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Psychological contract and job outcomes: mediating role of affective commitment

Inam UI Haq^{1*}, Farooq Ahmad Jam¹, Muhammad Umer Azeem¹, Muhammad Ahmad Ali² and Tasneem Fatima³

¹Faculty of Management Studies, University of Central Punjab Lahore, Pakistan. ²Faculty of Management Sciences, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan. ³Faculty of Management Sciences, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan.

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This cross sectional field survey examined the relationship between psychological contracts, affective commitment and job outcomes (Job satisfaction and Intention to quit). We hypothesized that psychological contract types are related to job satisfaction and turnover intention, we further hypothesized that the link between psychological contract and outcomes is mediated by affective commitment. The data were collected from 302 employees of several public and private organizations of Pakistan. Results revealed that affective commitment mediates the relationship between relational contracts and job satisfaction and the relationship between relational contracts and turnover intention, whereas it does not mediates the relationship between transactional contract and job outcomes.

Key words: Psychological contracts, affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intention.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers have carried out ample research on two important constructs in organizational behavior (OB), psychological contracts and affective commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1996; Raja, Johns and Ntalianis, 2004; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). This article investigated the relationship between two hot topics of OB research with specific focus on establishment of key links through which psychological contracts and outcome relationship exists. As it is evident from research that processes through which job behaviors are determined are much more important than job outcomes itself (Colquitt, Greenberg and Zapata-Phelan, 2005). Firstly, this study is aimed to investigate the relationship between psycho logical contracts and job outcomes (job satisfaction and intention to quit). Secondly, exploration of the mediating

Psychological contract is an exchange relationship between employee and employer (Schein, 1978). It is about the individual's belief, potential opportunities and mutual commitment in exchange relationships (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological contracts are of two types, relational contract and transactional contract (Morrison and Robinson 1997; Rousseau, 1995). Relational contracts are associated with emotional interactional dimensions, with non-financial, socio- emotional, intrinsic focus between employees and employers (Rousseau, 1995).

Transactional contract explain the economic exchange relations with extrinsic, financial and narrow focus. The construct of psychological contract was derived from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Organ, 1988).

Social exchange relationships involve economic as well as exchange of socio-emotional benefits (Cropanzano, Rupp and Byrne 2003). Affective commitment can be defined as emotional binding and employees' desire to be identified and affiliated with organization. It comprises of magnified emotions of attachment, belongingness and constancy (Meyer and Allen 1993). Both of these

Abbreviations: OB, Organizational behavior; **SD**, standard deviation; **PCI**, psychological contract inventory; **ANOVA**, analysis of variance.

mechanism of affective commitment in relationship between psychological contracts and job outcomes.

^{*}Corresponding author. E-mail: Inamulhaq27@gmail.com. Tel: + 92 323 9666166.

constructs are related to cognitive and emotional attachment of employees with the organization due to some extrinsic and intrinsic factors. All those positive factors which are the basis for formation of psychological contract (economic and socio-emotional) are considered the antecedents for higher levels of affective commitment. Exchange of economic as well as socio- emotional benefits from employer to employee causes the increased level of affective commitment, which works as a mechanism through which individuals with certain type of contracts are linked to job outcomes. Social exchange theory provides strong logical support in establishing the mediation mechanism of affective commitment between psychological contracts and job outcomes.

Psychological contracts and job outcomes

Psychological contract is defined as a person's perception and expectations about the shared obligation in an employment exchange relationship (Rousseau, 1989). Psychological contract is something that is beyond or more than expectation. It is an implicit unwritten and non verbal expectation of employees and employers (Schein, 1978). Psychological contract is a relationship of the mutual obligation between employee and employer (Rousseau, 1989). Each individual holds his/her different perception of mutual obligation under the contract (Robinson, Kraatz and Rousseau, 1994).

Psychological contract is belief or perception promise that rules and regulations are accepted by employees and employers (Robinson and Rousseau 1994). MacNeil's (1985) explained two major types of contracts. Transactional contract and relational contract.

Transactional contracts are economically based and short-term oriented (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Raja at al., 2004; Rousseau, 1990). Rousseau (1990) argues that those with transactional contracts are characterized as having "high competitive wage rates and absence of organizational commitment" (p. 391). Generally organizations temporarily hire individuals for specific purpose in order to meet current requirements.

The relational contracts include long term and extensive obligations, based on exchange of socio -emotional components such as loyalty, commitment and trust (Raja et al., 2004; Robinson et al 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993).

Generally, in relational contract, firm hire individuals and train them in order to meet future needs (Miles and Snow, 1980). Rousseau (1990) argues that in relational contract employees want to make a long-term relationship with their employers.

Job satisfaction can be defined as "a positive or negative evaluative judgment of one's job or job situation" (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996, p. 2). Job satisfaction is said to be a function of the perceived relationship between what one wants from his/her job and what one

perceives as offering (Locke, 1969). Following this logic, a discrepancy between promised and received inducements is likely to lead towards feeling of dissatisfaction.

Hoppock's (1935) found a strong correlation between workers' emotional adjustment and their levels of job satisfaction. Lock (1976) found that individuals react affectively when they get outcomes inconsistent with their expectations. These affective reactions can be positive when outcomes encountered are valued and pleasant. Consistent with this argument it is likely that job satisfaction will be more positive when it is felt that received outcomes are consistent with an individual's expectation. As Relational contract based on exchange of socio emotional components such as loyalty, commitment and trust, therefore employees in relational contract are generally more satisfied (Raja et al., 2004; Robinson et al 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993). Relational contract was positively related to job satisfaction and transactional contract was negatively related to job satisfaction (Millward and Hopkin, 1998; Raja et al., 2004). On the basis of this literature support, we propose the following hypotheses.

H_{1a}: Relational contract will be positively related to Job satisfaction.

 H_{1b} : Transactional contract will be negatively related to job satisfaction.

Employee may leave the organization voluntarily or involuntarily due to certain reasons. Turnover intention is defined as employee's decision to leave the organization (Mobley 1977). Voluntarily turnover may be due to unfavorable work environment, better career objectives and attractive financial sources. Organization may want to terminate the employee contract due to incompatibilities, It may retire the person due to old age or death these are included in involuntary turnover (Mobley,1977).

The relational contract includes long term obligations, based on socio-emotional components such as loyalty, commitment and trust (Robinson et al 1994; Rousseau, 1990; Rousseau and McLean Parks, 1993). Literature support that when employees exhibit relational contract, they have less or no turnover intention, where as transactional contract economically based and short-term oriented employees exhibit high turnover intention (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Raja at al., 2004; Rousseau, 1990). On the basis of above literature this research purposed the following hypotheses

 H_{2a} : Relational contract will be negatively related to turnover intention.

 H_{2b} : Transactional contract will be positively related to turnover intention.

Affective commitment and job outcomes

The major acceleration in affective commitment literature

was the contribution of Allen and Meyer (1990) they defined affective commitment as Individuals' emotional connection, feeling of ownership and inner desire to be identified with the organization. There are four facets of affective commitment: individuals' personal attributes, structural factors, job related features and tenure (Mowday, Porters and Steers 1982). Personal characteristics include demographic variables such as age, sex, education and tenure are linked to commitment (Angle and Perry, 1981). Meta analysis by Meyer Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnytsky (2002) proves that affective commitment is negatively correlated with turnover and job satisfaction.

Allen and Meyer (1996) reported several studies with strong positive correlation between affective commitment and job satisfaction. The correlation values ranged from (r=0.50 to r=0.64, p>0.05) as reported from eight different studies (p, 262). The strong positive relationship has been found in several studies between affective commitment and job satisfaction (Jenkins, 1993; Konovsky and Cropanzano, 1991; Lee, 1992; Lynn, 1992; Morrison, 1994, Withey, 1988).

Literature provides considerable empirical evidence on the association between affective commitment and turnover intention (Huselid and Day 1991; Lverson and Buttigieg, 1999; Mowday et al., 1982). The Meta analysis by Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner, (2000) and Mayer et al. (2002) proves that affective commitment is negatively correlated with employees turn over intention. Employees with affective commitment have more intentions to remain with the organization (Meyer, et al., 1993). Therefore current study purpose that

 H_{3a} : Affective commitment will be positively related to job satisfaction.

H_{3b}: Affective commitment will be negatively related to turnover intention.

Psychological contract and affective commitment

Affective commitment is related to emotional attachment with the organization (Allen and Meyer, 1990). Mayer and Allen (1991) suggest that an influenced by the extent to which the individuals' expectations about the organization are coordinated by their actual experiences. This clearly links with the perceived reciprocal obligations of the psychological contract (Robinson et al., 1994).

Previous literature has established the relationship between psychological contracts and organizational commitment (Millward and Hopkins, 1998; Raja et al., 2004; Rousseau, 1990).

Relational contract is based on socio-emotional components like commitment and trust (Robinson et al., 1994). Relational contract has positive significant association with organizational commitment (Millward and Hopkin 1998.

Transactional contract are monetary in nature with

short term time orientation (Raja et al., 2004; Rousseau, 1990). Rousseau (1990) argues that those with transactional psychological contracts are likely to have high competitive compensation with low organizational commitment. So, transactional contract is negatively related to the organizational commitment (Millward and Hopkin, 1998; Raja et al., 2004). On the basis of this literature support, we propose the following hypothesis.

H_{4a}: Relational contract will be positively related to affective commitment.

H_{4b}: Transactional contract will be negatively related to affective commitment.

Affective commitment as mediator

Social exchange theory suggests that one's relationship with an employer provides a proximal cause for work attitude and turnover intentions (Cropanzano et al., 2003). Psychological contracts and affective commitment both are related to cognitive and emotional attachment of employees with the organization. According to social exchange theory (economic and socio-emotional) exchanges form some psychological linkages of employees with organization. On the other hand these exchanges are considered to be the antecedents for higher levels of affective commitment.

Exchange of economic as well as socio-emotional benefits from employer to employee causes the increased level of commitment for relational contract employee and decreased level of affective commitment for transactional employee. This phenomena based on social exchange theory provides strong logical support in establishment of this mediating mechanism of affective commitment in this study.

The Attitude- Behavior Theory (Fishbein and Ajzen's, 1975) also supports this notion of affective commitment mediation mechanism between psychological contract and outcomes. This theory suggests that job attitude originated from individuals' beliefs about the different aspects of the environment. Affective commitment can be considered as an attitudinal reaction which resulted from employment experiences and beliefs about the work environment (Rousseau, 1995). A belief that in case of relational contract it may positively affect the attitude (commitment) towards the organization, where as for contract it may negatively transactional commitment towards the organization. Thus we propose that affective commitment is the mechanism through which individuals outcome are linked to psychological contracts. We therefore suggest the following hypotheses about the mediation of affective commitment between psychological contracts and outcomes.

 $H_{5a} \colon$ Affective commitment mediates the relationship between relational contract and job satisfaction.

H_{5b}: Affective commitment mediates the relationship

between transactional contract and job satisfaction.

 H_{6a} : Affective commitment mediates the relationship between relational contract and turnover intention.

H_{6b}: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between transactional contract and turnover intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample and procedures

Our survey consists of employees of 8 different organizations from private and public sectors in Pakistan. Two of the organizations were top telecom companies and five were well-established universities. One of the organizations is a well known multinational company.

In a brief cover letter we explained the research objective and scope of the study along with guarantee of confidentiality. In total 400 questionnaires were circulated in the above mentioned organizations. Overall, 331 filled questionnaires were returned. After discarding incomplete questionnaires, we were left with 302 useable responses resulting in effective response rate of 76%. Respondents include employees working in upper management, middle management, and lower management. The qualification of respondents ranged from high school to post graduate, 82% of the sample consisted of graduate employees.

The mean age of the respondents is 31.71 years with (standard deviation (S.D) = 8.26) and 69% of the respondents were male, which indicates positive growth of female participation in different organizations of Pakistan as compared to reported 6% female participation by (Raja et al., 2004).

Measures

All measures were collected through self reported instrument in which participants responded on 5 or 7 point scales. As English is the medium of instruction in Pakistani educational institutes. Few other studies are conducted in English in Pakistani context like (Butt, Choi and Jaeger, 2005). This raised our confidence in not using translated scales, to avoid translation and back translation issues.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfactions were measured using hoppock's (1935) 04 items scale. Responses were given on a seven-point scale. A sample item is "how much of the time you feel satisfied with your job". Cronbach's alpha of this scale is (a = .86).

Affective commitment

Affective commitment was measured using Meyer and Allen's (1990) eight 08-item scale. Responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from 1= 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'. A sample item is "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization". The Cornbach's alpha of this scale is (a = 85).

Psychological contract

20 items psychological contract inventory (PCI) by Rousseau (2000) was used to measure psychological contracts. Relational and transactional contracts were measured using 10 items for each

contract type. Responses were made on five—point sacle ranging from 1= 'strongly disagree' to 5= 'strongly agree'. The sample item for relational contract is, "Is responsive to employee concerns and well-being "and for transactional contract it is, "pay me only specific duties I perform". The alpha reliabilities for relational contract is (.89) and for transactional contract it is (a = .89).

Turnover intention

Turnover intention was measured using 3 items scale by Cammann et al. (1982). Responses were made on five-point scale and the sample item is, "I often think about leaving the organization". The alpha reliability for this scale is (a = .86).

Control variables.

The results of One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed significant differences in dependent and mediator variables with three demographic factors; Organization type, designation and field of specialization. All other demographic factors like age, gender and tenure revealed highly insignificant impact on mediator and job outcomes. Therefore, only three variables; organization type, designation and field of specialization were entered into the equation as control variables, when we performed Multiple Regression analysis in this study.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics, mean, standard deviation and correlations for all the variables used in this study. Alpha reliabilities are reported in bold parenthesis in front of each variable. The descriptive analysis results revealed mean value for affective commitment 2.99 (S.D = 1.11) and the mean value for outcomes were 4.47 (S.D = 1.25) for job satisfaction and 3.17 (S.D = 0.77) for turnover intention.

Affective commitment and job satisfaction demonstrated strong positive relationship (r = 0.71, p< .001) consistent with (r = 0.67, p< .01) reported by Raja et al., (2004). The correlation value between affective commitment and turn over intention was (r = - 0.73 p < .001) which is consistent with the reported correlation values (r = -0.66, p < .001) by Raja et al. (2004). The mean value for relational contract found 3.12 (S.D = 0.75) and for transactional contract 3.15 (S.D = 0.83). The association between psychological contract and job satisfaction found (r = 0.48, p < .001) for relational and (r = - 0.62, p < .001) for transactional. The correlation value between psychological contracts and turnover intention found (r = -0.56, p < .001) for relational and (r = 0.61, p < .001.001) for transactional contract. We found strong significant support for all main effect hypothesis from correlation matrix analysis reported in Table 1. To check the normality of data frequencies were observed and the analysis confirmed that the data used in this study was normally distributed.

Table 1. Mean, standard deviation, correlation and reliabilities.

Variable	Mean	S.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age	31.72	8.27										
OrgName	4.37	2.58	0.17									
Designation	2.68	0.55	-0.57	-0.04								
Education	3.56	2.49	0.36	0.07	-0.50							
Specialization	3.02	0.79	0.31	0.40	-0.15	0.26						
Transactional contract	3.15	0.83	-0.15	-0.12	0.22	-0.1	-0.07	(0.89)				
Relational contract	3.12	0.75	0.05	-0.09	-0.09	0	-0.08	-0.49**	(0.89)			
Affective commitment	2.99	1.11	0.12	0	-0.19	0.08	-0.08	61**	0.57**	(0.85)		
Turnover intention	3.17	0.77	-0.14	-0.08	0.18	-0.07	-0.08	0.61**	-0.56**	-0.73**	(0.86)	
Job satisfaction	4.47	1.25	0.20	0.05	024	0.11	0.04	-0.62**	0.48**	0.71**	-0.74**	(0.86)

N=302, **p< .001, *p< 0.05

Table 2. Regression analysis for transactional contract relational contract affective commitment and outcomes.

Duadiatau	Affective commitment			Job satisfaction			Turnover Intention		
Predictor	β	R ²	∆ R ²	β	R ²	∆ R ²	β	R ²	∆ R ²
Model 1: Main effects of cor	tract type	es							
Step 1									
Control variables		0.05			0.06			0.04	
Step 2.									
Transactional contract	-0.6***	0.39	0.34***	-0.6***	0.40	0.34***	0.59***	00.37	0.33***
Relational contract	0.55***	0.35	0.30***	0.47***	0.27	0.21***	-0.56***	0.34	00.3***
Model 2: Affective commitm	ent								
Step 1. Control variables					0.06			0.04	
Step 2. Affective commitment				0.69***	0.52	0.46***	-0.73***	0.55	0.51***

N, 302. Organizational types, specialization and designation was used as control variable. ***p< .001; **p< .001; *p< 0.05.

Regression analysis

Table 2 show results of hierarchical regression analysis. n first step of regression analysis we entered organization types, specialization and designation as control variables in the equation. In the second step we regress job satisfaction and turnover intention on psychological contract types.

Psychological contract and job outcomes

Hypothesis 1a predicts that relational contract will be positively related to job satisfaction and hypothesis 1b proposes the negative relationship between transactional contract and job satisfaction. We regressed job satisfaction on both of these contract types and results revealed that job satisfaction (β = .47, p < 0.001) was positively related to relational contract and negatively related (β = -.60, p < .001) to transactional contract. This strongly significant empirical support confirmed our first main effect hypotheses which was found consistent with

previous literature on psychological contract and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2a proposed negative relationship between relational contract and turnover intention. H_{2b} proposed positive relationship between transactional contract and turnover intention. To test this proposed relationship, we regressed turnover intention on transactional and relational contract type. The results of this regression provided empirical support of our hypotheses. Turnover intention (β = -0.56, p < .001) found negatively related to relational contract and (β = 0.59, p < .001) positively related to transactional contract.

Affective commitment and job outcomes

Hypotheses 3a predict positive relationship between affective commitment and job satisfaction and 3b predicts negative relationship between affective commitment and turnover intention. To test these relationships both of the outcomes were regressed on affective commitment. Regression results significantly supported our

hypotheses, affective commitment found (β = 0.69, p < 0.001) positively related to job satisfaction and (β = -0.73, p < 0.001) negatively related to intention to quit. These highly significant results provided strong support of H_{3a} and H_{3b} .

Psychological contracts and affective commitment

Hypothesis 4a proposed the positive relationship between relational contract and affective commitment and H_{4b} proposed the negative relationship between transactional contract and affective commitment. To test these predicted relationships affective commitment was regressed on both of psychological contract types. The results provided strong empirical evidence in support of H_{4a} and H_{4b} .

Relational contract was found to be (β = 0.55, p < 0.001) positively related to affective commitment and transactional contract was found (β = -0.60, p < 0.001) negatively related to affective commitment.

Mediation analysis

We predicted that affective commitment mediates the relationship between contract types and outcomes (job satisfaction and turnover intention). According to Baron and Kenny (1986) mediation can be established with three regression tests. First contract types (independent variable) should be related to affective commitment (mediator). Second, contract types and mediator (affective commitment) should be related to both outcomes. Third when both contract type (independent variables) and affective commitment (mediator) are concurrently incorporated in regression equation, then the relationship between contract types (independent variables) and the outcomes should be considerably weaker than the main effects of predictor and criterion variables.

For mediation analysis, in step 1, we entered control variables. In second step, the mediator affective commitment was entered. In the third step, psychological contract types were entered in equation and were regressed on job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Hypothesis 5a states that affective commitment mediates the relationship between psychological contract and job satisfaction. To test the mediating effect of affective commitment, we regressed job satisfaction, affective commitment and relational contract together as per conditions prescribed by Barron and Kenny (1986). As shown in Table 3, results of multiple regression revealed significant reduction in variances (from β =0.47*** to 0.05 n.s and ΔR^2 = 0.21, to = 0.05). These result confirmed full mediation condition prescribed by Barron and Kenny (1986) providing support for H_{5a}. H_{5b} states that affective commitment mediates the relationship between transactional contract and job satisfaction. To test the mediating effect of affective commitment, we regressed

job satisfaction, affective commitment and transactional contract together. As shown in Table 3, results of multiple regression revealed no significant reduction in variances (from $\beta = -60^{***}$ to -55^{**}).

Hypothesis 6 a states that affective commitment mediate the relationship between relational contract and turnover intention. To test the mediating effect of affective commitment, we regressed turnover intention, affective commitment, and relational contract together. Results in table 3 shows significant drop in variances (from $\beta = -0.56^{***}$ to -0.17 n.s and $\Delta R^2 = 0.33$, to = 0.05). This result confirmed full mediation condition prescribed by Barron and Kenny (1986) providing support of our H_{6a}. H_{6b} states that affective commitment mediate the relationship between transactional contract and turnover intention. Results in Table 3 shows no significant drop in variances (from $\beta = -0.59^{***}$ to 0.57^{***}). This result was unable to fulfill mediation condition prescribed by Barron and Kenny (1986) providing no support and reject our hypothesis 6b.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate the motivational and emotion antecedents of job satisfaction and turnover intention. In doing this, we endeavor to relate the various construct of OB such as psychological contract, affective commitment job satisfaction and turnover intention.

Overall, our finding/results give strong support for all hypotheses. We found that psychological contract (relational and transactional) significantly related to job outcomes (H_1 , H_{1a} , H_2 , and H_{2a}). these finding are consistent with the previous literature (Zhao et al., (2007) Psychological contract is related to job outcome such as job satisfaction and turnover intention.

We also found that psychological contract (relational and transactional contract) is significant related to affective commitment (H_4 , and H_{4a}) and affective commitment is significantly related to job satisfaction and turnover intention (Hypothesis 3, 3b). The contribution of this research is that affective commitment mediates the relationship between psychological relational contract and job outcomes(H_{5a} , and H_{6a}). These finding demonstrate that when promise build, the employees in workplace feel emotional attachment with the organizations which increase job satisfaction and decrease their turnover intention.

Practical implementation & Future Research

The results of our study have practical implication for managers and employees, our finding suggest that mangers should focus on employee's satisfaction, and it would be possible if employees feel emotional attachment with the organization, further, managers and

Table 3. Results of mediator regression analysis.

Predictors -		Job satisfactio	n	Turnover Intention				
	β	R²	ΔR^2	β	R ²	ΔR^2		
Model 1: Main effects								
Step 1.								
Control variable		0.05			0.04			
Step 2								
Transactional contract	-0.6***	0.4	0.34***	0.59***	0.37	0.33***		
Relational contract	0.47***	0.35	0.21***	-0.56***	0.34	0.33***		
Model 2: Mediation of a	affective comn	nitment						
Step 1								
Control variable		0.6			0.04			
Step 2								
Affective commitment		0.51	0.46		-0.55	0.52		
Step 3								
Transaction contract	-0.55**	0.26	0.25**	0.57***	0.33	0.22***		
Relational contract	0.05	0.57	0.05	-0.17	0.61	0.05		

N=302. Organizational types, specialization and designation was used as control variable. ***p< .001, **p< .001, *p< .05

employees should build and fulfill a psychological contract that's leads toward affective commitment which increase employees satisfaction and reduce intention to quit. The model of this study should be tested with other outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, job performance, creative performance and workplace deviance. Furthermore possible moderating variable regarding contracts-commitment and commitment-outcome should be studied in future research. A longitudinal study with different additional outcomes in this model is recommended for future research in different context.

Further researcher may use psychological contract breach, feeling of violation and affective commitment with other outcomes, we believes that testing moderating effect of affective commitment between contract breach and outcome will be a good future research.

Limitation of study

This research has several limitations. First, this research is cross sectional in nature; as such, we believe that this longitudinal study would better explain these relationships. Secondly, all findings were based on self reported data, while previous studies also used self reported measures (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Robinson and Morrison, 2000), so there may be a possibility of common method error in study.

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