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# Beyond Selecting for Performance: Toward a Fit-for-Sustainability Model of Personnel Selection

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## ABSTRACT

Personnel selection research demonstrates that structured methods reliably predict job performance. Yet this focus has narrowed the criterion space by equating performance at entry with long-term effectiveness. Drawing on Job Demands–Resources theory, I argue that sustainable performance unfolds within dynamic demand–resource systems that simultaneously shape employee well-being. Building on König et al. call to integrate well-being into selection, I propose a Fit-for-Sustainability model that shifts attention from static performance prediction to sustainable effectiveness. The model distinguishes demands–abilities fit at entry from needs—supplies fit, which must be secured through work design, and incorporates regulatory resources—such as proactive personality, self-control, and learning goal orientation—that enable employees to recalibrate fit as demands evolve. Organizational resources provide the regulatory latitude necessary for proactive adjustment. Together, these elements reposition selection as the starting point of continuous demand–resource optimization, advancing a theory of selection for sustainable performance and well-being over time.

Decades of personnel selection research show that a small set of structured, evidence-based methods—including structured interviews, cognitive ability tests, and work samples—can reliably and meaningfully predict job performance (Schmidt and Hunter 1998; Sackett et al. 2022). Yet this success has narrowed the criterion space. By concentrating validation almost exclusively on task performance at entry, the field has implicitly treated initial performance as a sufficient proxy for long-term organizational effectiveness.

That assumption is increasingly untenable. Performance unfolds within evolving constellations of job demands and resources that shape not only what employees can accomplish, but also whether they can sustain effort without depletion (Bakker et al. 2023, 2026). Prolonged misalignment between individuals and their work environments predictably leads to burnout, disengagement, and strain-induced turnover, thereby undermining employee sustainability (Barnes et al. 2023). Crucially, such misalignment is dynamic: demands intensify, technologies and market conditions shift, organizational resources expand or contract, and employees themselves develop, age, and reprioritize (Truxillo et al. 2015). As a result, fit at entry does not guarantee fit over time. Moreover, well-being is not merely a by-product of performance but a driver of it. Meta-analytic evidence shows that work engagement and low strain predict subsequent performance, persistence, and citizenship behavior (e.g., Corbeanu et al. 2023; Neuber et al. 2022; Sonnentag 2015). Well-being is therefore a precondition for sustained productivity.

I thus agree with König et al. (2026) that personnel selection has been overly anchored in performance as the primary criterion, despite evidence that HR practices across the employment

**Summary**

**What Is Currently Known About the Topic**

- Structured methods reliably predict job performance at entry.
- Selection research focuses mainly on task performance outcomes.
- Demands–abilities fit is central in personnel selection decisions.
- Well-being is typically treated as separate from selection.

**What This Paper Adds**

- Proposes a Fit-for-Sustainability model integrating performance and well-being.
- Distinguishes demands–abilities fit from needs–supplies fit at entry.
- Highlights regulatory traits that enable adaptation to changing demands.
- Reframes selection as entry into dynamic demand–resource systems.

**Implications of the Findings for Practitioners**

- Select for demands–abilities fit to prevent long-term overload risks.
- Assess regulatory traits (e.g., proactivity, self-control, learning).
- Do not select for "low needs"; ensure needs–supplies fit via job design.
- Align selection with supportive work design to sustain performance.

cycle—including recruitment and selection—also shape employee well-being (e.g., Guest 2017; Liu et al. 2019; Ogbonnaya and Aryee 2022). Importantly, selection research is not limited to entry-level performance. A small number of longitudinal studies show that predictors such as personality and cognitive ability retain validity over time (e.g., Iliescu et al. 2023; see also, Judge et al. 1999). However, these studies remain rare and, more importantly, extend prediction across time without explaining *how* performance and well-being develop within changing work environments. As such, they capture stability in predictors, but not the processes underlying sustained effectiveness.

Building on König et al. (2026) argument, this commentary therefore advances a process perspective. Rather than treating (personality predictors of) well-being as an additional static criterion, I conceptualize selection as the starting point of ongoing demand–resource dynamics. Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory (Bakker et al. 2023) provides the integrative framework, identifying job demands and job resources as the most proximal antecedents of both performance and well-being, while individual characteristics influence how these conditions are perceived, mobilized, and regulated over time (Bakker 2015). The key question thus becomes not only who will perform well at entry, or continue to perform over time, but who can sustain performance and well-being as demands and resources evolve.

On this basis, I propose a Fit-for-Sustainability model of personnel selection. First, I reposition selection from predicting isolated performance to predicting sustainable effectiveness within a demand–resource system. Second, I distinguish two core forms of fit—demands–abilities fit and needs–supplies fit—as the mechanisms linking selection to both performance and well-being. Third, I incorporate self-regulatory resources that enable employees to maintain and recalibrate this fit over time. Together with organizational resources that provide regulatory latitude, these elements position selection as the starting point of continuous adaptation, extending König et al.'s provocation by specifying *how* sustainable performance and well-being are achieved.

## 1 | A Fit-for-Sustainability Model of Personnel Selection

JD–R theory (Bakker et al. 2023; Demerouti and Bakker 2023) provides a flexible and widely applied framework for understanding how work design shapes employee motivation, well-being, and performance. Unlike classic job design models that assume a fixed set of universally motivating job characteristics (e.g., Hackman and Oldham 1976), JD–R theory proposes that every job can be understood through its specific configuration of job demands and job resources.

Job demands are aspects of work that require sustained physical, emotional, or cognitive effort and are therefore associated with physiological or psychological costs (Demerouti et al. 2001). Examples include high workload, emotionally demanding interactions, and complex tasks. In contrast, job resources are physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that help employees achieve goals, reduce demands, or stimulate learning and development. Examples include autonomy, supportive leadership, and opportunities for skill use. Importantly, JD–R theory emphasizes that the relevance and impact of demands and resources depend on the specific occupational context (Bakker and Demerouti 2024).

Central to the theory is the proposition that job demands and job resources activate two complementary psychological processes. First, excessive or chronic job demands trigger the health-impairment process, whereby sustained effort gradually depletes employees' energy and leads to strain, fatigue, and eventually burnout (Demerouti et al. 2001; Li et al. 2023). Second, job resources stimulate the motivational process, fostering work engagement, persistence, and performance—particularly when they satisfy employees' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Van den Broeck et al. 2008; Lesener et al. 2020).

JD–R theory also highlights the dynamic interplay between demands and resources. Job resources can buffer the negative effects of high demands on strain while simultaneously boosting motivation and engagement when work is challenging (Bakker et al. 2007; Hakanen et al. 2005). In addition, employees possess personal resources, such as optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy,

which help them cope with demands and mobilize job resources (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009; Bakker et al. 2023). Employees are therefore not passive recipients of job design. Through job crafting, they proactively adjust their job demands and resources to create a better fit between the job and their capabilities, needs, and preferences (Tims and Bakker 2010). These processes help explain how employees can sustain both well-being and performance over time.

When applied to personnel selection, JD–R theory clarifies both the limits and leverage points of selection. Selection cannot directly determine employee well-being or compensate for poorly designed jobs. However, it can shape the starting conditions of demand–resource dynamics by ensuring demands–abilities fit and identifying individuals with the regulatory capacity to mobilize and optimize job resources as demands evolve. In this way, selection influences well-being indirectly—through initial fit and adaptive potential rather than through screening for well-being itself. Figure 1 illustrates this process.

## 2 | Two Types of Fit at Entry

At the moment of selection, person–job fit is inherently prospective and static. Applicants have not yet had the opportunity to experience, regulate, or craft their work. Nonetheless, selection decisions establish the starting configuration from which all subsequent demand–resource dynamics unfold. Building on classic person–environment fit theory (Edwards 1991; Kristof-Brown et al. 2005), two forms of fit are theoretically relevant at entry: demands–abilities (D–A) fit and needs–supplies (N–S) fit (Edwards 1996). Yet only one can legitimately function as a selection criterion.

D–A fit refers to the correspondence between job demands and an individual's knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics required to meet those demands effectively (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005; Sekiguchi 2004). Selecting for D–A fit is both justified and essential. Although selection typically ensures that employees meet the basic requirements for the job—so that major skill gaps cannot be compensated by effort alone—misfit can still arise at entry because jobs are complex. Moreover, people differ in the goals they pursue and the strengths they bring, and these differences shape how they respond to and act within their work environment (Barrick et al. 2013). Selecting for D–A fit cannot eliminate such misfit, but it can reduce the likelihood that employees must rely on sustained overexertion to meet demands. When demands exceed abilities, employees may attempt to compensate through sustained effort (Hockey 1997), initiating the health-impairment process described by JD-R theory: prolonged overexertion depletes energy and increases the risk of strain and burnout (Demerouti et al. 2001). Importantly, this imbalance often remains initially invisible, as employees maintain performance by working longer hours or intensifying concentration (Van Vianen 2018). For example, a fintech product manager lacking data literacy may initially compensate by overpreparing for meetings and extending work into evenings. However, such compensatory effort is energetically costly and, over time, becomes unsustainable, resulting in overload and exhaustion (Bakker 2015; Hakanen et al. 2005). Selecting for D–A fit thus serves a preventive function by reducing the likelihood that short-term performance is achieved through hidden overexertion that later converts into burnout.

Needs–supplies (N–S) fit refers to the alignment between what individuals value in their work—such as autonomy, competence, relatedness, pay, recognition, security, or development

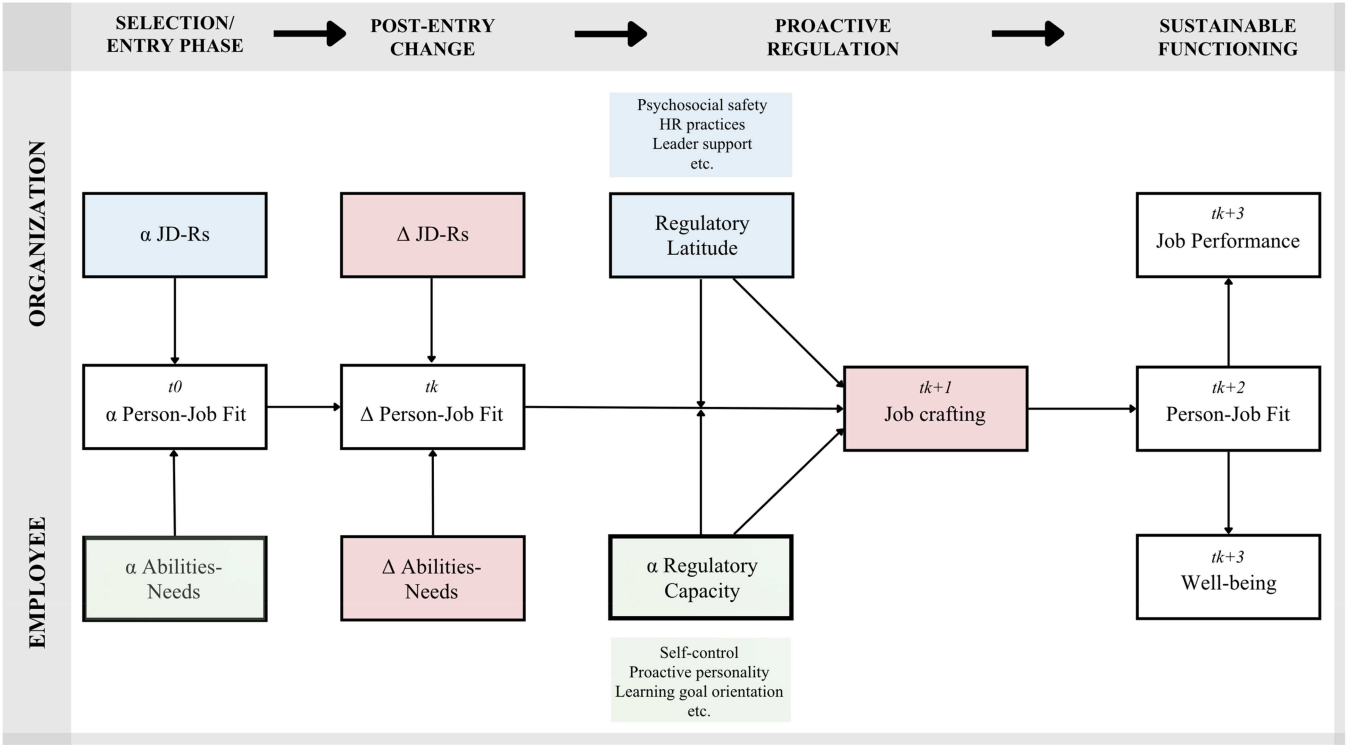


**FIGURE 1** | Fit-for-sustainability model of personnel selection.

opportunities—and what the job provides, which in JD–R terms largely reflects the availability of job resources. N–S fit is a powerful predictor of engagement and well-being (Kristof-Brown et al. 2005; Saks and Gruman 2018). However, unlike demands–abilities fit, it cannot be sustainably secured through selection alone. Although organizations may attract or hire applicants whose preferences align with existing job conditions, screening for "low needs" confuses fit with deprivation tolerance. Many psychological needs are universal rather than discretionary (Deci et al. 2017), and they fluctuate over time as careers and life circumstances evolve. Selecting applicants who report a low need for autonomy or recovery does not eliminate those needs; it merely identifies individuals temporarily willing to endure their frustration. For example, hiring an air-traffic controller who claims to function well with minimal rest does not remove the biological requirement for recovery; it simply delays fatigue-related risk (Sonnentag et al. 2022). In JD–R terms, needs–supplies fit must be established through resourceful work design and sustained organizational support. Selection can align abilities with demands; only job and system design can ensure that resources meet human needs.

This is an important distinction. Selection can prevent demands–abilities misfit at entry, but it cannot compensate for inadequate job resources, nor does it fully capture the personal resources that influence how employees deal with demanding working conditions (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009; Bakker et al. 2023). Moreover, even strong initial fit does not guarantee sustainability. As jobs evolve—through technological change, expanding responsibilities, or shifting performance pressures—misalignment can re-emerge, underscoring the need for dynamic regulation beyond initial screening.

## 3 | The Role of Self-Regulatory Resources

JD–R theory views employees not as passive recipients of job characteristics but as active agents who regulate effort, safeguard their energy, and cultivate resources over time (Bakker et al. 2023). Sustainable performance therefore hinges not only on initial demands–abilities fit, but also on personal resources that enable individuals to monitor, adjust, and recalibrate their demand–resource balance as conditions evolve (see Figure 1). Among these, several regulatory resources are particularly consequential; the examples that follow are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

*Proactive personality* reflects a stable tendency to anticipate future demands and initiate constructive change rather than merely adapt to existing conditions (Bateman and Crant 1993; Parker et al. 2010). Proactive individuals monitor their environment for emerging problems, seek feedback and resources, clarify expectations, and introduce improvements as demands intensify. Within a JD–R framework, this disposition is crucial because it increases the likelihood that employees will adjust demands and mobilize resources before strain accumulates (Bakker et al. 2012). Empirically, proactive personality predicts voice, job crafting, and role innovation beyond conscientiousness, which primarily captures reliability and persistence (Fuller and Marler 2009; Li et al. 2020). In selection, structured behavioral interviews and contextualized SJTs can assess whether applicants habitually initiate change rather than simply endure pressure.

*Self-control*. Whereas proactive personality reflects a tendency to anticipate and initiate constructive change, self-control supports the moment-to-moment regulation required to enact such change. Trait self-control refers to the capacity to override impulses and prioritize goal-consistent actions (Tangney et al. 2004). In dynamic work contexts, this capacity becomes relevant when employees experience misalignment between job demands and their capabilities or needs. Evidence suggests that employees high in self-control are more likely to respond to such signals with constructive adjustment. For example, a diary study showed that employees high in self-control were more likely to cope with daily boredom through job crafting rather than distractive behavior (Van Hooff and Van Hooft 2023). Conceptually, job crafting appears especially consistent with start control, because it requires initiating effortful, self-starting behaviors that serve longer-term goals (De Boer et al. 2011). In selection contexts, simulations or situational judgment tests can present applicants with goal-conflict scenarios that require prioritizing long-term objectives over immediate impulses, thereby providing indirect assessments of self-regulatory decision making.

*Learning goal orientation* reflects a dispositional tendency to view challenges as opportunities for developing competence and adapting strategies (Dweck 1986; Payne et al. 2007). As job demands evolve, through digital transformation, shifting client expectations, or strategic change, individuals high in learning orientation are more likely to seek feedback, experiment with new approaches, and acquire additional skills rather than defensively rely on established routines (Stasielowicz 2019; VandeWalle and Cummings 1997). In this sense, learning orientation functions as a regulatory resource: it enables employees to recalibrate their capabilities in response to changing demands, thereby sustaining demands–abilities fit over time. Empirically, learning goal orientation predicts adaptive performance and skill development (Payne et al. 2007), as well as job crafting (Matsuo 2019; Van Dam et al. 2013). Assessment centers can evaluate this capacity through feedback–revision tasks or short learning simulations.

When these regulatory resources co-occur, they increase the likelihood that employees will engage in job crafting—self-initiated adjustments to tasks, relationships, and the balance between demands and resources (Bakker and Slemp 2026). For example, a marketing consultant confronted with escalating client pressures may renegotiate deadlines, redistribute responsibilities within the team, or proactively develop new analytical capabilities to restore alignment. Job crafting is an emergent behavior arising from self-regulatory resources—including proactivity, self-control, and learning orientation, enacted within sufficient organizational latitude (e.g., Demerouti 2026; Slemp et al. 2015). Demands–abilities fit establishes the initial alignment between capabilities and requirements; regulatory resources determine whether that alignment can be sustained and recalibrated as conditions evolve. Selection systems that neglect these resources may optimize short-term competence while undermining long-term adaptability and sustainable performance.

## 4 | Organizational Resources Providing Regulatory Latitude

Proactive regulation does not occur in a vacuum. The Fit-for-Sustainability model therefore explicitly incorporates organizational resources that enable—or constrain— employees' capacity to regulate their demand–resource balance. The following examples highlight some of these resources without aiming to provide a comprehensive list. Psychosocial safety climate (PSC) creates a shared perception that speaking up about overload and resource needs is legitimate and supported (Dollard and Bakker 2010). Empowering leadership provides discretion, participative decision-making, and autonomy, thereby granting employees the latitude to reprioritize tasks and redesign aspects of their roles (Amundsen and Martinsen 2014). Enabling HR practices—such as employee involvement in decision-making, flexible work arrangements, and structured opportunities for job crafting—further institutionalize adaptive role negotiation (Gürbüz et al. 2026). Without such structural supports, even highly proactive and self-regulating employees may be compelled to sustain performance through effort intensification rather than through effective recalibration.

The Fit-for-Sustainability model thus reframes selection as the entry point into a dynamic system. Selection does not directly determine well-being; rather, it establishes the initial demands–abilities alignment and identifies regulatory capacities that allow employees to maintain and restore fit as demands evolve. Organizational resources determine whether these capacities can be enacted. Importantly, the model also accounts for the opposite scenario: employees who perform strongly at entry and display apparent person–job fit may nonetheless carry regulatory risks. For example, individuals high in workaholism may deliver exceptional short-term performance while relying on compulsive overwork and impaired recovery (Taris and de Jonge 2024). Similarly, high perfectionism without regulatory flexibility may foster persistent striving while undermining boundary-setting (Kun et al. 2021). Such profiles can mask emerging imbalance in demand–resource dynamics. The model therefore shifts attention from performance at entry to the sustainability of the regulatory processes underpinning it.

Consider the fintech product manager selected solely for cognitive ability and interview performance. Early success may conceal escalating overload as the firm scales. In contrast, a candidate selected for strong D–A fit and regulatory resources is more likely to anticipate complexity, acquire new competencies, renegotiate priorities, and seek support. When supported by PSC, empowering leadership, and enabling HR practices, such proactive regulation sustains both performance and well-being.

In sum, the Fit-for-Sustainability model extends personnel selection beyond predicting immediate task proficiency to identifying individuals capable of sustaining performance within evolving demand–resource systems. Sustainable effectiveness does not arise from ability alone, but from the interaction between initial demands–abilities fit, regulatory capacity, and the organizational resources (regulatory latitude) that enable adaptive adjustment. Figure 1 illustrates this dynamic architecture, positioning selection not as a static gatekeeping mechanism, but as the starting point of ongoing demand–resource optimization.

## 5 | Research Directions

A central next step is rigorous longitudinal validation of the Fit-for-Sustainability model. A prototypical study would assess demands–abilities fit and key regulatory resources (e.g., proactive personality, self-control, learning goal orientation) at entry, measure organizational resources at the team or unit level (e.g., psychosocial safety climate, empowering leadership, autonomy), and follow employees across 12–24 months. Multisource data (supervisor-rated performance, objective indicators, peer reports) and repeated measures of engagement and exhaustion would allow latent growth modeling of sustainability trajectories (Singer and Willett 2003). Multilevel modeling can test cross-level interactions, specifically whether P-O misfit predicts job crafting and indirectly relates to employee outcomes only when regulatory and organizational resources are present. Such designs move beyond static validation toward dynamic prediction of performance and well-being over time.

To establish theoretical distinctiveness, comparative incremental validity studies are essential. Traditional selection models typically rely on cognitive ability, Big Five traits, and static person–job fit (Barrick and Mount 1991; Schmidt and Hunter 1998). A head-to-head design would compare a baseline model including these predictors with an expanded model incorporating regulatory and organizational resources. The expectation is criterion expansion (Sackett et al. 2022): traditional predictors particularly explain initial performance, whereas the Fit-for-Sustainability model explains variance in long-term adaptive performance, engagement stability, burnout trajectories, and retention. Demonstrating incremental validity for dynamic outcomes is critical for positioning the model as complementary rather than redundant.

The strongest test would be a quasi-experimental field study comparing units adopting sustainability-based selection with those using traditional models. Tracking performance dispersion, burnout prevalence, sick leave, and turnover costs over multiple years would provide rare organizational-level evidence that selection architecture shapes well-being and performance ecosystems. Such research would elevate the model from conceptual refinement to institutional impact.

Generalizability should be examined by testing multiple regulatory resources beyond the core trio proposed here—for example, emotional regulation and recovery self-efficacy—and by varying organizational resources that provide regulatory latitude. Researchers can also model resource constellations rather than single predictors, consistent with JD–R theory (Bakker et al. 2023). Cross-lagged panel designs would allow examination of reciprocal demand–resource dynamics, testing whether regulatory capacity predicts subsequent job crafting and whether resource-rich environments amplify those effects.

Finally, future research should also examine how the Fit-for-Sustainability model informs employee development beyond selection. Because demand–resource constellations and individual capabilities evolve, sustaining person–job fit requires continuous regulatory adaptation rather than a one-time hiring decision. Development practices may therefore function as mechanisms that strengthen employees' regulatory resources,

such as proactive problem solving, self-control, and learning orientation, thereby increasing the likelihood that misfit signals trigger job crafting and capability development rather than strain. Investigating such processes would extend the model from a selection framework to a dynamic system of sustainable capability and resource alignment over time.

## 6 | Conclusion

König et al. (2026) argue that personnel selection should explicitly target (personality predictors of) well-being rather than focusing solely on performance. I agree with the spirit of this call but refine its implication. Well-being is not a stable attribute that can be screened for at entry; rather, it emerges over time as employees use their self-regulatory resources to maintain fit between their capabilities, needs, and the demands and resources of the job. The Fit-for-Sustainability model shows how selection can nevertheless support well-being indirectly, by securing demands–abilities fit, identifying regulatory capacity, and aligning with organizational contexts that provide regulatory latitude. In doing so, selection moves from predicting who will perform now to identifying who can perform, adapt, and remain well over time.


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### Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used ChatGPT-5 to enhance the readability and linguistic quality of the text, as the author is not a native English speaker. Following the use of this tool, the author carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and assumes full responsibility for the final version of the manuscript.

### Data Availability Statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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