

Mediating Role of Critical Psychological States in Relationship between Person–Job Fit and Intention to Leave in Uganda

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the role of critical psychological states in the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave among medical workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital in Uganda. The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. A sample of 475 medical workers was selected. Based on a structured questionnaire with Likert type statements this study used both descriptive and inferential statistics for data analysis. To test the hypothesis that critical psychological state mediates the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave, Baron and Kenny four-step regression analysis was used. The study results confirmed that critical psychological state mediates the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave. The results have contributed to the job characteristics theory, and it advises organisations to improve the fit between employees and their jobs, make jobs more meaningful and give employees responsibility for their work, and provide feedback to employees.

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INTRODOUCION AND STUDY OBJECTIVES

Critical psychological states are attitudinal variables that include experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results (Memon et al., 2015; Behson et al., 2000). The three states are preferred states that trigger work-related outcomes. Experienced meaningfulness is the extent to which a jobholder considers his or her job of importance against their values system, and is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile. Experienced responsibility is the degree of personal accountability that a jobholder has for his or her work. Knowledge of results is the extent to which a jobholder knows and understands how well he or she is performing on the job (Memon et al., 2015; Renn & Vandenberg, 1995).

Critical psychological states are an outcome of studies by Hackman and Oldham (1976) based on their Job Characteristics theory where they identified preferred and ideal critical psychological states and worked backwards to determine a group of fundamental job characteristics that influence critical psychological states that lead to a set of job related outcomes (Behson et al., 2000). Hackman and Oldham (1976) used the critical psychological states to establish a theoretical link between perceived job features and job attitudes. As a result, jobs that have the fundamental job constructs will activate stronger experiences of the job attitudes, which in turn lead to positive work outcomes. Job attitudes such as critical psychological states may therefore be

considered mediators of the job - fit and outcomes relationships.

Person–job fit has for long been a subject of discussion in the many professions (Bright, 2021; Hagopian et al., 2009). A country with a good health care system will have medical workers whose skills, abilities and attitudes are aligned with the demands of their jobs resulting in a healthy dependable workforce and a thriving economy. In Uganda, patients spend more than USD 200 million per annum on medical treatment overseas (Omaswa, 2009). The inefficient health care system has affected wellbeing and slowed economic development, further affecting the health sector. Because of this situation, Mulago National Referral Hospital does not have staff, money and equipment needed for patients resulting in poor person-job fit and a workforce that is exposed to disease (Ndejjo et al., 2015; Nabuye et al., 2011; Hagopian et al., 2009; Lwamafa et al., 2006; Kitanda, 2008). Despite being the biggest and main referral hospital, Mulago National Referral Hospital has a high rate of attrition and yet Uganda has a significant shortage of medical workers. The hospital lacks resources and equipment, and is severely understaffed (Peiffer et al., 2021; Ndejjo et al., 2015). Health personnel are constantly looking for improved opportunities and a more satisfying work atmosphere elsewhere (Peiffer et al., 2021; Kitanda, 2008; Lwamafa et al., 2006; Huang & Sekiguchi, 2007; Lwamafa et al., 2006).

Intention to leave characterises a situation where employees think about quitting and generally lack continuity

(Boon & Biron, 2016; Wheeler et al., 2007; Jourdain & Chênevert, 2010; Morrell et al., 2008). It is characterised by an employee's frequency of thought about leaving, willingness to leave amidst available opportunities, alternative career choices, and the likelihood that an employee will leave the organisation (Wheeler et al., 2007). While actual quitting behavior is the focus of many employers (Morrell et al., 2008), intention to leave is argued to be a strong surrogate indicator of actual leaving (Memon et al., 2015; Purani & Sahadev, 2008). From a research perspective, there is practical merit that once people have left the organisation, there is little likelihood to understand their prior situation. The validity of studying intention to leave is in the works of Jourdain and Chênevert (2010) in which intention to leave is found to be an accurate indicator of actual leaving (Carless, 2005).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hackman and Oldham (1975) originally proposed the model on job characteristics that has five job dimensions that determine critical psychological states, which influence work related results. Hackman and Oldham worked with critical psychological states to establish a theoretical link between perceived job features and work outcomes. Work outcomes such as intention to leave may result from a job that stimulates three critical psychological states namely experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. Experienced meaningfulness refers to the extent to

which an individual considers his or her job important against their value system, and largely has meaning, is valued and worthy. Experienced responsibility characterises the extent of personal liability and accountability an employee has over their work. Knowledge of results is the extent to which an employee is conversant, on a regular basis, with their performance on the job, and the impact of this performance. According to Behson et al. (2000), critical psychological states are a core explanation of the relationship and mediate the effects of the person-job fit on outcomes such as intention to leave.

Person- job fit is one of the variables reliably found to lead to intention to leave (Goetz & Wald, 2022). Two fundamental facets of person job fit namely needs-supplies and demands-abilities explain this intention (Goetz & Wald, 2022). Demands-abilities fit arises when the jobholder's abilities, knowledge, and skills match with job requirements. Needs-supplies fit arises when the jobholder's requirements, requests, and preferences are satisfied by the job. In addition to the two facets of fit, Scroggins (2007) proposed the fit in which employees seek out those jobs that give them self-fulfilling and confirming information that the perceived self is the actual self, commonly known as self – concept job fit. These three forms of fit demonstrate the nature of fit dimensions in person-job fit (Boon & Biron, 2016; Memon et al., 2015; Kristof et al., 2005). The relationship between person - job fit and intention to leave is influenced by incidental variables and attitudes such

as critical psychological states (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The stronger the fit between an employee and the job, the less likely the employee will leave the job (Bright, 2021; Deniz et al., 2015). In contrast, Wheeler et al., (2007); Resick et al. (2007) and Aktas (2014) found a weak effect of person-job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting an indirect relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave. This further provides the basis for studying critical psychological states.

According to Hackman and Oldman (2010) different job characteristics including skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy and feedback are important job design inputs for employees to experience meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results. When employees perceive their work as purposeful and significant, they experience meaningfulness (Popaitoon, 2022; Brands, 2019). It is important to consider the right calibre of employees and the matching working conditions to achieve meaningfulness, as it varies from job to job (Tilmans & Gunderman, 2017; Rosso et al., 2010). Meaningful work is an avenue for employee motivation, engagement, and performance. Jobs that provide for a breadth of skills, completion, impact, significance, and alignment to an employee's value system lead to experienced meaningfulness. Experienced responsibility happens when employees perceive that they are in control of their work and expectations

on the job (Han, 2019). Experienced responsibility is characterised by a sense of autonomy and discretion to make decisions while performing a job, in addition to the accountability for work outcomes. Knowledge of results is mostly achieved through continuous feedback from supervisors, peers, and direct reports on all aspects of the job (Auh, 2019). It involves an understanding of work results and performance, and therefore means that employees should always have access to job related information.

The good fit between the person and the job is critical for sustaining positive critical psychological states (Goetz & Wald, 2022). There is great support and evidence for the link between both demands – abilities fit and needs – supplies fit, and critical psychological states (Cable & DeRue, 2002; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Scroggins, 2007). In addition, self-concept measures were found to strongly correlate with job fit and other variables (Scroggins, 2007). Based on the structure proposed by Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson (2005), it is suggested that three types of fit may justify and be responsible for unique inconsistencies and variations in critical psychological states. Needs-supplies fit accounts for experienced meaningfulness, and demand-abilities fit accounts for experienced responsibility, knowledge of results, and impact. In addition, the self-concept - job fit accounts for experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results. While research consistently supports the meaningful and important results that arise from a

greater sense of fit, it is assumed that person-job misfit necessarily leads to intention to leave (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman & Johnson, 2005) and therefore concluding that person-job fit and critical psychological states share a strong positive relationship (Wheeler et al., 2007; Kristof, 1996; O'Reilly et al., 1991).

Wheeler et al. (2004) built on these findings and theorised that person-job misfit results in negative attitudes and states which lead to a systematic sequence of mental evaluations starting with intention to leave the organisation (Sylva et al., 2019). While earlier studies by Kristoff Brown et al. (2005) generally accept this process, it is ambiguous and there is evidence to show that intention to leave is complex and not straightforward. Additionally, research findings Aktas (2014) indicate that the critical psychological states play a role in the person-job fit outcomes relationship, and mostly trigger intention to leave the organisation, and less intention to leave the occupation or profession (Iplik et al., 2011; Purani & Sahadev, 2008). As such, the latter phenomenon requires more research that is empirical because intention to leave can be intended for not only a specific organisation but also the profession. Karatepe and Demir (2014) found that other variables are important mediators of the job outcomes relationship beyond the model of job characteristics. This finding by Karatepe and Demir (2014) supports the works of Fried and Ferris (1987) who found a strong relationship between specific variables and work-related results and outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODS

The study adopted a cross sectional descriptive survey design. The target population of the study was all medical workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital. Mulago National Referral Hospital employs approximately 1,007 medical workers who include Director/Deputy Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Medical Officer, Nursing, Other Allied Health Workers. The other allied health workers include Technician, Attendant, Radiographer, Sonographer, Physicist, Laboratory Technologist, Laboratory Assistant, among others (Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List, 2019). Data compiled and obtained from Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List (2019) provided a total number of 1,007 medical workers in Mulago Hospital Complex. Using the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), 475 respondents were selected to constitute a sample. A stratified random sampling method was used to sample the respondents. The strata comprised of Director/ Deputy Director, Senior Consultant, Consultant, Medical Officer, Nursing, Other Allied Health Workers (Mulago National Referral Hospital Staffing List, 2019). The respondents' consents were sought before the study. They were further assured that the information given would be treated with confidentiality for the sole purpose of this study. The researcher obtained a letter of introduction to carry out the study from the University of Nairobi and approval from the Mulago Hospital Research and Ethics Committee (MHREC). A simple random sample was obtained for each stratum using proportionate stratified sampling methods (Lenth, 2001).

The study relied solely on primary data which was collected for the first time from the respondents. The instrument for collecting primary data was a Likert's five-point scale semi-structured questionnaire with scales ranging from "Very Less Extent (1)" to "Very Great Extent (5)". The questionnaires were self-administered, and the respondents of the study were the medical workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital in Uganda. A pilot study was done to measure the validity and reliability of the instrument. The study used the Cronbach alpha as the measure of reliability of the instrument and measurements of alpha equal or greater than 0.7 was used. To achieve construct validity, the study used and modified constructs that have already been used in other empirical studies. The scores from the indicators of each variable were aggregated to create a composite index. These constructs have been tested and proven to be valid in measuring the variables under study. The study variables were operations as indicated in the table below.

Baron and Kenny (1986) four-step regression analysis was used to test the

mediating role of Critical Psychological States on the relationship between Person-Job Fit and intention to leave (Baron and Kenny, 1986).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The following hypothesis was formulated and tested:

H₁: Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between Person – Job Fit and Intention to Leave among medical workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

To test this hypothesis, an index was created for Critical Psychological States variable by computing composite index for the three dimensions namely experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility, and knowledge of results which each had its own measures.

Baron and Kenny (1986) four step method was used to test the hypothesis. Mediation is confirmed when the following four conditions are fulfilled. The first condition is that

Table 1
Distribution of Sample

Category	Population (N)	Sample Size (S)
Director/ Deputy Director	2	2
Senior Consultant	15	14
Consultant	23	19
Medical Officer	84	66
Other Allied Health Workers	206	132
Nursing	677	242
Total	1,007	475

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 2
Operationalisation of Study Variables

Variable	Operational Indicators	Measurement and Source
Person – Job Fit	<p>Needs-Supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a job that gives a job holder just about everything that they want from a job • Job holder’s motives and supplies of the job are congruent • Job holder’s personal needs and supplies of the job are congruent • Having enough time to do the job • Having enough resources to do the job • Having a job that provides comfort <p>Demand-Abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A match arising from job demands and employee skills • Training that fits job requirements • Ability to solve problems on the job • Abilities that are congruent with the job • Performing satisfactory work • Handling multiple tasks while on the job • Working longer hours than usual <p>Self-concept – Job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having similar values in life that are congruent with the things that the job offers (Values congruence) • Having a good fit between job offerings and job holder interests in a job • Having features that the job holder is looking for in a job • A match between job holder’s perception of his personal professionalism and professional attributes of the job • Perceived clarity of job responsibilities • Having a job schedule congruent with family and personal life • Emotional involvement in the job • Perceived ability to have control over the job • Perceived ability to modify the job • Perceived personal qualities for job success 	<p>Brkich and Carless (2002); Edwards (2008); Kristof et al. (2005); Scroggins (2007)</p>

Variable	Operational Indicators	Measurement and Source
Critical Psychological States	<p>Experienced Meaningfulness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensiveness of skills while performing work • End-to-end processes to complete tasks • Meaningful work • Impact of one's job on other's work • Significance of job tasks • Importance of the job in relation to one's values system <p>Experienced Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depth of discretion while performing work • Responsibility for work outcomes • Freedom and power to influence work results • Accountability for work results • Ownership of work processes <p>Knowledge of Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing work results • Access to all information relating to work • Knowledge of performance on the job • Continuous feedback on all aspects of the job 	Behson, Eddy and Lorenzet (2000); Renn and Vandenberg (1995); Judge, Bono and Locke (2000)
Intention to Leave	<p>Frequency of thought of quitting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of opportunities • Alternative career choices • Actual and active job search • Unconditional intentions to leave • Feelings of "days-numbered" in the organisation • Preference to work in another organisation 	Joudain and Chenevert (2010); Purani (2008); Wheeler et al. (2007)

the independent variable must have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable in the absence of the mediator. The second condition is that the independent variable must have a significant effect to the mediator; the third condition is that the mediator must be significantly related to the dependent variable; and the fourth condition is that when the effect of the mediator on the

dependent variable is controlled, the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be not be significant. The study analysed the results based on the strata as well as the overall workforce. On stratification basis, the study captured Director/Deputy Directors' category, Senior Consultant's category, Consultants' category, Medical Officers' category,

other allied health workers category and Nursing category respectively. The results are presented in Tables 3 to 9.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship was significant ($R^2 = 0.096$, $F = 18.991$, $\beta = 0.237$, $t = 2.341$, $P\text{-value} = 0.001$). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.006$, $F = 16.501$, $\beta = 0.007$, $t = 3.024$, $P\text{-value} = 0.003$). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.053$, $F = 10.234$, $\beta = 0.216$, $t = 1.956$, $P\text{-value} = 0.006$). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state is not significant ($R^2 = 0.212$, $F = 24.582$, $\beta = 0.008$, $t = 1.878$, $P\text{-value} = 0.157$). This confirmed that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between person job fit and

intention to leave among Directors/ Deputy Directors of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave was significant ($R^2 = 0.068$, $F = 12.451$, $\beta = -1.03$, $t = -3.236$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.048$, $F = 9.328$, $\beta = 0.003$, $t = 2.675$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.015$, $F = 7.222$, $\beta = 0.134$, $t = 1.779$, $P\text{-value} = 0.007$). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state is not significant ($R^2 = 0.06$, $F = 16.129$, $\beta = -0.004$, $t = -2.056$, $P\text{-value} = 0.157$). This confirmed that Critical Psychological

Table 3
Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Directors/ Deputy Directors of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.31	.096	18.991	2.341	0.237	0.001
2	.08	.006	16.501	3.024	0.007	0.003
3	.23	.053	10.234	1.956	0.216	0.006
4	.46	.212	24.582	1.878	0.008	0.157

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 4

Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Senior Consultants of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.26	.068	12.451	-3.236	-1.03	0.000
2	.22	.048	9.328	2.675	0.003	0.000
3	.123	.015	7.222	1.779	0.134	0.007
4	.245	.06	16.129	-2.056	-0.004	0.326

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 5

Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Consultants of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.424	.179	23.456	3.786	0.784	0.003
2	.329	.108	17.678	4.227	0.279	0.001
3	.127	.016	9.351	-2.564	-0.085	0.005
4	.416	.173	19.228	3.219	0.138	0.329

Note. Field data (2020)

State mediates the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave among Senior Consultants of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave was significant ($R^2 = 0.179$, $F = 23.456$, $\beta = 0.784$, $t = 3.786$, $P\text{-value} = 0.003$). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.108$, $F = 17.678$, $\beta = 0.279$, $t = 4.227$, $P\text{-value} = 0.001$). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and

intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.016$, $F = 9.351$, $\beta = -0.085$, $t = -2.564$, $P\text{-value} = 0.005$). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state is not significant ($R^2 = 0.173$, $F = 19.228$, $\beta = 0.138$, $t = 3.219$, $P\text{-value} = 0.329$). This confirmed that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave among Consultants of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave was significant ($R^2 = 0.114$, $F = 29.286$, $\beta = 0.956$, $t = 3.872$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000$). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.091$, $F = 16.993$, $\beta = 0.007$, $t = 2.451$, $P\text{-value} = 0.002$). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.018$, $F = 8.311$, $\beta = -0.015$, $t = -2.672$, $P\text{-value} = 0.002$). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and

intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state is not significant ($R^2 = 0.104$, $F = 24.679$, $\beta = -0.137$, $t = -3.644$, $P\text{-value} = 0.371$). This confirmed that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave among Medical Officers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave was significant ($R^2 = 0.243$, $F = 33.782$, $\beta = 0.006$, $t =$

Table 6

Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Medical Officers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.337	.114	29.286	3.872	0.956	0.000
2	.302	.091	16.993	2.451	0.007	0.002
3	.134	.018	8.311	-2.672	-0.015	0.002
4	.323	.104	24.679	-3.644	-0.137	0.371

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 7

Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Other Allied Health Workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.493	.243	33.782	3.761	0.006	0.000
2	.385	.148	27.567	2.442	0.001	0.000
3	.238	.057	15.452	2.893	0.007	0.002
4	.227	.052	18.679	1.037	0.012	0.007

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 8

Regression Results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among Nurses of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.428	.183	56.672	8.342	1.007	0.004
2	.332	.11	33.128	5.761	0.782	0.005
3	.115	.013	21.785	-3.993	-0.026	0.001
4	.416	.173	50.227	-2.067	-0.033	0.379

Note. Field data (2020)

Table 9

Regression results for the Mediating Effect of Critical Psychological State on the Relationship between Person Job Fit and Intention to Leave Among all Medical Workers of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda

Model	R	R square	F	t	B	P value
1	.571	.326	200.935	14.175	-1.126	0.000
2	.410	.168	83.944	9.162	0.40	0.000
3	.086	.007	3.093	-1.759	-0.050	0.009
4	.573	.328	101.124	-1.101	-0.090	0.272

Note. Field data (2020)

3.761, P-value = 0.000). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.148$, $F = 27.567$, $\beta = 0.001$, $t = 2.442$, P-value = 0.000). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.057$, $F = 15.452$, $\beta = -0.007$, $t = 2.893$, P-value = 0.002). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of

critical psychological state is significant ($R^2 = 0.052$, $F = 18.679$, $\beta = 0.012$, $t = 1.037$, P-value = 0.007). This confirmed that Critical Psychological State does not mediate the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave among other allied health workers of Mulago National Hospital, Uganda.

In the first step, the analysis showed that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave was significant ($R^2 = 0.183$, $F = 56.672$, $\beta = 1.007$, $t = 8.342$, P-value = 0.004). In the second step the results confirmed a significant relationship between person job fit and critical psychological state ($R^2 = 0.11$, $F = 33.128$, $\beta = 0.782$, $t = 5.761$,

P-value = 0.005). The third step tested the significance of the relationship between critical psychological state and intention to leave. The results confirmed a significant relationship ($R^2 = 0.013$, $F = 21.785$, $\beta = -0.026$, $t = -3.993$, $P\text{-value} = 0.001$). The fourth step tested the significance of the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state. The results indicated that the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave in the presence of critical psychological state is not significant ($R^2 = 0.173$, $F = 50.227$, $\beta = -0.033$, $t = -2.067$, $P\text{-value} = 0.379$). This confirmed that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between person job fit and intention to leave among Nurses of Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda.

In step 1, the results show a statistically significant and positive relationship between person-job fit and employee intention to leave ($R = 0.571$). Coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.326$) shows that person-job fit explains 32.6% variation of intention to leave. The regression model is statistically significant as shown by F Ratio $F = 200.935$, $P < 0.05$. The result thus confirms the first condition in testing for the mediation of critical psychological states in the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave. In step two, the results indicate that person-job fit has a significant influence on critical psychological states ($R^2 = 0.168$, $F = 83.944$, $P < 0.05$). This finding indicates that person-job fit explains 16.8% variance in critical psychological states. The model shows a positive significant relationship between person-job fit and critical psychological states

($\beta = 0.40$, $t = 9.162$, $p\text{-value} = .000 < .05$). The results therefore suggest that the second step of testing for mediation met the requirements and therefore the process proceeded to step three. In step three, results indicated that critical psychological states had a weak relationship with intention to leave ($R = 0.086$). Specifically, critical psychological states explain 0.07% variation in intention to leave ($R^2 = 0.007$, $F = 3.093$, $P < 0.05$). The model had F value of 3.093 and P value < 0.05 , indicating that the model was statistically significant. Beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.050$, $t = -1.759$, $p\text{-value} = .009 < .05$) indicated that critical psychological states had a weak negative relationship with intention to leave. The finding thus satisfies the third necessary condition for proceeding to step four. In step four, results show a relationship between person-job fit, critical psychological states and intention to leave with a correlation coefficient of 0.573. This correlation coefficient increased from 0.571 when person-job fit was the only predictor in the regression model. The coefficient of determination increased from 0.326 to 0.328, depicting a significant R square change of 0.002. The model in overall is statistically significant ($F = 101.124$, $P\text{-value} = 0.000 < .05$). The beta coefficient for critical psychological states ($\beta = -0.090$, $t = -1.101$, $p\text{-value} = .272 > 0.05$) is not significant. Thus, satisfying the condition which states that if the effect of mediating variable is controlled, then the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should not be significant. The results provide evidence that critical psychological states mediate the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave.

The results are consistent with the findings of [Goetz and Wald \(2022\)](#); [Bright \(2021\)](#); [Sylva et al., \(2019\)](#); [Huang et al.\(2005\)](#); [Sekiguchi \(2007\)](#); [Edwards \(2008\)](#); [Kristof-Brown et al. \(2005\)](#) who found that relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave is influenced by incidental variables and attitudes such as critical psychological states ([Kristof-Brown et al., 2005](#)). This was further confirmed by [Wheeler et al. \(2007\)](#); [Resick et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Aktas \(2014\)](#) who found a weak effect of person-job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job-related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting that there is an indirect relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave.

From a theoretical perspective, the job characteristics theory posits that job dimensions determine critical psychological states, which have an effect on work related results ([Hackman and Oldham, 1975](#)) and that the critical psychological states have a theoretical link with job features. The current study findings conform with this preposition because it proves that person-job fit influences critical psychological states. The theory further posits that critical psychological states are a core explanation of the relationship and mediate the effects of the person-job fit on work outcomes ([Popaitoon, 2022](#); [Han, 2019](#); [Cable & DeRue, 2002](#); [Kristof-Brown et al., 2005](#); [Scroggins, 2007](#)). This is further confirmed by [Behson et al. \(2000\)](#); [Wheeler et al. \(2007\)](#); and [O'Reilly et al. \(1991\)](#) who found that critical psychological states mediate the effects of the person-job fit

on outcomes such as intention to leave. It is therefore concluded that person-job fit and critical psychological states share a positive relationship. Critical psychological states of workers mostly trigger intention to leave ([Purani & Sahadev, 2008](#); [Iplik et al., 2011](#)).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Critical Psychological States was conceptualised in terms of experienced meaningfulness, experienced responsibility and knowledge of results. The hypothesis was developed stating that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between Person–Job Fit and Intention to Leave among medical workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda. Based on the strata in the study, critical psychological state mediates the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave among Directors/ Deputy Directors, Senior Consultants, Consultants, Medical Officers, and Nurses at Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda. On the other hand, critical psychological state did not mediate the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave among other allied health workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital, Uganda. The results further found mediation of critical psychological states on the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave among the workforce as a whole, indicating that the attributes of critical psychological states are manifested among employees to the extent of mediating the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave. This means that the influence of person-job fit on intention to leave is

indirect through critical psychological states when you consider the workforce as a whole, and therefore critical psychological states are a necessary condition for the influence of person-job fit on intention to leave among the workforce as a whole. The hypothesis that Critical Psychological State mediates the relationship between Person-Job Fit and Intention to Leave was thus confirmed.

The overall results are consistent with the findings of [Goetz and Wald \(2022\)](#); [Bright \(2021\)](#); [Sylva et al. \(2019\)](#); [Huang et al. \(2005\)](#); [Sekiguchi \(2007\)](#); [Edwards \(2008\)](#); [Kristof-Brown et al. \(2005\)](#) who found that the relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave may be influenced by incidental variables and attitudes such as critical psychological states leading to intention to leave ([Kristof-Brown et al., 2005](#)). This result further supports [Wheeler et al. \(2007\)](#); [Resick et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Aktas \(2014\)](#) who found a weak effect of person-job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting that there is an indirect relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave.

Theoretical Implications

The study outcomes majorly support the propositions of the theory of Job Characteristics. The study findings indicated a moderate positive relationship between person-job fit and intention to leave. This finding supports the job characteristics theory which assumes that job characteristics

are an important determinant of work-related outcomes such as intention to leave. The theory's assumption that it is possible for a single job factor in the model to explain all other factors is however contradicted. The findings of this study indicated that all job facets including needs-supplies, demands-abilities and self-concept job are important contributors in determining person-job fit, and not any single one of them on its own demonstrates the influence of all other factors. In addition, the job characteristics theory assumes that there is potential that combinations of the person-job fit facets are more important influencers than others. This is supported by the current study finding that demands-abilities are major influencers of intention to leave compared to self-views and needs-supplies. Managers therefore need to focus on all job characteristics but understand that different job characteristics drive quit decisions in varying degrees and should emphasise the structure of jobs, employee skills, knowledge and training that fit the job requirements, employee resources and abilities to solve problems on the job, actual job performance, and building confidence for employees. The job characteristics theory further assumes that job dimensions determine critical psychological states, which have a resultant impact on work results. This means that needs-supplies, demands-abilities and employee self-views shape the nature of critical psychological state in terms of knowledge of results, meaningfulness, and responsibility of the job as experienced by the job holder and therefore managers need

to emphasise job characteristics to drive desired psychological states.

Policy implications

Many National Policy documents have focused on the work environment and the organisation and less on the individual. The study finding that person-job fit influences intention to leave means that it is important for organisations to examine policies on the needs of the employee and what the job offers, job demands such as education and working hours and the abilities of employees, and realistic job reviews. In addition, the finding that critical psychological states mediate the person-job fit-intention to leave relationship presents an opportunity for organisations to consistently examine the design of jobs including meaningfulness of work, nature of job responsibilities and feed back in the form of managing performance and reward for specific levels and jobs. These can be integrated into policy on regular review of jobs.

Practical Implications

From the findings, realistic job reviews for potential medical workers including medical students are important to align job dimensions with the potential professionals. This can be done through professional development and curriculum given that Mulago National Referral Hospital is the largest teaching referral hospital in Uganda. It is important to improve the perceived nature of fit between employees and their jobs. The degree to which a job holder's skills, abilities, and qualities are compatible

with the demands of the job goes a long way in improving employee retention. This requires that education, training, and continuous professional development be aligned to job demands. There is also a need to improve needs-supplies fit in which workers' requirements, needs and wishes are addressed by the jobs that they do improving the degree to which the intents, desires and needs of the employee are aligned to the supplies of the job for those intensions and the extent to which the job satisfies those desires.

It is recommended that managers make jobs more meaningful and give employees responsibility for their work. Experienced meaningfulness can be achieved by attaching importance to jobs through clearly defining how job tasks contribute to organisational success, valuing jobs and making them worthwhile. Experienced responsibility can be achieved by encouraging employees and holding them personally accountable for their work through clear performance indicators and measures and continuous performance reviews. As a result, employees who perceive meaningfulness and responsibility are likely to activate stronger experiences of the job attitudes, which in turn lead to positive work outcomes. In addition, knowledge of results can be achieved through regular formal and informal performance feedback, supervision, rewards, and recognition.

Recommendation for Future Research

Long term longitudinal studies are the preferred way to study progress

of relationships. Noting the individual perceptions change over time depending on the context, a longitudinal study would show how the relationship between person-job fit, critical psychological states, self-evaluation and intention to leave progresses overtime more than at only one time.

From this study, there are other factors that influence intention to leave. [Huang, Cheng and Chou \(2005\)](#); [Kristof-Brown et al. \(2005\)](#); [Sekiguchi \(2007\)](#); [Edwards \(2008\)](#) in their studies found that person-job fit is a significant determinant of intention to leave. However, they also found that there are other variables that explain this relationship and that could lead to intention to leave. This is further confirmed by [Wheeler et al. \(2007\)](#); [Resick et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Aktas \(2014\)](#) who found a weak effect of person-job related variables on intention to leave, but rather indirect effects through the experience of job related attitudes and other variables, therefore suggesting that an indirect relationship exists. This study found that 32.6% variation in intention to leave is attributed to

person-job fit. There is opportunity for further research and exploration of the other antecedents of intention to leave to contribute to the full understanding of intention to leave.

This study focused on intention to leave. There is need for a further study to establish and differentiate between intention to leave organisation and intention to leave the job. [Wheeler et al. \(2007\)](#) found that a lack of fit results in negative attitudes and states which lead to a systematic sequence of mental evaluations starting with intention to leave the organisation. While researchers generally accept this process, it is ambiguous and there is evidence to show that intention to leave is complex and not straightforward. Additionally, research findings indicate that the critical psychological states of workers mostly trigger thoughts to leave the organisation, and less to leave the profession ([Purani & Sahadev, 2008](#); [Iplik et al., 2011](#)). As such, the latter phenomenon requires more research that is empirical because intention to leave can be intended for not only a specific organisation but also the profession.

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