, and employee performance (Cable, DeRue, 2002; Kristof, 1996).

In more recent studies, fit perceptions have also been indicated as the most potent predictor of candidate attraction concerning job and organization characteristics and the recruitment process (Uggerslev et al., 2012; Van Vianen, 2000). However, despite numerous examples of evidence supporting using P-O fit as an instrument for attracting talent, some problems continue to haze our present understanding of P-O fit experience in a job search context.

### Values congruence

Values congruence refers to the alignment between an individual's values and an organization's values, fostering a sense of identification, belongingness, and positive work behaviors (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Extant research indicates that values congruence influences employee motivation, commitment, and job satisfaction (Kristof, 1996) (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Co-occurrence analysis for P-O fit, values congruence, work values and organizational values.

Source: own elaboration based on VOSviewer results.

Additionally, values congruence correlates with positive work outcomes such as increased job performance and organizational attraction (Cable, Parsons, 2001; Chatman, 1991). Measurement methods for values congruence encompass self-reported measures and social network analysis, with its manifestation varying across organizational levels and being influenced by leadership, culture, and communication (Chatman, 1991).

The first year of employment holds significant implications for person-organisation fit, employee engagement, motivation and organizational commitment. Research underscores the importance of a positive onboarding experience and socialization practices during this period, contributing to higher job satisfaction, performance, and retention rates (Allen, Shanock, 2013; McCulloch, Turban, 2007; ZHU et al., 2017). Quality onboarding processes encompassing training, feedback, and mentoring facilitate employees' integration into the organization, fostering their acclimation to roles and organizational culture (Takeuchi et al., 2020).

### 3. Methods and Research Questions

This study adopted a comprehensive approach to investigate the interplay between personal and organizational values among employees during their first year of employment. In pursuit of this objective, four research questions were formulated, two of which pertained to the pre-employment period, while the remaining two addressed the period of employment within the respective company.

- Q1 – Do jobseekers exhibit interest in their potential employers' organizational values?
- Q2 – Do recruiters assess potential candidates based on their alignment with the organization's values?
- Q3 – Did newly employed workers encounter conflicts between personal and organizational values during their first year of employment?
- Q4 – What were the predominant areas of conflict experienced by employees?

To address the aforementioned research questions, a diagnostic survey method was employed utilizing a questionnaire survey (quantitative approach), involving the administration of surveys to a target sample comprising 300 recently employed individuals (N = 300) within new organizations. The respondents who participated in the CAWI survey were diverse in terms of gender, age, marital status, education, place of residence, employment size, work experience, frequency of job changes, industry of company operation, and job position held. The sample was selected from an internet panel provided by a research agency using screening criteria to ensure representation of the general population.

Additionally, a qualitative research procedure known as the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) was employed (Flanagan, 1954; Gremler, 2004). The critical incident technique comprises a series of procedures crafted to acquire direct observations of human behavior in

a manner that maximizes their potential usefulness in addressing practical concerns and developing overarching psychological principles. This technique delineates protocols for gathering observed incidents that hold particular significance and meet systematically established criteria. In this context, an incident refers to any observable human activity that is self-contained enough to allow for inferences and predictions about the individual carrying out the action. For an incident to be considered critical, it must occur in a situation where the purpose or intention of the action appears reasonably clear to the observer, and where the consequences of the action are distinct enough to leave little doubt about its effects. The research aimed to identify specific instances of positive and negative experiences reported by respondents. These experiences were then categorized and analyzed to identify prevalent themes and areas of conflict within the first year of employment.

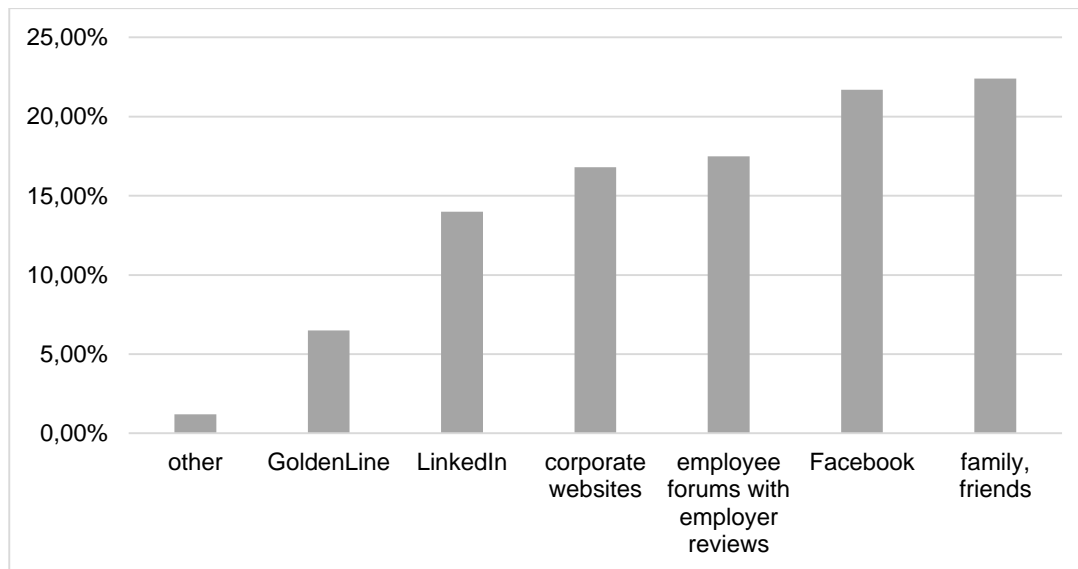
The research design allowed for a comprehensive exploration of values congruence and conflict resolution dynamics, spanning both pre- and post-employment phases, thereby providing valuable insights into the factors influencing employees' values alignment and organizational fit.

#### **4. Research results**

The findings of the study revealed that a significant proportion of job seekers sought information on organizational values during the job search process, with various sources influencing their decision-making. Additionally, the study highlighted the importance of values congruence and effective onboarding processes in shaping employees' experiences and outcomes during the first year of employment.

Of the 177 individuals (59.0%) who confirmed seeking information on organizational values, many relied on personal connections for insights, with 22.4% consulting close friends or family. This underscores the significance of informal networks in shaping perceptions of organizations, as individuals glean insights into organizational culture and image through interactions within their immediate circles.

Social media platforms, notably Facebook, were another popular source, utilized by 21.7% of respondents, while 17.5% accessed dedicated websites for employer reviews and insights. In contrast, professional platforms like LinkedIn and GoldenLine were less frequently utilized, with 14% and 6.5% of respondents, respectively, turning to these channels for organizational information (Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** Sources of knowledge of organizational values.

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 177 (only the group of people who indicated seeking content on organizational values).

Analysis of the surveyed sample's education level revealed no discernible trend in their propensity to seek organizational values information. Regardless of educational background, respondents exhibited a consistent inclination towards analyzing organizational values during the job search process. This indicates a uniform practice across various professional groups, with individuals across education levels demonstrating similar levels of engagement in seeking organizational values information (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

*Education vs. seeking knowledge of organizational values*

Age (years)	N	% of N
< 25	39	22,0
26-40	42	23,7
<b>41-55</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>34,5</b>
> 56	35	19,8
Total	177	100,0

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 177 (only respondents who indicated seeking content on organizational values).

Individuals aged between 26 and 55 (78.0%) demonstrated a higher propensity for contemplating employment-related matters, while younger (22%) and older (19.8%) individuals showed less inclination towards considering organizational values during their job search (Tab. 2).

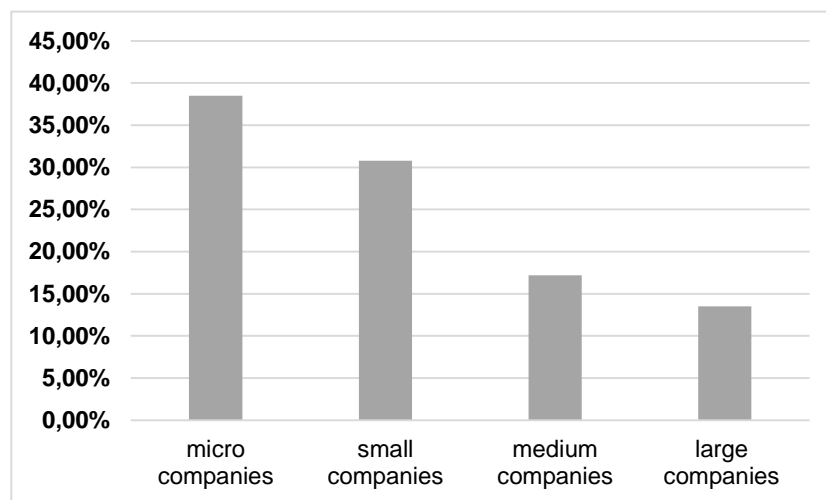
**Table 2.**  
*Age and drawing knowledge of organizational values*

Level of education	N	% of N
<b>Lower</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>36,7</b>
Secondary	61	34,5
Higher	51	28,8
Total	177	100,0

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 177 (only the respondents who indicated seeking content on organizational values).

The questionnaire asked employees whether personal and organizational values topics were discussed during the job interview. Surprisingly, the vast majority (91%) reported that these topics were not broached.

Subsequently, the researchers probed whether employees encountered conflicts between their personal values and their employer's organizational values within the first year of employment. While a significant portion (82.7%) indicated no such conflicts, further investigation revealed numerous examples of conflict areas (Tab. 4). Among those who reported experiencing such issues (17.3%), values incongruence was most encountered by individuals employed in micro companies with 1 to 9 employees (38.5%) and small companies with 10 to 49 employees (30.8%). Conversely, respondents in larger companies were less likely to report such challenges 17.2% for medium companies and only 13.5% for large companies (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** Company size and experience of value conflict.

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 52.

In terms of industry, a majority worked in the logistics and transportation (25.0%) and manufacturing (20.0%) sectors, with smaller proportions in healthcare, finance, and technology (Tab. 3).

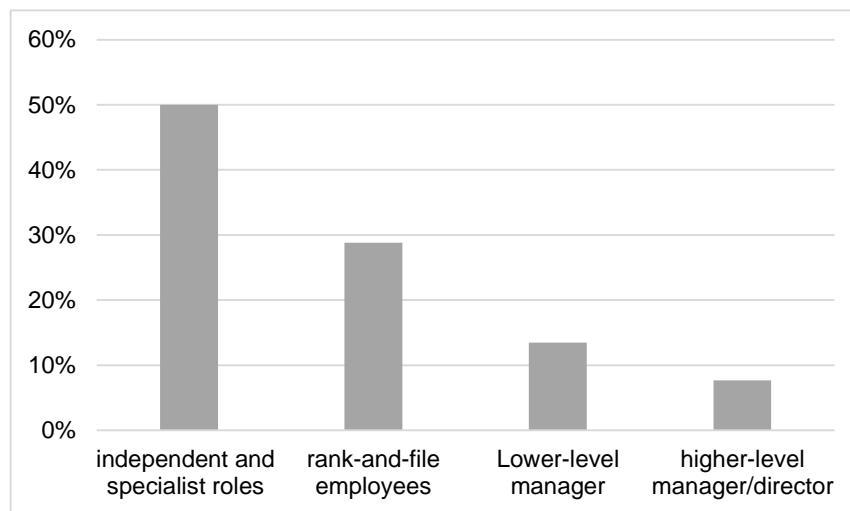


**Table 3.**  
*Industry and the experience of value conflict*

Industry	N	%
commerce and distribution	6	11,5
IT	9	17,3
finance, insurance	7	13,5
<b>logistics, transportation</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19,2</b>
<b>manufacturing</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19,2</b>
education	5	9,6
state administration	3	5,8
health care	1	1,9
fintech	1	1,9
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 52.

Those most affected by conflicts in values were employees in independent and specialist roles within the company (50.0%). In contrast, such experiences were less common among rank-and-file employees (28.8%) and least prevalent among managerial positions (21.2%) (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Occupied job position and experience of value conflict.

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 300.

The final phase of the research employed the Critical Incident Technique (CIT)(Gremier, 2004), where participants were tasked with recounting both their most positive and negative experiences during their initial year of employment. For the scope of this article, the researchers directed their attention towards the narratives detailing the most adverse encounters. Surprisingly, nearly half of the respondents disclosed encountering negative incidents, albeit without directly attributing them to conflicts in values, as previously discussed (Tab. 4).

**Table 4.***Positive and negative experiences in the first year of employment*

<b>POSITIVE EXPERIENCES (N = 300)</b>	
N	%
200	66,7
<b>NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES (N = 300)</b>	
N	%
<b>131</b>	<b>43,7</b>

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 300.

The researchers sought to identify the prevalent themes within these negative experiences and ascertain if certain issues were more recurrent than others. Following a meticulous analysis of the responses provided by 131 participants, the researchers identified five distinct areas that emerged as particularly salient (Tab. 5).

**Table 5.***Most salient areas of negative experiences in the first year of employment*

<b>Area of conflict</b>	<b>No of occurrences</b>	<b>% N</b>
<b>Conflicts with the supervisor</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>41%</b>
Conflicts with co-workers, bad atmosphere	27	30%
Lack of support during the initial period of employment/ lack of implementation in the new position	17	19%
Too much workload	13	14%
Unfairness in salary calculating/payment	9	10%

Source: own elaboration based on analysis of CAWI survey data among employees N = 131.

The authors uncovered a noteworthy trend regarding the sources from which job seekers gather information about organizational values. While informal channels such as personal connections and social media platforms like Facebook were commonly utilized, professional networking platforms such as LinkedIn and GoldenLine were less frequently accessed. This finding challenges the conventional notion that job seekers primarily rely on professional networks for such information, suggesting a broader landscape of information sources that employers should consider when crafting their employer value proposition.

Additionally, the investigation into conflicts between personal and organizational values revealed intriguing patterns across different organizational sizes and employee roles. While conflicts were more prevalent among individuals in independent or specialist positions within micro and small companies, larger organizations exhibited lower rates of values incongruence. These findings shed light on the nuanced dynamics of values alignment within organizational contexts, highlighting the importance of tailoring strategies to address values-related challenges based on organizational size and employee roles.

## 5. Conclusions

The study underscores the pivotal role of organizational values in the job search process and highlights potential conflicts that may emerge between personal and organizational values during employees' initial year of employment. Job seekers demonstrate a proactive approach in seeking information about organizational values, predominantly through informal channels like family and friends, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook. However, despite this proactive stance, discussions on personal and organizational values during job interviews are notably lacking, revealing a gap in the recruitment process.

Although the majority of employees did not report conflicts between personal and organizational values in their inaugural year of employment, those who did were primarily from micro and small companies, holding independent or specialist positions. This underscores the necessity for organizations, particularly smaller entities, to place greater emphasis on values alignment during recruitment and onboarding processes to preempt potential conflicts and bolster employee satisfaction and retention.

## 6. Practical Implications

Drawing insights from the research outcomes, a multitude of actionable recommendations arise for businesses striving to enhance values alignment and mitigate conflicts within their workplace environments. These recommendations, if diligently implemented, can significantly contribute to fostering a harmonious and values-driven organizational culture.

Firstly, integrating discussions on values into the recruitment and onboarding processes stands out as a paramount strategy. Employers should actively incorporate inquiries regarding personal and organizational values during job interviews, ensuring that prospective employees understand and resonate with the company's core values from the outset. Moreover, providing comprehensive insights into organizational values and culture during the onboarding phase is imperative. This could entail conducting orientation sessions explicitly addressing the organization's values, mission, and vision, thereby instilling a sense of alignment and commitment among new hires from the onset of their employment journey.

Secondly, promoting values alignment through inclusive work environments is pivotal. Businesses should strive to cultivate a culture that celebrates diversity of thought and perspective, fostering an environment where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to express their authentic selves. Organizing workshops and training sessions centered on values alignment can facilitate open dialogues and promote understanding among employees, thereby strengthening the organizational fabric and promoting a shared sense of purpose.

Thirdly, providing training and support for navigating values conflicts is essential. Employers should equip both managers and employees with the necessary tools and skills to effectively address and resolve conflicts arising from values misalignment. This may involve offering conflict resolution training, establishing channels for transparent communication and feedback, and providing access to resources and support networks. By empowering employees to navigate values conflicts constructively, organizations can foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and mutual respect.

Lastly, regular assessment of values alignment among employees is imperative for organizational success. Employers should implement mechanisms to routinely evaluate employees' perceptions of values alignment and identify potential areas of discrepancy or conflict. This could involve conducting surveys, focus groups, or one-on-one interviews to solicit feedback and insights from employees regarding their alignment with organizational values. By regularly assessing values alignment, organizations can proactively address emerging issues, reinforce positive behaviors, and align strategic initiatives with the core values and aspirations of their workforce.

In summary, by adopting these key strategies—integrating values discussions into recruitment and onboarding processes, promoting values alignment through inclusive work environments, providing training and support for navigating values conflicts, and regularly assessing values alignment among employees—businesses can cultivate a harmonious and values-driven work environment that fosters employee engagement, satisfaction, and organizational success.

## **7. Recommendations for Further Research**

For future research endeavors, a deeper exploration into the determinants influencing values congruence and conflict resolution across various organizational settings would be beneficial. Longitudinal studies tracking employees' perceptions of values alignment over time could yield valuable insights into the dynamics of Person-Organization fit (P-O fit) and its ramifications on employee attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, investigating the impact of leadership and organizational culture on fostering values alignment and alleviating conflicts would contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of this multifaceted phenomenon.

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