



Authenticity at Work: A Matter of Fit?

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ABSTRACT

Authenticity at work refers to the extent to which a worker feels in touch with their true self while at work. At first sight this concept seems to overlap with the concept of person-environment (P-E) fit, that is, the degree to which an individual experiences good fit with their work environment. Drawing on a sample of 867 Dutch gifted workers, structural equation modeling was used to investigate (i) whether authenticity at work and P-E fit can be distinguished, and (ii) how authenticity at work and P-E fit were associated with employee well-being. As expected, confirmatory factor analysis revealed that authenticity at work and P-E fit were distinct from each other. Moreover, the mediated effect of authenticity at work was stronger for two negative forms of well-being (burnout and boredom) than for two positive forms of well-being (work engagement and job satisfaction). The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed, especially focusing on the distinction between authenticity and P-E fit.

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Over the years, the concept of authenticity (i.e., the degree to which a person acts in agreement with one's true self) has received considerable attention. Authenticity has been found to be relevant in many contexts, including the work environment (e.g., Emmerich & Rigotti, 2017; Reis, Trullen & Story, 2016). Authenticity at work can be construed as a subjectively experienced phenomenon that emerges when there is a strong congruence (or "fit") between a person and his/her work environment (e.g., Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014a). However, since person-environment (P-E) fit can be defined as the congruence among an individual and his or her work environment that results when both match well (Edwards, 2008), it is important to examine the associations between authenticity and P-E fit to see if these concepts can be distinguished from each other.

Both authenticity at work and P-E fit have been related to various aspects of employee well-being. For example, Van den Bosch and Taris (2014b) showed that authenticity accounted for on average thirteen percent of the variance in well-being (the three dimensions of burnout, i.e., cynicism, emotional exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment, Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach & Jackson, 1996) after controlling for

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relevant work characteristics. Similarly, the considerable body of research on the relations among P-E fit, well-being, and work outcomes also shows that good fit is associated with positive outcomes for both the person and the organization (e.g., Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Oh et al., 2014). Interestingly, despite the interest in authenticity and P-E fit as well as the fact that both refer to the congruence of a person and the work environment, at present no research has examined the effects of authenticity at work and P-E fit simultaneously in predicting well-being. The current research addresses this gap by examining (a) the distinctiveness of authenticity at work and P-E fit; can these concepts be distinguished empirically? and (b) the unique relationships of both constructs with two types of employee well-being (i.e., positive indicators of well-being: work engagement and job satisfaction, and indicators of negative well-being, that is, burnout and boredom). By focusing on these two topics the present study provides novel insights into the growing body of knowledge on authenticity at work.

Authenticity at Work

Authenticity is sometimes considered a trait-like concept that does not change much across time or situations (e.g., Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008). Conversely, state-based conceptualizations of authenticity propose that authenticity results from the congruence between the person and the specific environment in which s/he operates (cf. Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014a). Since the work environment is subject to change (e.g., when tasks change or when colleagues leave), the degree of congruence between a person and his/her environment (i.e., their experienced authenticity) may change as well. Thus, it makes sense to conceptualize authenticity *at work*—a specific environment that is subject to change—as a state in our investigation of the associations between authenticity at work, P-E fit, and well-being.

In his seminal work on the self, Barrett-Lennard (1998) mentioned three inner consistencies: a person's primary subjective experience, their symbolized awareness, and their outward behavior and communication. Consistent with this view, Wood et al. (2008) measured trait authenticity in terms of three dimensions: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. Drawing on this conceptualization, Van den Bosch and Taris (2014a) developed a work-specific state-based measure of authenticity. The first dimension of authenticity, *self-alienation*, is the subjective experience of "not knowing who one is" at work. This dimension refers to employees who feel out of touch with their core self at work, with higher levels of experienced self-alienation being associated with psychopathology (cf. Wood et al., 2008). The second dimension of authenticity, *authentic living*, concerns the degree to which employees are true to their selves at work and act in accordance with their personal values and beliefs. Employees who engage in work activities that fit their own values and beliefs are characteristic for this dimension. The third dimension of authenticity refers to the extent to which an individual *accepts external influence* of others and believes that (s)he meets the expectations of others. An optimal level of experienced authenticity is reached when an employee

experiences low levels of self-alienation, high levels of authentic living, and low levels of accepting external influence.

From a social-psychological perspective, feelings of authenticity have been conceptualized as emerging from a strong overlap of one's actual self ("who he or she is in general," Gan & Chen, 2017) and one's ideal self (the self that embodies one's hopes, aspirations and wishes for oneself, i.e., the person one would like to be, cf. Barrett-Lennard, 1998; Higgins, 1987) and ought self (the self that we—or others—feel we should be, Higgins, 1987; Vannini & Franzese, 2008). Discrepancies between the actual self on the one hand and the ideal and ought selves on the other are associated with adverse outcomes such as dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, self-criticism, agitation, and lack of authenticity (Gan & Chen, 2017; Higgins, 1987). In a sense, this reasoning is a specification of Festinger's (1957) proposition that a person who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, values, or ideas will experience cognitive dissonance, that is, psychological discomfort. In both approaches, lack of authenticity is an expression of a person's awareness that their true or actual self does not fit well with the way they feel or act at work and that others, rather than they themselves, determine how they behave. Consistent with this reasoning, feelings of alienation and not staying close to oneself at work tend to be associated with higher levels of burnout (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014b). Conversely, feeling authentic at work is associated with high levels of work engagement and satisfaction (Metin, Taris, Peeters, Van Beek & Van den Bosch, 2016). Apparently, workers who stay close to their selves at work and participate in activities that fit with their core self, are more likely to experience favorable outcomes than others.

Person-Environment Fit

A large body of literature attests to the relevance of P-E fit theory for industrial and organizational psychology (e.g., Edwards, 2008; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). The P-E fit literature distinguishes among several types of fit, including person-job (P-J) and person-organization (P-O) fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Muchinsky and Monahan (1987) further distinguished between two types of person-environment fit: supplementary versus complementary fit. *Supplementary fit* occurs when an individual is similar to other people in his or her environment. *Complementary fit* refers to the match between an individual's talents and the corresponding needs of the environment. Complementary fit is characterized by the added value of the person in the context of the needs of the environment, that is, the qualities of the individual add substantial value to and fill the needs of the environment.

Meta-analytic findings have shown that workers reporting higher levels of P-E fit hold more positive work attitudes and perform better than others (e.g., Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). These findings apply to both complementary and supplementary fit. However, Piasentin and Chapman (2007) assessed supplementary and complementary fit simultaneously, finding that their effects on outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment differed. Similarly, Guan, Deng, Risavy, Bond, and Li (2011) showed that the effects of supplementary and complementary fit on outcomes such as commitment and organizational citizenship behavior differed. Thus, it appears that the type of fit experienced by employees affects the strength of its

associations with work outcomes. Therefore, we distinguish between complementary P-O fit and supplementary P-O and P-J fit.

Well-being

This study distinguishes between two positive forms of well-being (work engagement and job satisfaction) and two negative forms of well-being (burnout and boredom). *Work engagement* is a positive, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working and the willingness to invest effort in one's work in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by enthusiasm, pride and challenge. Finally, absorption refers to being deeply engrossed in one's work. Engaged employees experience good health, feel more committed to the organization (Schaufeli & Schaufeli, 2008), perform better (Cesario & Chambel, 2017), and behave proactively (Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a positive, pleasurable emotional state that results from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). It has been related to various indicators of mental and physical health. For example, in a meta-analysis of almost 500 studies, job satisfaction was strongly related to mental health, with lower levels of satisfaction being associated with higher levels of burnout, depression, and anxiety, and lower levels of physical health (Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005).

Burnout

Burnout is a negative psychological condition that is characterized by emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment (Schaufeli et al., 1996). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of fatigue and depletion of one's emotional resources. Cynicism captures a distant or indifferent attitude to one's work. Finally, personal accomplishment refers to a lack of professional efficacy and the tendency to evaluate one's work negatively. The first two dimensions, exhaustion and cynicism, constitute the core of the burnout syndrome (Schaufeli & Taris, 2005). Burnout is associated with negative work outcomes, such as low commitment to the organization they work for, lower job satisfaction, a higher tendency to leave the organization they work for, and low performance (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Van Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris, & Schreurs, 2012).

Finally, *boredom* refers to a state of low arousal and dissatisfaction that results from an understimulating work environment (Mikulas & Vodanovich, 1993). Reijseger et al. (2012) reported that bored employees felt that time passed by slowly and that they felt little identification with their work activities. As expected, in this study low job demands and low job resources were associated with higher levels of boredom. Further, boredom is associated with higher levels of psychological distress and absenteeism, lower levels of job satisfaction and low job performance (Kass, Vodanovich, & Callender, 2001; Watt & Hargis, 2010).

The Present Study

Authenticity and P-E Fit

Conceptually, authenticity at work and P-E supplementary fit show some similarity, since they both focus on the congruence of the individual and the environment. P-E fit refers to the match between the environment and person. This match is expected to relate to authenticity: the better the P-E fit, the higher the feelings of experienced authenticity, and vice versa. Because both constructs capture the congruence between the person and his/her work environment, the question emerges to what extent authenticity at work and P-E fit differ. While authenticity focuses on experienced *feelings* of being in touch with one self at work, P-E fit focuses on the individual's *cognitive* assessment whether there is a good match between this person and the organization/job. Thus, the difference between authenticity and P-E fit hinges on the psychological domain; the former is primarily affective in nature, whereas the latter is primarily cognitive. Therefore, we expect authenticity at work and P-E fit (i.e., supplementary fit, measured as both P-O fit and P-J fit), to be distinct (Hypothesis 1).

Regardless of whether one focuses on supplementary or complementary fit (Guan et al., 2011), high fit is associated with positive outcomes. Employees perceiving complementary fit experience fit as originating from their perception that their unique skills and qualities add value to the organization they work for. These workers are cognitively aware of the dissimilarity between themselves and their job or organization. Conversely, employees experiencing supplementary fit perceive themselves and their environment as similar. The awareness of similarity is expected to relate to feelings of authenticity at work, with employees who feel similar to their environment will show higher levels of authenticity than others. Therefore, the relation between authenticity at work and complementary P-O fit will be weaker than the relationship between authenticity at work and supplementary P-O and P-J fit (Hypothesis 2).

Mediation Model

Figure 1 presents the model for this study. Employees are assumed to assess the consistency between their self and the environment, and the match between person and environment will relate to the level of experienced authenticity: the better the P-E fit,

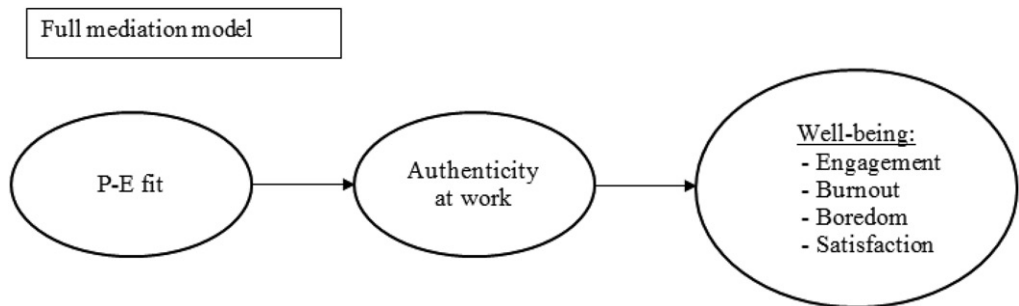


Figure 1. Heuristic model for the associations among P-E fit, Authenticity at work and well-being outcomes.

the more authentic one will feel. If an employee's cognitive assessment results in good fit with the working environment and assesses this environment as similar (supplementary fit), higher levels of authenticity at work should occur. In that case the environment and the worker share common values, meaning that there is no need for the latter to engage in behavior that does not fit their core self. This cognitive process should relate positively to authenticity.

Previous research on authenticity at work has shown that authentic workers are intrinsically motivated and identify fully with their jobs (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2018), and do not need to deal with difficulties of not being themselves at work (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014b). Conversely, low-authenticity workers identify less strongly with their job. This process is expected to relate to employee well-being. Specifically, authenticity at work should relate positively to positive forms of well-being (i.e., work engagement and job satisfaction) and negatively to negative forms of well-being (i.e., boredom and burnout) (Hypothesis 3).

Person-environment (P-E) fit theory states that stress arises from incongruence or misfit (Edwards, Caplan & Harrison, 1998). Larger misfits between a person and environment will induce lower levels of well-being. Chatman's (1989) person-organization fit model focuses on the fit between a person's values and the values of the organization, proposing that a better match between the person's values and those of the organization enhances worker's performance and well-being (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). Based on this reasoning and consistent with previous findings concerning state authenticity at work, we expect that authenticity at work will mediate the relationship between P-E fit and well-being. The cognitive judgment of fit is expected to result in feelings of authenticity, which will ultimately lead to well-being.

Method

Participants and Procedure

The present study was conducted among a sample of highly gifted workers. Part of the sample (approximately 2,000 respondents) was contacted through the Dutch branch of MENSA, an international society of highly gifted individuals. People can only join this organization after taking an intelligence test that shows that their IQ belongs to the top 2% of the population. All members received an email from the organization which described the purpose and relevance of the study. The other part of the sample was contacted through several online communities focusing on highly gifted individuals. In order to be included in the study, participants were required to report their IQ and which IQ test they had taken.

In both cases, the guidelines of the American Psychological Association, the Dutch Association of Psychologists and our local ethical review board were followed. Participants received an email message that invited them to participate in an online survey study, informing them about the aims and design of the study, and indicating that participation was voluntary and anonymous. Participants did not receive any monetary compensation for their contribution. By clicking on a link in the invitation, the participants were led to the survey. They could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted. Informed consent to use their data was given by clicking the "finish" button

on the last page of the survey. These efforts resulted in a total sample of 1,262 participants. An exact response rate could not be computed, since it was unclear how many eligible workers had been contacted. Part of the participants ($N = 368$) were self-employed and were excluded from further analysis. After list-wise deletion of observations with missing values, the final sample contained 867 employees, 802 of which were MENSA members.

Of these 867 participants, 383 (44.2%) were female and 484 (55.8%) were male. Their average age was 41.6 years ($SD = 9.36$), and on average they had worked for 18.7 years ($SD = 9.67$). Nearly half (46.0%) of the participants held a master's degree, 32.4% held a bachelor's degree, and most of the remaining participants (21%) had completed their intermediate vocational education or had completed high school only.

Measures

Authenticity at Work

Authenticity was measured with the Individual Authenticity Measure at Work (IAM Work; Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014a). The IAM Work taps the three dimensions of authenticity distinguished by Wood et al. (2008) using four items for each dimension: authentic living (e.g., "At work, I always stand by what I believe in," Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$), self-alienation (for example, "I don't feel who I truly am at work," $\alpha = .97$), and accepting external influence (among others, "At work, I feel the need to do what others expect me to do," $\alpha = .78$). Participants were instructed to keep in mind their most recent work position for the past four weeks. They should then indicate how much each statement applied to them at work, using a 7-point Likert-scale (1 = "does not describe me at all, 7 = "describes me very well").

Boredom

Boredom was assessed using the six-item Dutch Boredom Scale (DUBS; Reijseger et al., 2012). Items include "It seems as if my working day never ends" and "At work, time goes by very slowly" (0 = "never," 6 = "always," Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$).

Burnout

Burnout was measured with two scales, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, of the Maslach Burnout Inventory–General Survey (MBI-GS; Schaufeli et al., 1996). Emotional exhaustion was measured with five items (e.g., "I feel emotionally drained from my work," Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) and cynicism included four items (such as "I doubt the significance of my work," $\alpha = .88$). Answer categories ranged from 0 ("never") to 6 ("every day").

Satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction was assessed by three items taken from Van Veldhoven, De Jonge, Broersen, Kompier, and Meijman (2002). An example item is "Overall, I am satisfied with my job" (1 = "totally disagree," 5 = "totally agree," Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$).

Work Engagement

Work engagement was assessed with the nine-item version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). The UWES taps the three aspects of work engagement (vigor, dedication, and absorption). Example items are: “At my work, I feel bursting with energy” (vigor); “My job inspires me” (dedication); and “I feel happy when I am working intensely” (absorption) (0 = “never,” 6 = “always”). The internal consistencies were .89 for vigor, .90 for dedication, and .82 for absorption, respectively.

Demographic Variables

The study included four control variables: gender, age, work experience (in years), and educational level. Educational level was presented as a multiple choice question with six ordered options (0 = “primary education,” 6 = “academic degree”).

P-E Fit

In order to test our hypotheses, we developed an 11-item, direct measure of perceived P-E fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) consisting of three scales: person-job (P-J) supplementary fit, person-organization (P-O) supplementary fit, and person-organization (P-O) complementary fit. To examine the factorial validity of these scales, three models were tested and compared using AMOS 21.0 (Arbuckle, 2012). The first model was a one-factor model, with all items loading on this factor. This model did not fit the data well, $\chi^2(df=44) = 1,912.69$; RMSEA = .22 (90% CI = .21–.23); NFI = .69; CFI = .69. The second model was a two-factor model, with the complementary items and the supplementary items loading on two separate first-order factors. This model fitted the data better, $\chi^2(df=43) = 448.48$; RMSEA = .10 (90% CI = .10–.11); NFI = .93; CFI = .93. The difference between the one-factor model and the two-factor model was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(df=1) = 1,464.21$, $p < .001$.

The third model was a three-factor model, with P-O fit supplementary, P-J fit supplementary, and P-O fit complementary as three separate factors. This model also fitted the data well, $\chi^2(df=41) = 157.34$; RMSEA = .06 (90% CI = .05–.07); NFI = .97; CFI = .98, with all fit indices meeting their criteria for good fit (cf. Byrne, 2010). The difference between the two-factor model and the three-factor model was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(df=2) = 291.14$, $p < .001$, meaning that the model with three separate P-E fit factors fitted the data best. Thus, three fit factors (P-O supplementary, P-O complementary, and P-J supplementary fit) could be distinguished. Table 1 presents the items with their standardized factor loadings. Table 2 presents the correlations among the three fit factors. Coefficient α was .86 for person-organization supplementary fit, .88 for person-organization complementary fit, and .90 for Person-work supplementary fit.

Statistical Analysis

The model examined in the present study was tested with structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 21.0 (Arbuckle, 2012). Five models were tested and compared using

Table 1. Standardized Factor Loadings of the 3-Factor Model of P-E Fit.

Item		Factor		
		P-J fit supplementary	P-O fit supplementary	P-O fit complementary
1	I fit my job well.	.79		
2	This job fits all my wishes and desires.	.86		
3	I am still not tired of the job I am doing.	.81		
4	There is a good match between what my job offers me and what I am looking for in a job.	.87		
5	My organization offers me exactly what I am looking for.		.89	
6	I cannot imagine an organization that would fit me better.		.77	
7	My organization meets all my wishes and desires.		.80	
8	This organization's culture fits me well.		.63	
9	I am important for my organization since my personal values differ from theirs.			.74
10	I am valuable for my organization, exactly because I valuable other things.			.93
11	Due to my divergent ideas I am important for my organization.			.86

maximum likelihood estimation procedures. Model fit was evaluated using the χ^2 statistic, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the normed fit index (NFI), and the comparative fit index (CFI).

Main Analysis

In order to test the study hypotheses we applied Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two-step approach. First we examined whether the concepts of authenticity at work and person-environment fit could be treated as different constructs. To this aim we compared five competing models using confirmatory factor analysis. The one-factor model (M1) proposed that all items of authenticity and P-E fit would load on one latent factor. Thus, this model assumed that P-E fit and authenticity are essentially the same concept. The 4-factor model (M2) proposed that all items of authenticity loaded on one latent factor, whereas the items of P-O supplementary fit, P-O complementary fit, and P-J fit would load on three separate latent factors. For all models with more than one latent factor we allowed the factors to correlate. The third model was a six-factor model (M3), with authentic living, self-alienation, accepting external influence, P-O supplementary fit, P-O complementary fit, and P-J supplementary fit as six separate first-order factors. The fourth model was a second-order factor model (M4), with three first-order factors (authentic living, self-alienation, and accepting external influence) loading on a single, overarching latent factor (i.e., authenticity) and the three other first-order factors (P-O supplementary fit, P-O complementary fit, and the P-J fit) loading on separate factors. This model (M4) also tested the relevance of the complementary fit construct in relation to the concept of authenticity at work (Hypothesis 2). The fifth model was a double second-order factor model (M5), with the three subscales of authenticity loading a second-order latent factor (authenticity) and the remaining subscales of P-E fit loading on a second second-order latent factor (P-E fit).

In the second step of this two-step approach we tested two possible models. The first was the hypothesized full mediation model (cf. Figure 1). In this model the relationship between P-E fit and the study outcomes was fully mediated by authenticity at work.

Table 2. Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations for the Study Variables.

Variable	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)
Age	41.6	9.36	–																	
Educational level	5.11	1.09	–.05	–																
Work experience	18.7	9.67	.89	–.16	–															
Gender	1.44	–	–.13	.11	–.14	–														
Authenticity	4.63	1.02	.11	.05	.11	–.07	–													
Authentic living	5.30	1.04	.07	.10	.06	–.05	.76	–												
Self-alienation	3.37	1.81	–.08	–.08	–.08	.02	–.85	–.50	–											
Accepting influence	4.04	1.17	–.11	.09	–.12	.09	–.63	–.32	.25	–										
Work engagement	4.35	1.26	.10	.07	.11	–.05	.58	.44	–.61	–.20	–									
Vigor	4.41	1.36	.10	.04	.11	–.06	.58	.42	–.59	–.24	.92	–								
Dedication	4.47	1.42	.08	.09	.09	–.05	.60	.44	–.64	–.19	.95	.82	–							
Absorption	4.16	1.32	.09	.07	.09	–.04	.43	.36	–.45	–.12	.91	.74	.80	–						
Emotional exhaustion	3.19	1.43	–.10	–.03	–.11	.10	–.59	–.36	.59	.32	–.52	–.60	–.49	–.36	–					
Cynicism	3.28	1.51	–.05	–.01	–.05	.00	–.63	–.39	.70	.22	–.67	–.64	–.69	–.51	.65	–				
Job satisfaction	3.26	1.08	.07	.05	.08	–.06	.62	.42	–.71	–.17	.77	.72	.80	.62	–.58	–.74	–			
Boredom	3.54	1.44	–.23	–.06	–.21	.01	–.45	–.32	.52	.09	–.54	–.52	–.53	–.45	.42	.57	–.56	–		
P-O fit supplementary	2.66	.86	.04	.06	.04	–.02	.50	.35	–.59	–.09	.55	.48	.60	.45	–.43	–.59	.71	–.39	–	
P-O fit complementary	3.10	.93	.10	.02	.10	–.15	.16	.18	–.07	–.14	.21	.19	.20	.19	–.10	–.09	.15	–.09	.07	–
P-J fit supplementary	2.99	.96	.12	.11	.13	–.05	.57	.40	–.66	–.13	.70	.61	.74	.58	–.47	–.67	.79	–.55	.72	.14

Note. Correlations of .08 are significant at $p < .05$, correlations of .12 are significant at $p < .01$. $N = 867$.

Table 3. Authenticity and P-E Fit: Fit of Six Competing Models.

Model	χ^2	df	NFI	RMSEA	CFI
M1: 1-factor model	6,881.26	230	.54	.18	.55
M2: 4-factor model	3,169.00	224	.79	.12	.80
M3: 6-factor model	814.07	215	.95	.06	.96
M4: One second-order factor model	904.24	221	.94	.06	.95
M5: Double second-order factor model	780.22	164	.94	.07	.95
M6: Final model	612.49	163	.95	.06	.97

Note. $N = 867$.

The second model was a partial mediation model. In this model the relationship between P-E fit and the study outcome variables was partially mediated by the concept of authenticity at work. For the mediation analysis we applied the bootstrapping procedure proposed by Preacher and Hayes (2008) with the number of bootstrap samples set at 2,000 and bias-corrected confidence intervals set at 95%. Hypotheses were tested by comparing the fit indices corresponding with each model. Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations among all study variables.

Results

Authenticity and P-E Fit

The results of the CFAs are shown in Table 3. Model M1 (i.e., the 1-factor model with all items loading on one factor) did not fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 6,881.26$, $df = 230$; $NFI = .54$; $RMSEA = .18$; $CFI = .55$). Model M2 (the 4-factor model with all authenticity items loading on a single latent factor and three separate fit constructs) also showed poor fit ($\chi^2 = 3,169.00$, $df = 224$; $NFI = .79$; $RMSEA = .12$; $CFI = .80$). Model M3 (the 6-factor model with three separate authenticity dimensions and three separate fit dimensions) showed a good fit ($\chi^2 = 814.07$, $df = 215$; $NFI = .95$; $RMSEA = .06$; $CFI = .96$).

Hypothesis 2 stated that supplementary fit should be more strongly associated with authenticity at work than complementary fit. To test this assumption, we allowed the latent factor of authenticity at work to correlate with the three separate first-order fit factors (Model M4). This model fitted the data well ($\chi^2 = 904.24$, $df = 221$; $NFI = .94$; $RMSEA = .06$; $CFI = .95$). Results showed that the correlation between P-O fit supplementary and authenticity at work was .69 ($p < .001$), the correlation between P-J supplementary and authenticity at work was .76 ($p < .001$), and that the correlation between P-O fit complementary and authenticity at work was only .10 ($p < .01$), lending credence to our reasoning that complementary fit would be only weakly related to authenticity at work. We tested this hypothesis by performing two additional analyses. First, we constrained the correlation between authenticity at work and P-O fit to be equal to the correlation between P-O complementary fit and authenticity at work. This resulted in a significantly poorer fit of the model ($\chi^2 = 1,047.89$, $df = 222$; $NFI = .93$; $RMSEA = .07$; $CFI = .94$), $\Delta\chi^2(df = 1) = 143.65$, $p < .001$. Second, we constrained the correlation between authenticity at work and P-J fit to be equal to the correlation between P-O fit complementary fit and authenticity at work. This also resulted in poorer fit of the model ($\chi^2 = 1,097.98$, $df = 222$; $NFI = .93$; $RMSEA = .07$; $CFI = .94$), $\Delta\chi^2(df = 1) = 193.74$, $p < .001$. These findings strengthen our reasoning that complementary fit should relate only weakly to authenticity at work (Hypothesis 2 supported).

Table 4. Direct and Indirect Effects After Executing Bootstrapping for the Work Outcomes in the Present Study.

	Estimate	SE	Percentage explained variance in well-being (%)
Direct effects			
P-E fit → engagement	.61	.05	37.2
P-E fit → satisfaction	.89	.05	79.2
P-E fit → burnout	-.28	.07	7.8
P-E fit → boredom	-.38	.07	14.4
Indirect effects			
P-E fit → authenticity → engagement	.20	.06	4.0
P-E fit → authenticity → satisfaction	.19	.05	3.6
P-E fit → authenticity → burnout	-.50	.07	25.0
P-E fit → authenticity → boredom	-.25	.07	6.3

Note. $p < .001$ for all estimates. Pathways are standardized estimates.

Clearly, complementary fit is considerably less important for authenticity than the other types of fit. For simplicity, complimentary fit was omitted in subsequent models.

Model M5 (i.e., the double second-order factor model with the three authenticity subscales loading on one higher-order factor and the two remaining P-E fit subscales loading on the other higher-order factor) showed good fit ($\chi^2 = 780.22$, $df = 164$; NFI = .94; RMSEA = .07; CFI = .95). Model M6 (the final model) was adjusted to obtain optimal fit. In this model, we allowed two items of the accepting external influence scale of the authenticity construct to correlate. The fit of this model was excellent ($\chi^2 = 612.49$, $df = 163$; NFI = .95; RMSEA = .06; CFI = .97). Based on these findings, we concluded that the expected factor structure was confirmed, demonstrating that the concept of authenticity at work and the concept of person-environment fit indeed represent two different constructs (Hypothesis 1 supported).

Structural Analyses

In order to examine the associations among P-E fit, authenticity and well-being, we tested two competing models. The first model (the full mediation model, cf. Figure 1) showed reasonable fit, $\chi^2(df = 1,011) = 3,598.20$; RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .05–.06); NFI = .90; CFI = .93. The second model (the partial mediation model) showed a marginally better fit, $\chi^2(df = 1,007) = 3,463.13$; RMSEA = .05 (90% CI = .05–.06); NFI = .91; CFI = .93 (Byrne, 2010). The difference between both models was significant, $\Delta\chi^2(df = 4) = 135.07$, $p < .001$, indicating that the partial mediation model fitted the data better. Therefore, the remainder of this study focuses on the partial mediation model.

Mediation Analysis

Table 4 shows the direct effects of P-E fit on the work outcomes, its indirect effects through authenticity at work, and the percentage of variance in well-being accounted for by the direct and indirect effects. Partial mediation occurs when both the direct effect of variable X on Z and its indirect effect through variable Y are significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The results indicate that authenticity at work partially mediates the relationships between P-E fit on the one hand, and work engagement ($b = .20$, $p < .001$), job satisfaction ($b = .19$, $p < .001$), burnout ($b = -.50$, $p < .001$), and boredom ($b = -.25$, $p < .001$) on the other hand.

Authenticity at Work and P-E Fit

We expected a positive association between authenticity at work and P-E fit (Hypothesis 2). Consistent with this reasoning, P-E fit was positively associated with authenticity at work ($b = .78, p < .001$). Employees experiencing good fit with the organization and his or her work also report lower levels of alienation and apparently work in congruence with their values and beliefs.

Authenticity at Work and Well-being

We expected that higher levels of authenticity at work would be related to higher levels of employee well-being (Hypothesis 3). Consistent with this reasoning, authenticity at work and *work engagement* were positively related, $b = .28$ ($p < .001$). Thus, employees who perceived their selves as authentic showed higher levels of engagement. Moreover, authenticity at work and *job satisfaction* were positively associated. Authentic workers displayed higher levels of satisfaction at work ($b = .24, p < .001$). We expected the relationship between authenticity at work and *burnout* to be negative. Our results supported this hypothesis ($b = -.64, p < .001$): workers who felt out of touch with their self at work and who did not participate in work activities that were congruent with their values and beliefs showed higher levels of emotional exhaustion and were more cynical towards their work. Finally, we found a negative association between authenticity at work and *boredom*. As expected, workers who showed lower levels of experienced authenticity reported higher levels of boredom ($b = -.32, p < .001$). These findings align with the idea that authenticity at work is positively related to worker well-being (Hypothesis 3 supported).

Discussion

Drawing on data from 867 highly gifted employees, the present study examined the concepts of authenticity at work and P-E fit in relation to various aspects of employee well-being (burnout, boredom at work, work engagement, and job satisfaction). Based on earlier conceptualizations of authenticity as the discrepancy between one's actual self and one's ideal and ought selves, we proposed that lack of authenticity would be associated with adverse outcomes (Gan & Chen, 2017; Higgins, 1987). Moreover, we expected that authenticity at work and P-E fit would be empirically distinct concepts. We believe that the four most interesting findings of the present study are the following. First, our findings show that whereas the concepts of authenticity at work and person-environment fit are theoretically related, authenticity can be distinguished empirically from scales assessing various types of P-E fit (i.e., P-O and P-J supplementary fit). Our findings demonstrated that an employee's cognitive assessment of the degree to which she/he fits in their work environment (supplementary fit) is positively related to the experience of authenticity at work.

Second, our results indicate that complementary fit is less strongly related to authenticity at work than supplementary fit. In this sense, the degree to which good fit will lead to higher feelings of authenticity is contingent upon the type of fit involved. This finding is in line with Cable and Edwards (2004) and underlines the fact that

complementary and supplementary fit are two different forms of fit. Furthermore, this finding is in line with Piasenten and Chapman (2007). Although complementary fit also showed the expected positive relation with authenticity at work, its relationship with authenticity was substantially weaker. In conjunction, these findings provide further evidence that similarity—that is, supplementary fit—is central to the fit construct, at least in the context of authenticity.

Third, mediation analysis revealed that authenticity at work and P-E supplementary fit are strongly related. How employees judge the congruence between themselves and their job or organization is associated with how authentic they perceive themselves at work. Apparently, the degree to which employees evaluate their work environment as being similar to their own values, desired culture, and needs (supplementary fit), enhances their levels of feeling authentic at work.

Finally, authenticity at work was expected to mediate the relationship between P-E fit and well-being. Our findings indicated that perceived authenticity at work partially mediated the relationship between P-E fit and several well-being outcomes. Further inspection of the indirect effects presented in Table 4 revealed that the effects involving the negative forms of well-being (burnout and boredom) were stronger than the effects involving the positive outcomes (engagement and job satisfaction). The strongest mediated effect of authenticity is in predicting burnout. These findings suggest that the adverse effects of feeling *inauthentic* at work are more important than the effects of feeling authentic at work. Not feeling authentic is associated with emotional exhaustion and boredom. These findings are in line with previous studies concerning authenticity at work and well-being. For instance, Van den Bosch and Taris (2014b) found similar results concerning the relatively stronger associations between authenticity at work and negative well-being outcomes than with positive well-being outcomes. Alternatively, this pattern of associations may be interpreted in terms of the primacy of loss principle stated in Conservation of Resources theory (Chen, Westman & Hobfoll, 2015), holding that a threat of one's resource loss (e.g., lack of authenticity) is disproportionately more salient than resource gain, resulting in stronger effects of authenticity on the negative outcomes than on the positive outcomes.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Four main limitations of this study require further discussion. First, the present sample of highly gifted employees clearly does not represent the average or typical employee. All participants in the present study had an IQ of at least two standard deviations above the population average. Therefore, the findings of our study cannot directly be generalized to other employees and occupational groups, in that highly intelligent people tend to have a higher risk of psychological and/or social maladjustment (Powell & Haden, 1984). For example, highly gifted workers may be easily bored because they are overqualified for their job, they may constantly seek new adventures and challenging activities (which may not be appreciated by their colleagues and supervisor), and need to experience freedom (which is difficult to achieve in the presence of all sorts of organizational procedures and protocols, cf. Persson, 2009). Such individuals may therefore experience a poorer fit with their jobs than other employees. This suggests that the range of P-E fit found in the

present sample is larger than would have been the case for other samples, which allows for a stronger test of the associations between P-E fit and the other study concepts. The same reasoning applies to the scores of the present sample on authenticity; here, too, the systematic variance on this concept may be larger would be the case in regular-IQ samples. It is conceivable that this feature of the present sample has influenced our findings, in that the higher systematic variance in both P-E fit and authenticity may have led to stronger associations among (the dimensions of) these concepts. If so, this implies that it would have been more difficult to distinguish among these concepts than in regular-IQ samples. However, the findings reported in Table 3 show that both concepts could still be distinguished empirically, suggesting that intelligence did not bias the associations among the items of these concepts beyond the point where these concepts could not be distinguished anymore. Indeed, in substantive terms, the factor-analytic results obtained in the present sample for authenticity resemble those obtained in research using regular-IQ samples (Metin et al., 2016; Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014a).

Interestingly, the present high-IQ sample reported slightly lower levels of authenticity than the samples used in Metin et al. (2016) and Van den Bosch and Taris (2014a). Moreover, comparison of the associations among the dimensions of authenticity and work engagement reported in these two studies with the findings reported in the present study revealed that these were usually stronger in the present high-IQ sample. This pattern of results is consistent with the idea that IQ moderates the association between authenticity and engagement, such that authenticity is a stronger predictor of engagement for high-IQ participants (cf. Erickson, 1995). In the absence of a sizeable body of evidence on this issue it is difficult to say anything definitive on the association between giftedness and authenticity, but future research may examine this issue more fully.

Second, the cross-sectional nature of the present research precludes conclusions about cause-effect relations. Although the evidence presented in this study showed that P-E fit and authenticity can be distinguished empirically, the present design does not allow for causal inferences. This implies that the *causal* linkage between P-E fit, authenticity at work, and well-being remains to be investigated. Although this presents a serious limitation of this research, we note that the present study is the first to examine P-E fit and authenticity at work simultaneously in predicting well-being. In this sense, we believe that it adds substantially to current knowledge on the nomological network of both authenticity and P-E fit.

Thirdly, all data in the present study were gathered through self-reports, implying that common method variance (CMV) might have influenced our findings. However, the bias caused by this phenomenon should not be overestimated. Spector and Brannick (2009) argue that it is incorrect to assume that CMV among self-report measures always takes place. Moreover, if CMV would have influenced our findings, this would have led to inflated correlations among all study variables. However, Table 2 shows that the correlations among the variables follow a variable pattern and although all measures were self-report scales, still some correlations were non-significant, suggesting that the bias due to CMV is relatively small. Further, the meta-analysis of Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) revealed that studies using subjective and objective fit measures reported similar findings concerning the associations between P-E fit and well-being. All in all, there seems no reason to assume that CMV biased our findings considerably.

Finally, issues of authenticity have become a pervasive part of our individualistic, post-modernist Western culture (cf. Erickson, 1995). The sample used here was drawn from the Dutch population and it may be assumed that authenticity and person-environment fit are salient concepts for such participants. For example, Kuntz and Abbott (2017) replicated the factor structure of the authenticity measure used in the present paper using a sample from New Zealand. However, these concepts may be less relevant to members of non-Western cultures. In this respect it is noteworthy that the authenticity measure used here has been validated in various culturally distinct groups. Specifically, the factor structure of the IAM Work has been tested and replicated in China (Liu & Wang, 2015) and Brazil (De Carvalho Chinelato, Ferreira, Valentini & Van den Bosch, 2015), supporting its reliability, validity and use across non-Western cultures. Unfortunately, since the person-environment fit measure used here was newly developed, similar evidence for this measure is as yet not available. On the one hand, there is some evidence that Western conceptualizations of person-environment cannot directly be generalized to non-Western cultures (e.g., Chuang, Hsu, Wang & Judge, 2015). On the other hand, existing measures of person-environment have successfully been applied in non-Western cultures (e.g., Lee, Kim, Kim & Kim, 2017). Thus, despite the cultural embeddedness of the P-E fit concept, it appears that the notion of fit is useful on non-Western cultures as well. Follow-up research may reveal whether this also applies to the measure of P-E fit used in the present study.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Despite these limitations, the present study provides further understanding of the concept of authenticity at work and extends earlier work by replicating the associations among authenticity at work and work engagement, burnout, and satisfaction (Metin et al., 2016; Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014a, 2014b). Moreover, the present study extends current knowledge by showing that a cognitive evaluation of fit (i.e., P-E fit) is distinct from (and theoretically precedes) an affective evaluation of fit (authenticity). Further, the current study suggests that P-E fit predicts the negative forms of well-being mainly indirectly, via authenticity at work. On the other hand, the direct effects of P-E fit on the positive forms of well-being (i.e., work engagement and job satisfaction) were stronger than its indirect effects through authenticity at work. Thus, the magnitude of the mediation effect of authenticity at work regarding P-E fit and well-being outcomes varies for different outcomes. Lastly, the present study examined authenticity at work and P-E fit simultaneously, and included boredom as an important well-being outcome (Reijseger et al., 2012). Our results emphasize that authenticity at work is a relevant construct in industrial and organization psychology, and especially so in relation to worker well-being.

At the practical level, our findings suggest that organizations should focus on employees experiencing misfit, rather than on improving P-E fit for those who already experience a satisfactory level of fit. Misfit is both directly and indirectly (i.e., through authenticity at work) associated with lower levels of well-being. These findings stress the importance of examining the employee's perceptions of fit with their job. Periodic evaluating allows organizations to locate misfitting and inauthentic employees and

provide options to increase their fit and feelings of authenticity at work. Further, employees can shape their jobs using job crafting (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012) or can renegotiate their terms of employment (e.g., Bal, De Jong, Jansen, & Bakker, 2012). In this way employees may be able to tailor their jobs to their own preferences, which should lead to jobs where employees will achieve better fit and experience higher levels of authenticity. We believe that these recommendations hold for workers in general, but especially for highly gifted workers such as the group employed in the present study. Due to their intellectual abilities this group is more vulnerable for experiencing misfit and psychological and/or social maladjustment than other groups of workers (Persson, 2009; Powell & Haden, 1984). The strategies mentioned above for identifying and addressing low-fit situations may therefore be especially relevant (and, hopefully, useful) for this particular group.

Concluding Remarks

The present study adds to our understanding of authenticity at work by showing its divergent validity with person-environment fit. We demonstrated that whereas both constructs are theoretically related, they are empirically distinct from each other. Furthermore, the present study reveals that whereas authentic workers show more positive signs of well-being (i.e., work engagement and job satisfaction), low-authenticity workers show adverse relations with well-being (i.e., burnout and boredom). In general, these findings suggest that authenticity at work might be an important evaluative construct related to the fit a person experiences at their job, but also to several important well-being outcomes.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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