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Ideological currency in psychological contracts: the role of team relationships in a reciprocity perspective

P. Matthijs Bal^{a*} and Rob Vink^b

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This study focused on the role of ideology in psychological contracts, which has been a neglected theme in psychological contract research. A study among Dutch middle managers in education revealed that ideological psychological contract fulfillment explained additional variance in relation to employee obligations toward the organization. Moreover, it was found that team relationships moderated the relations between some aspects of employer contract fulfillment and employee obligations, but no significant interactions were found between employer ideological fulfillment and team relationships in relation to employee obligations.

Keywords: employee obligations; ideology; middle managers; psychological contract; team relationships

Introduction

Psychological contracts are often used to describe exchange relationships between employee and organization. It has been shown that perceptions of contract fulfillments have a profound impact on job attitudes and behaviors (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski and Bravo 2007; Bal, De Lange, Jansen and Van der Velde 2008). Recent studies have focused on the role of reciprocity in psychological contracts (Parzefall 2008), by explaining that reciprocity norms constitute a fundamental aspect in how psychological contracts relate to job attitudes and behaviors (Gouldner 1960; Zhao et al. 2007). However, although studies have shown the potential negative consequences of breaches and positive effects of contract fulfillments, few studies have focused on the interplay between employees' perceptions of mutual obligations in the psychological contract. According to the definition of the psychological contract, it consists of both employer obligations and employee obligations, and it is through the exchange of both employer and employee obligations that employees become more loyal and better performing (Dabos and Rousseau 2004).

Further, psychological contract research has typically focused on either transactional or relational contracts, thereby ignoring the possible existence of other components in the psychological contract (De Vos, Buyens and Schalk 2003). In their conceptual paper, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) introduced the concept of ideological contract in addition to the existing components of the contract to explain the espousal of a cause,

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which may be important in addition and above financial, relational, and developmental exchanges between employee and organization (Bal, Jansen, Van der Velde, De Lange and Rousseau 2010). Despite the recent popularity of concepts such as ideology and callings in organizational behavior (Geare, Edgar and McAndrew 2006; Geare, Edgar and McAndrew 2009; Elangovan, Pinder and McLean 2010; Berg, Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2010), there are very few studies on the role of ideology in psychological contracts (see for a qualitative study O'Donohue and Nelson 2007).

Finally, an increasing number of studies has focused on personal and organizational moderators in the relations between employer contract fulfillments and work outcomes, including personality, age, organizational support and mentoring (Orvis, Dudley and Cortina 2008; Zagenczyk, Gibney, Kiewitz and Restubog 2009; Bal, Chiaburu and Jansen 2010). However, in this paper we argue that for employees to react upon employer fulfillment, high-quality team relationships that support execution of high-standard work ethics are essential, such that when team relationships are of high-quality, employees are more likely to increase their own obligations than when team relationships are poor. According to social exchange theory (Gouldner 1960; Blau 1964), exchanges with colleagues at the workplace are important for employees since work groups may facilitate a sense of belonging and social approval (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Moreover, high-quality relationships with co-workers may fulfill basic human needs, such as affiliation. Therefore, high-quality team relationships that embody the mutual trust of a social exchange relationship promote reciprocal effort in the job and organization by employees (Love and Forret 2008). For instance, a study of Love and Forret (2008) showed that high team-member exchange was positively related to several types of organizational citizenship behaviors. Thus, high-quality team relationships will be essential in the enhancement of employee's felt obligations.

The current study adds to previous research on psychological contracts in several ways. First, it focuses on both employee and employer obligations in the psychological contract, thereby including the reciprocity of obligations in line with the definition of psychological contracts (Rousseau 1995). Moreover, this paper introduces a measure for both employer ideological and employee ideological obligations, and it investigates the contribution of this concept to psychological contract research among a sample of middle managers in education. It has been found that ideology is a more important reason for working in education than the compensation received (Borghans and Golsteyn 2005). Finally, this study is first to introduce team-related moderators in the relations of psychological contract fulfillment with outcomes.

The psychological contract

The psychological contract has been used widely as a framework for understanding the employment relationship and explanation of job attitudes and behaviors (Guest 2004; Zhao et al. 2007). According to Rousseau (1995, p. 9), a psychological contract is 'individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization'. Terms of an individual's psychological contract include that person's understandings of his or her own as well as the employer's obligations (Rousseau 1995; Dabos and Rousseau 2004). Although the majority of studies focused on the employer's psychological contract obligations, the psychological contract itself consists of the employees' perceptions regarding the mutual obligations of both (Rousseau 1995). Both employee and organization are assumed to have obligations toward each other, and these obligations are interdependent. Especially through the beliefs

regarding the extent to which the employer honors or fulfills the psychological contract, employees are expected to experience greater obligation toward the employer (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Montes and Zweig 2009).

The mechanisms underlying psychological contracts are typically accounted for using social exchange theory (Blau 1964), and in particular its central concept, the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960). By virtue of this norm, people engage in social exchanges and anticipate that their efforts will be reciprocated by the other party. Especially in the workplace the reciprocity norm guides exchanges between employee and organization (Rousseau 1995). Employers often make future commitments to their employees to motivate them to put effort in their jobs and remain with the organization (Rousseau 1995, 2005). When employees judge employer fulfillment to be high, they are more likely to feel obligated to reciprocate and hence increase their own sense of obligation toward the organization (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002). Previous studies have indeed shown that high levels of employer fulfillment are related to high levels of employee obligations (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; De Vos et al. 2003; Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman 2004). However, these studies did not investigate specific patterns of reciprocation. Although researchers have shown that the obligations consist of multiple content types, they failed to address the nature or content of the obligations involved (De Vos et al. 2003; Dabos and Rousseau 2004). Moreover, many studies measure only one side of the psychological contract, the employee's own obligations for example, or what the employee believes the employer owes in return, but seldom both. The current study investigates the reciprocity of psychological contracts, by distinguishing among several types of employer and employee obligations.

Types of employer and employee obligations

A psychological contract between the employee and the organization consists of both employer and employee obligations. Traditionally, a distinction has been made between transactional and relational type of employer obligations (Rousseau and Parks 1993). Transactional obligations are short-term focused obligations with a monetizable scope. Relational obligations, however, consist of socio-emotional elements with a long-term and open-ended focus (Rousseau and Parks 1993). However, considerable critique on this distinction has led to the introduction of new dimensions (De Vos et al. 2003; Taylor and Tekleab 2004). For instance, employer obligations to provide job security and training entail both transactional and relational elements, and therefore, tend to cross-load on both dimensions over studies (Taylor and Tekleab 2004; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005). Therefore, it has been suggested that employer obligations toward the employee can be classified along a greater number of factors than the transactional-relational distinction. In the current study, we distinguish among employer job content, social, financial, developmental, and ideological obligations. While the first four obligations were identified in previous studies (e.g. De Vos et al. 2003; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2005; Bal et al. 2010), in this paper we introduce the empirical investigation of ideological obligations.

Thompson and Bunderson (2003; based on the work of Blau 1964) introduced the concept of ideological contract in addition to the existing dimensions of the psychological contract. According to the authors, employees perceive obligations from the employer that are directed at the pursuit of a principle or cause (Thompson and Bunderson 2003, p. 573; see also Geare et al. 2006, 2009). They defined ideological currency in the psychological contracts as 'credible commitments to pursue a valued cause or principle (not limited to self-interest) that are implicitly exchanged at the nexus of the individual-organization

relationship' (Thompson and Bunderson 2003, p. 574). Employees may be working not only for monetary rewards or to socially connect to others, but may be motivated to work in order to contribute to enhance the quality of life of others or to contribute to the mission of the organization (Grant and Wade-Benzoni 2009). Consequently, employees may perceive obligations from the organization to create a work environment where employees can give meaning to their lives and fulfill their moral ideals. According to Thompson and Bunderson, employees may believe that the organization should demonstrate credible commitment and investment in a valued cause or principle, and in return, employees feel obligated to perform in such a way that these causes and principles are promoted in organizational functioning. Thus, employees perceive ideological obligations from the employer, and also form evaluations of the extent to which the employer fulfills its ideological obligations. Employer ideological obligations and fulfillment are expected to constitute separate dimensions in the psychological contract.

With respect to the employee, obligations regarding their contributions (i.e. resources they owe to the employer) are represented by efforts put in the job or otherwise directed toward helping the employer (Organ 1988). Employee obligations often entail performing in-role behaviors as well as extra-role flexibility (Van Dyne and LePine 1998; Workman and Bommer 2004; Bal et al. 2010). In-role obligations involve working to the standards set for one's job, which include being efficient and cooperating with their colleagues. Flexibility obligations involve employee commitments to provide support for co-workers in need or employee commitments to respond to the broader firm's needs in such ways as being flexible about hours or volunteering to do extra tasks (Organ 1988). Previous studies have supported the distinction between these two types of employee obligations (e.g. De Vos et al. 2003; Bal et al. 2010). In the current study, we argue that employees may also perceive ideological obligations toward their organization. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) described employee ideological obligations in terms of participation in the organization's mission, organizational and societal citizenship behavior. However, no empirical research has been published in which ideological obligations (from both employer and employee) were measured. This study aims to fill this gap and introduces a new measure of both employer and employee ideological obligations. In line with that mentioned above, we expect employee ideological obligations to constitute a separate dimension within the psychological contract. Therefore, the first hypothesis is:

H1: Ideological employer obligations and fulfillment and ideological employee obligations constitute separate factors within the psychological contract.

Previous studies have found that increases in employer psychological contract fulfillment lead to increases in respective employee obligations (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002). Although the psychological contract consists of both perceived obligations and evaluations of these obligations (fulfillment or breach), it has been shown that, in particular, evaluations of the psychological contract relate significantly to several outcomes, including employee obligations (Zhao et al. 2007; Montes and Zweig 2009). Although high-employer obligations may set an ambitious standard for employees to become more highly motivated in their work (Dabos and Rousseau 2004), it is the perception of fulfillment that ultimately motivate employees to invest more effort in their jobs and the organization (Montes and Zweig 2009). In line with these earlier findings, we expect that, in particular, perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment, rather than obligations are related to higher levels of employee's felt obligations toward the organization. Because ideology relates to the fundamental principles of society, Thompson and Bunderson (2003) argued that fulfillment and breach of these types of

obligations have stronger effects on work motivation, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals at work. Bedell-Avers, Hunter, Angie, Eubanks and Mumford (2009) argued that ideology at the workplace emphasizes a shared collective past, and values and standards necessary for a just society. Ideological leadership, for instance, focuses on shared values of the organization and reinforcement of organizational members to make a strong commitment to the cause (Mumford, Antes, Caughron and Friedrich 2008; Bedell-Avers et al. 2009). Because of the moral significance of ideological obligations, these may become non-negotiable, and therefore, when unfulfilled, people will feel less motivated to perform in-role obligations, being flexible, and perceive ideological obligations toward their organizations themselves. When ideological obligations are violated by the organization, employees' personal identities as member of the organization may be threatened, and consequently motivation will drop significantly (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Thompson and Bunderson 2003). In other words, ideological fulfillment will explain additional variance in relation to employee obligations, beyond the effects of other types of psychological contract fulfillment (i.e. job content, social, financial, and developmental). Therefore, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Ideological fulfillment explains additional variance above other types of psychological contract fulfillment in relation to employee obligations.

The role of team relationships in ideological contract obligations

Finally, we propose that team relationships are essential in the relations between employer contract fulfillment and employee obligations. Research has shown that several types of factors are important in determining the strength of the consequences of psychological contract fulfillments and breaches. Personal factors, such as personality (Orvis et al. 2008) and age (Bal et al. 2008), may influence the relationships, as well as organizational factors, such as availability of mentors (Zagenczyk et al. 2009), and social exchange relationships with the organization (Bal et al. 2010). However, psychological contracts do not exist in a social vacuum, where employee and organization exchange obligations, regardless of environmental circumstances. In fact, psychological contracts function in a social environment, where individuals' state of their psychological contract is compared to that of their colleagues (Guest 2004). In this study, we propose that team relationships are essential in reactions to psychological contract fulfillments. Henderson, Wayne, Shore, Bommer, and Tetrick (2008) argued that both psychological contract fulfillment and team relations provide resources for employees. By delivering inducements such as money, autonomy, and development, organizations fulfill the need for resources among their employees. Team members may also fulfill important needs among employees, such as need for affiliation and belonging. Therefore, contract fulfillments and team relationships may not only act as substitutes of each other, but may also strengthen each other.

High-quality relationships with peers in the organization may buffer the negative effects of low-psychological contract fulfillment and enhance the positive effects of high-contract fulfillment (Dulac, Coyle-Shapiro, Henderson and Wayne 2008). More specifically, employees will continue to feel highly obligated toward the organization and put effort in their jobs when their psychological contracts are marginally fulfilled, but at the same time perceive their relation with their team of high quality. In this sense, putting effort in the job because of high-quality team relationships becomes a substitute for low-psychological contract fulfillments by the organization. Likewise, high-team

relationships may bolster the positive effects of psychological contract fulfillments, such that when both are high, levels of employees feel more highly obligated toward the organization than when team relationships are low (Dulac et al. 2008). Dulac and colleagues (2008) explained that when employees have strong relationships with their teams, they may be cognitively biased to explain possible contract breach in more favorable terms (e.g. explaining that the organization was unable to fulfill its promises) and thus uphold their side of the deal, and still feeling obligated to contribute to the organization. We therefore expect that:

H3: Team relationships moderate the relationships between psychological contract fulfillment and employee obligations, with stronger relations for those with strong team relationships.

Method

Procedure and sample

The study was conducted among middle managers in secondary and tertiary educational institutions in The Netherlands. The sample was deemed appropriate for the current study purposes since reasons for people to work in education may be based on ideological considerations, and therefore, ideological obligations may be important among the participants of this study (Kallenberg 2007). Moreover, middle managers in education are concerned with both fulfilling their commitments toward the ideology of the school and perceiving obligations from the institution to strengthen their position such that they are able to fulfill the ideological cause of the institution (Hallier and James 1997). Team relationships are particularly important in the current research setting, where middle managers in educational institutions are primarily attracted through internal promotions, and thus middle managers are often supervising their former colleagues (Kallenberg 2007). Therefore, for these middle managers team relationships are very important in their daily functioning. In the current research context, the roles of middle managers are to fulfill the role as the link between the top management of schools and the workplace (being the teachers), to coordinate daily activities at the school, and to supervise the teachers (De Rooij and Vink 2009). For the current sample, 88% of the employees used to be a teacher before becoming a middle manager, and 95% of the respondents obtained the position of a middle manager through promotion in their department and thus is currently supervising former co-workers (De Rooij and Vink 2009). Thus, because a large percentage of the middle managers achieved their position by promotion within their team, team relationships will be especially important for effective functioning. In the current context, teams are constituted of teachers complemented with support staff and supervised by the middle manager. Six hundred and twelve middle managers from a wide variety of schools throughout The Netherlands were approached by email to participate in the study. Email addresses were obtained from school directors. We decided to approach middle managers from a wide range of schools, to obtain a higher variety in psychological contracts. In total, 161 middle managers filled out the questionnaire (response rate of 26%), and after deletion of respondents with missing values, the final sample consisted of 138 employees. The mean age of the respondents was 49 years, and on average they worked for 6 years in their current function, and supervised 25 employees. A total of 53% of the respondents were male. More than 85% of the participants indicated that their main roles included educational supervision of teachers, the translation of school policies into team policies, advising the top management team

about strategic decisions, conducting performance appraisals among their staff, and the evaluation of educational results.

Measures

Employer obligations

Five types of employer obligations were measured: content, social, financial, developmental, and ideological. The first four types were measured with the scales of De Vos and colleagues (2003). Items were slightly adapted to reflect the employment situation of the respondents (e.g. 'my organization' was changed into 'my school'). Respondents rated the extent to which they believed their employer was obligated to provide a range of items. Answers could be provided on a five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'to a very great extent'. Job content was measured with four items (e.g. 'opportunities to show what you can do' and 'a job with responsibilities'), and obtained a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. Social obligations were measured with four items, examples being 'a good atmosphere at work' and 'a good mutual cooperation' (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). Employer financial obligations were measured with four items (e.g. 'financial rewards for exceptional performance' and 'an attractive pay and benefits package'). Cronbach's alpha was 0.77. Employer developmental obligations were also measured with four items. Examples are 'opportunities for career development within my school' and 'opportunities to follow courses and training relevant for my personal growth'. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.77.

For employer ideological obligations, a new scale was constructed which was designed for the current study context, being education. The measure for the ideological contract obligations were constructed based on the theoretical work of Thompson and Bunderson (2003), and in cooperation with the Dutch Council for the Educational Sector, member of the European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools. Items were constructed based upon the theoretical work of Thompson and Bunderson (2003), and the qualitative study of O'Donohue and Nelson (2007). Furthermore, based on the comments of a representation of the advisors at the Dutch Council for the Educational Sector, items were added to both the ideology scales. The items were: 'opportunities to give meaning to my life through my job', 'opportunities to fulfill my pedagogic ideals in my job', 'opportunities to fulfill my moral ideals in my job', and 'opportunities to fulfill my societal ideals in my job'. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.89. Validity of this scale is presented below.

Employer fulfillment

Respondents rated the extent to which they believed their employer had fulfilled a range of obligations. The same list of obligations was presented as for the employer obligations, and the same answer-categories were used. The Cronbach's alphas for the five employer fulfillment scales ranged from 0.76 to 0.92.

Employee obligations were measured by three scales: in-role, flexibility, and ideological obligations (with the same answer-categories as the employer obligations). In-role and flexibility obligations were measured with scales from De Vos and colleagues (2003). In-role obligations were measured with four items (e.g. 'work and efficiently' and 'cooperate well with your colleagues'), and was found reliable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.86). Flexibility obligations were measured with four items. An example is: 'work extra hours to get my job done' (Cronbach's alpha = 0.87). For ideological obligations, a new measure

was constructed, based on Thompson and Bunderson (2003). Nine items were constructed, and included obligations to contribute to the mission, educational results, image, policy development, innovation of their organization, and to have a vision on their team, investment to keep student number high, to persist if things do not go so well in the organization, and to execute policies of the organization. Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.89.

Quality of team relationships was measured with six items. The items are based on existing scales measuring perceived organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa 1986) and leader-member exchange (Janssen and van Yperen 2004). The items were adjusted to measure perceived team support. The items include: 'The work relation with my team is effective, 'I have a lot of trust in my team', 'my team considers my suggestions for change', 'my team and I are suited to each other', 'my team understands my problems and needs, and 'my team recognizes my potential'. Answers could be provided on the same range as the psychological contract items. Cronbach's alpha of this scale was 0.91.

Control variables

We controlled for the age of the respondent (measured as a continuous variable), the number of years in the current function (also measured continuously), and the span of control of the middle manager (measured by the number of people the respondent supervises). The mean age was 49 years (SD = 7.4 years; range 27–62 years). The mean job tenure was 6 years (SD = 4.7; range 1–28 years). On average, the middle managers supervised 25 employees (SD = 24.5; range 1–106). Table 1 shows the correlations among the variables under study.

Analysis

To test Hypothesis 1 for the construct and discriminant validity of the psychological contract measures, measurement models including all psychological contract items were tested by means of exploratory factor analysis (EFA; with varimax-rotation) and subsequently confirmatory factor analyses (CFA with Lisrel 8.80; Jöreskog and Sörbom 2008). To evaluate models, established goodness-of-fit indices were used (Hu and Bentler 1999). For the root mean square error of approximation, a value of 0.05 or below is indicated as good fit, and below 0.08 as acceptable. Further, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) should be lower than 0.05. Non-normed fit index (NNFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), and incremental fit index (IFI) should all be above 0.90. Six different models were tested; the baseline model with the 13 proposed factors included: five employer obligations factors, five employer fulfillment factors, and three employee obligations factors. This model was tested against a range of models with fewer factors.

Moderated regression analysis was conducted for Hypotheses 2 and 3. The independent variables were centered to avoid multicollinearity (Aiken and West 1991). In the first step (not shown in Table 4), the control variables were entered, as well as the employer obligations, except for employer ideological obligations. In step 2, employer ideological obligations were entered, in step 3 the employer fulfillments (except for employer ideological fulfillment), in step 4 employer ideological fulfillment, and in the final step the interaction terms between employer contract fulfillment and team relationships. Since researchers have stated that interactive effects are harder to detect, especially in field studies, an alpha level of 0.10 was used to estimate significant

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations of the study variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1 Age	48.78	7.38	-																
2 Job tenure	5.94	4.69	0.40**	-															
3 Span of control	25.07	24.50	0.10	0.07	-														
4 ER content	3.92	0.62	-0.17*	-0.24**	0.04	-													
5 ER social	3.66	0.81	-0.06	-0.02	0.04	0.85	-												
6 ER financial	3.76	0.72	-0.14	-0.23**	-0.06	0.25**	0.89	-											
7 ER developmental	3.85	0.66	-0.22**	-0.21*	-0.02	0.45**	0.23**	0.77	-										
8 ER ideological	3.03	0.88	-0.03	-0.10	-0.12	0.34**	0.47**	0.49**	0.89	-									
9 ERF content	3.84	0.69	-0.17*	-0.08	-0.04	0.19*	-0.06	0.13	0.15	-0.01	-								
10 ERF social	3.22	0.86	-0.07	0.16	-0.05	0.07	0.44**	0.04	0.16	0.25**	0.38**	-							
11 ERF financial	2.14	0.82	-0.15	0.15	-0.04	-0.05	0.17	0.07	0.16	0.03	0.40**	0.50**	0.76	-					
12 ERF developmental	3.30	0.86	-0.21	0.01	-0.11	0.06	0.15	0.11	0.26**	0.21*	0.48**	0.54**	0.63**	0.82	-				
13 ERF ideological	2.93	0.87	-0.06	0.07	-0.15	0.11	0.33**	0.13	0.28**	0.56**	0.37**	0.50**	0.35**	0.57**	0.86	-			
14 EE in-role	4.36	0.42	-0.04	-0.08	0.01	0.14	0.14	0.09	0.12	0.08	0.33**	0.17*	0.13	0.13	0.26**	0.86	-		
15 EE flexibility	3.63	0.78	0.02	-0.03	0.10	-0.00	0.07	0.08	0.15	0.03	0.19*	0.14	0.21*	0.13	0.20*	0.25**	0.87	-	
16 EE ideological	4.37	0.45	-0.06	-0.12	0.02	0.21*	0.05	0.17*	0.16	0.12	0.33**	0.22*	0.17*	0.21*	0.28**	0.56**	0.15	0.89	-
17 Team relationships	3.92	0.62	-0.08	0.14	0.05	0.13	0.13	-0.08	0.12	0.11	0.15	0.17*	0.10	0.17	0.19*	0.17*	0.03	0.18*	0.91

Note: Reliabilities are reported along the diagonal. N = 138. ER, employer obligations; ERF, employer fulfillment; EE, employee obligations; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01.

interactive effects (Aguinis 2002; Aguinis, Beaty, Boik, and Pierce 2005). For significant moderators, we plotted the interaction effects using simple slope analysis and calculated beta weights for the slopes one standard deviation below and above the mean (Aiken and West 1991).

Results

The first hypothesis stated that employer ideological obligations, employer ideological fulfillment, and employee ideological obligations constitute separate constructs within the psychological contract. Table 2 shows the results of the EFA (with varimax-rotation; factor loadings and eigen values) and Table 3 shows the results of the CFA. The EFA produced 13 factors with eigen values above one, and all of the items loaded on their proposed factors. The factor loadings were all above 0.40. Therefore, the EFA showed support for the distinctiveness of the employer and employee ideological contract obligations.

The results of the CFA showed that the baseline model (with the thirteen proposed factors) fitted well ($\chi^2 = 474.68$, $p < 0.001$; $df = 1691$; $RMSEA = 0.04$; $CFI = 1.00$; $NNFI = 0.99$). This baseline model obtained a significant better fit than all the other models, including models, where ideological obligations loaded on other factors. All items loaded significantly on their latent factor with factor loadings above 0.40. Modification indices did not indicate that items loaded on other factors than expected. We conclude that the factor structure is valid, and that there is no common method threat to validity. Hypothesis 1 is supported; employer ideological obligations, employer ideological fulfillment, and employee ideological obligations constitute separate factors in the psychological contract.

Hypothesis 2 stated that ideological fulfillment explained additional variance in relation to three employee obligations. Table 4 shows the results of the (moderated) regression analyses. Employer ideological obligations were not related to any of the employee obligations. Employer content fulfillment was significantly related to employee in-role obligations ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$). In step 4, we tested for the additional explained variance by employer ideological fulfillment. Employer ideological fulfillment was significantly related to employee in-role obligations ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$), employee flexibility obligations ($\beta = 0.25$, $p < 0.05$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.03$), and to employee ideological obligations ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < 0.10$, $\Delta R^2 = 0.02$). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported; employer ideological fulfillment explained additional variance above the effects of employer contract fulfillment in relation to employee obligations.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that team relationships would interact with employer contract fulfillment, such that high-team relationships would strengthen the positive relationships of employer fulfillment with employee obligations. Employer financial fulfillment interacted significantly with team relationships in predicting employee in-role obligations ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.05$). Simple slope analysis showed that the relation for low-quality team relation employees was positive ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.10$), and the relation for high-quality team relationships was negative ($\beta = -0.18$, $p < 0.05$). This is in contrast to the hypothesis (see Figure 1). Employer content fulfillment interacted significantly with team relationships in relation to employee flexibility obligations ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.001$). The relation was positive for high-quality team relation employees ($\beta = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$), and negative for low-quality team relation employees ($\beta = -0.26$, $p < 0.10$; see Figure 2). Team relationships also positively moderated the relation between employer content fulfillment and employee ideological obligations ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.10$). The relation

Table 2. Factor loadings of the complete set of items under study with exploratory factor analysis (items as they appeared in the questionnaire).

		<i>Factor loadings EFA</i>												
<i>Eigen Value</i>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Employer content obligations		5.38	5.14	4.22	3.69	3.60	3.39	3.17	3.15	2.86	2.48	2.33	2.27	2.07
1	A job in which I can make decisions by myself								0.87					
2	A job with responsibilities								0.90					
3	The possibility to schedule my own tasks								0.65					
4	Opportunities to use my skills and capacities								0.67					
Employer social obligations														
1	A good work-private balance				0.57									
2	A good atmosphere at work				0.83									
3	Positive relationships among colleagues				0.73									
4	A good mutual cooperation among colleagues				0.85									
5	A good communication among colleagues				0.84									
Employer financial obligations														
1	Financial rewards for exceptional performance									0.83				
2	Wage increases based on my performance									0.82				
3	An attractive pay and benefits package									0.71				
4	Opportunities for promotion									0.40				
Employer developmental obligations														
1	Opportunities for career development within my school											0.72		
2	Opportunities to follow courses and training relevant to my job											0.48		
3	Opportunities to follow courses and training relevant to my personal growth											0.76		
4	Opportunities to develop myself personally											0.74		

Employer ideological obligations			
1 Opportunities to give meaning to my life through my job			0.68
2 Opportunities to fulfill my pedagogic ideals in my job			0.69
3 Opportunities to fulfill my moral ideals in my job			0.81
4 Opportunities to fulfill my societal ideals in my job			0.83
Employer content fulfillment			
1 A job in which I can make decisions by myself	0.80		
2 A job with responsibilities	0.81		
3 The possibility to schedule my own tasks	0.79		
4 Opportunities to use my skills and capacities	0.73		
Employer social fulfillment			
1 A good work-private balance	0.58		
2 A good atmosphere at work	0.82		
3 Positive relationships among colleagues	0.81		
4 A good mutual cooperation among colleagues	0.84		
5 A good communication among colleagues	0.80		
Employer financial fulfillment			
1 Financial rewards for exceptional performance		0.72	
2 Wage increases based on my performance		0.82	
3 An attractive pay and benefits package		0.67	
4 Opportunities for promotion		0.48	
Employer developmental fulfillment			
1 Opportunities for career development within my school			0.42

Table 2 – *continued*

	<i>Eigen Value</i>	<i>Factor loadings EFA</i>												
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>
2 Opportunities to follow courses and training relevant to my job		5.38	5.14	4.22	3.69	3.60	3.39	3.17	3.15	2.86	2.48	2.33	2.27	2.07
3 Opportunities to follow courses and training relevant to my personal growth													0.42	
4 Opportunities to develop myself personally														0.69
Employer ideological fulfillment														0.65
1 Opportunities to give meaning to my life through my job	0.57													
2 Opportunities to fulfill my pedagogic ideals in my job	0.66													
3 Opportunities to fulfill my moral ideals in my job	0.67													
4 Opportunities to fulfill my societal ideals in my job	0.69													
Employee in-role obligations														
1 Work fast and efficiently										0.66				
2 Cooperate well with your colleagues										0.78				
3 Assist your colleagues in their work										0.79				
4 Deliver qualitative work										0.78				
5 Share information with my colleagues										0.63				
Employee flexibility obligations														
1 Work extra hours to get my job done													0.81	
2 Take work home regularly if necessary													0.88	
3 Volunteer to do tasks that are strictly no part of your job													0.76	
4 Work during the weekend if necessary													0.86	

Employee ideological obligations		
1	Contribute to the mission of the organization	0.76
2	Contribute to the educational results of the school	0.84
3	Contribute to the image of my organization	0.81
4	Contribute to policy development in my organization	0.70
5	Contribute to innovation in my organization	0.58
6	Have a vision on the development of my team	0.60
7	Invest to keep student numbers high	0.57
8	To persist if things do not go so well in the organization	0.71
9	To execute policies of the organization	0.69

Table 3. Results of scale analyses.

<i>Model</i>	<i>CFA</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>SRMR</i>	<i>NNFI</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>IFI</i>	Δdf	$\Delta\chi^2$
1	1 factor	2381.61***	1769	0.09	0.96	0.95	0.95	79	1906.93***
2	2 factors	1745.60***	1768	0.08	0.97	0.97	0.98	77	1270.92***
3	6 factors	1349.15***	1754	0.07	0.97	0.97	0.98	63	874.47***
4	8 factors	1192.40***	1741	0.07	0.98	0.98	0.98	50	747.72***
5	13 factors	474.68***	1691	0.04	0.99	1.00	1.00		Baseline model

Note. Models: 1: all items together; 2: an employer psychological contract factor and an employee psychological contract factor; 3: employer content, employer social, employer financial, employer developmental, employee ideological, employee obligations; 4: employer content, employer social, employer financial, employer developmental, employer ideological, employee in-role, employee flexibility, employee ideological; 5: the thirteen proposed factors; CFA, confirmatory factor analysis; SRMR, standardized root mean square residual; NNFI, non-normed fit index; CFI, comparative fit index; IFI, incremental fit index. *** $p < 0.001$.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression analyses predicting employee obligations¹.

	Dependent variables															
	Employee in-role obligations					Employee flexibility obligations					Employee Ideological Obligations					
	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	H3	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	H3	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	H3	
Control variables																
Age	0.02	0.06	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.06	0.11	0.11	0.14	0.14	0.02	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.09	
Job tenure	-0.04	-0.07	-0.09	-0.10	-0.10	-0.04	-0.09	-0.12	-0.16	-0.16	-0.06	-0.15	-0.17	-0.18	-0.18	
Span of control	-0.01	-0.01	0.01	-0.00	-0.00	0.10	0.11	0.12	0.08	0.08	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01	
Independent variables																
Employer content obligations	0.09	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.02	-0.10	-0.11	-0.08	-0.09	-0.09	0.15	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.13	
Employer social obligations	0.13	0.17	0.15	0.17	0.17	0.07	0.04	0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.02	-0.07	-0.08	-0.09	-0.09	
Employer financial obligations	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.08	-0.08	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.06	0.06	
Employer developmental obligations	0.07	0.04	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.20	0.16	0.16	0.25*	0.25*	0.05	-0.02	-0.01	0.03	0.03	
Employer ideological obligations	-0.06	-0.02	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.05	-0.01	-0.13	-0.14	-0.14	0.03	0.05	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	
Team relation (TR)			0.13	0.12	0.15	0.00	0.00	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	0.15	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.16	
Employer content fulfillment (ECF)			0.35***	0.29***	0.27*	0.16	0.10	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.21*	0.21*	0.16	0.16	0.16	
Employer social fulfillment (ESF)			-0.01	-0.04	-0.04	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.13	0.13	0.11	0.11	0.11	
Employer financial fulfillment (EFF)			0.01	0.03	0.06	0.16	0.17	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.09	0.09	
Employer developmental fulfillment (EDF)			-0.10	-0.18	-0.16	-0.06	-0.15	-0.19	-0.19	-0.19	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.09	-0.09	
Employer ideological fulfillment (EIF)			0.25**	0.25**	0.21	0.25**	0.25**	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21*	0.21*	0.21*	0.19†	0.19†	
Interaction terms																
ECF × TR				0.02	0.02				0.40***	0.40***				0.20†	0.20†	
ESF × TR				-0.01	-0.01				0.08	0.08				0.16	0.16	
EFF × TR				-0.33*	-0.33*				-0.08	-0.08				-0.33*	-0.33*	
EDF × TR				0.24	0.24				-0.14	-0.14				0.15	0.15	
EIF × TR				0.16	0.16				-0.02	-0.02				-0.07	-0.07	
F ¹	0.70	1.74	1.93*	2.01*	2.01*	0.80	1.08	1.28	1.91*	1.91*	1.21	2.11*	2.19*	2.22**	2.22**	
ΔF	0.29	3.31**	3.82*	2.02†	2.02†	0.21	1.49	3.60†	3.33**	3.33**	0.09	3.38**	2.80†	2.03†	2.03†	
R ²	0.04	0.16	0.18	0.25	0.25	0.05	0.10	0.13	0.24	0.24	0.07	0.18	0.20	0.27	0.27	
ΔR ²	0.00	0.11	0.03	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.11	0.11	0.00	0.11	0.02	0.06	0.06	

Note: Standardized regression coefficients are reported. † p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

^a Step 1 included control variables and employer obligations (except for employer ideological obligations; not shown in Table 4).

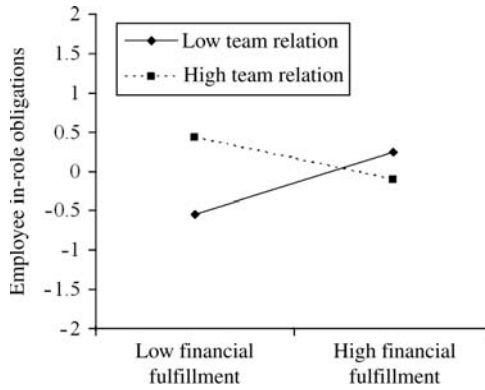


Figure 1. The interaction pattern between employer financial fulfillment and team relation in relation to employee in-role obligations.

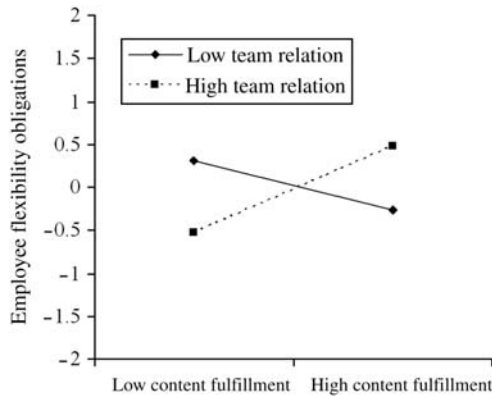


Figure 2. The interaction pattern between employer content fulfillment and team relation in relation to employee flexibility obligations.

was positive for high-quality team relation employees ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.05$), whereas the relation was non-significant for low-team relation employees ($\beta = -0.02$, ns; see Figure 3). Finally, we found a significant interaction effect of employer financial fulfillment with team relation in predicting employee ideological obligations ($\beta = -0.33$, $p < 0.05$). The relation for low-team relationships was positive ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$), whereas the relation was not significant for low-team relation counterparts ($\beta = -0.15$, ns). The interaction pattern is graphically shown in Figure 4. In sum, Hypothesis 3 is partially supported. Team relationships indeed moderated the relations of employer content fulfillment with employee obligations, such that the relations were stronger for those with stronger team relationships. However, team relationships moderated the relations of employer financial fulfillment with employee obligations negatively, such that the relations were stronger for employees with low-quality team relationships.

Discussion

This study investigated the role of ideology in psychological contracts. It was expected that ideological obligations were empirically distinct from other dimensions in the

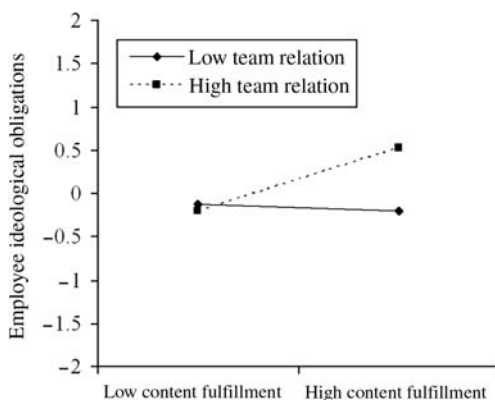


Figure 3. The interaction pattern between employer content fulfillment and team relation in relation to employee ideological obligations.

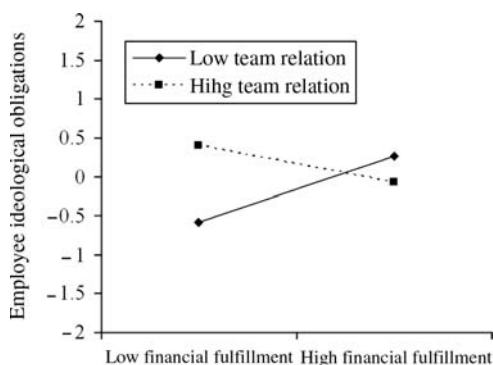


Figure 4. The interaction pattern between employer financial fulfillment and team relation in relation to employee ideological obligations.

psychological contract between the employee and organization, and that employer ideological fulfillment explained additional variance in employees' level of felt obligations toward the organization. Finally, high-quality team relationships were expected to strengthen these positive effects between employer fulfillment and employee obligations. It was found that ideology constituted separate aspects in the psychological contract; scales that were constructed for this study based on the previous work on the role of ideology in psychological contracts were found to be reliable and empirically different from other aspects of the psychological contract (Thompson and Bunderson 2003; O'Donohue and Nelson 2007). Employees perceive both employer obligations and employee obligations, and ideological considerations play an important role for middle managers in education. Ideological obligations were perceived from the organization (e.g. to provide opportunities to give meaning to life and to provide opportunities to fulfill societal ideals), and in return employees feel more highly obligated to contribute to the ideology of the organization, such as contribution to fulfillment of the mission and vision of the organization. It was found that employer obligation fulfillment contributed to higher employee obligations, which is in line with earlier findings showing significant relations between contract fulfillment and outcomes, including employee obligations (Montes and Zweig 2009; Bal et al. 2010).

Moreover, it was found that employer ideological fulfillment explained additional variance in employee obligations, above other forms of employer fulfillment, and specifically above employer content fulfillment. Thus, next to a motivating potential consequence of opportunities to provide interesting work and an inspiring work environment (De Vos et al. 2003), contribution to a cause and principle (such as pedagogic and societal ideals) motivates employees to engage in higher obligations on their part, and therefore returning ideological inducements by the organization by investing more effort on their part (De Cooman et al. 2009). Thus, this study found that ideology plays an important role in psychological contracts, and contributes to a further understanding of the employee–organization relationship.

The final issue that this study addressed was the role of team relationships in the relations between employer contract fulfillment and employee obligations. Although previous studies have looked on various moderators that might attenuate or accentuate the effects of psychological contract evaluations on work outcomes, these have been largely investigated within personal (e.g. age, future time perspective, Bal et al. 2008; 2010) and organizational domains (Dulac et al. 2008; Zagenczyk et al. 2009). This study is the first to investigate how team relationships may alter psychological contract outcomes, and it was argued that the relations of employer fulfillment would be enhanced by strong team relationships, and that team relationships will buffer the negative consequences of contract unfulfillment. This was indeed the case for employer content fulfillment, where team relationships strengthened the relationships of content fulfillment with employee flexibility and ideological obligations. Even when employers do not provide jobs where employees can show their skills and jobs where employees have responsibilities, employees still feel obligated to their organization when they have high-quality team relationships. This is in line with the argument made by Dulac and colleagues (2008), who stated that when employees have high-quality relationships with others (e.g. their colleagues or the organization), they are more likely to evaluate psychological contract breaches in a more favorable light, such that they emotionally respond less intensely to these breaches. This is because employees will likely be cognitively biased in their sensemaking after contract breaches, because they tend to uphold their positive beliefs that they have about their team (Morrison and Robinson 1997).

For employer financial fulfillment, the reverse was the case; high-quality team relationships did not buffer but impeded the relation: when team relationships were strong, employer financial fulfillment was negatively related to employee felt obligations. These opposite findings of the moderating role of team relationships in the presumed effects of employer contract fulfillment add to the debate as to whether high-social exchange relationships with the organization, high-team relationships, and high-personal resources actually decrease or increase the positive effects of employer contract fulfillment on work outcomes (Dulac et al. 2008; Bal et al. 2010). Some have argued that high-quality relationships will buffer the negative impact of contract breaches because of the biased sensemaking process for those who experience high-quality relationships (e.g. Robinson 1996; Dulac et al. 2008), whereas others have argued that high-quality relationships actually strengthen the negative effects of contract breaches, because those with high-quality relationships feel betrayed by their organization when they experience contract breach (Bal et al. 2010).

This study shows that it is dependent upon the type of contract fulfillment: for content of the job, including levels of autonomy and responsibilities, absence might be compensated by social relationships in the organization, whereas for financial fulfillments, another process might occur. When relationships within the team of the middle manager

are of high quality, financial inducements from the organization may create inequity between the middle manager and the team, such that the middle manager may feel privileged by the organization above the other members of the team, and therefore negatively relating to their level of felt obligations toward the organization (Lambert 2009). For the middle managers with poor team relationships, financial inducements will function as a substitute to put effort in their work and the organization, and become the primary source to rely upon for the employee to engage in different types of obligations, including in-role and ideological obligations. In sum, team relationships play an important contextual role in how employees become motivated and feel obligated toward the organization, with different moderating roles for employer content and financial fulfillments.

Limitations

This study has some limitations. First, and above all, the study was a cross-sectional study, and thus causal interpretations cannot be made. Although previous studies have shown that, in particular, employee obligations are enhanced by employer actions (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler 2002; Dabos and Rousseau 2004), this study did not allow for investigation of the psychological contract over time. Furthermore, the measures in this study were collected from a single source, therefore increasing the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff 2003). We recommend future researchers to collect data from other sources, including colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors. The psychological contract is about employees' beliefs regarding the mutual obligations between them and their organizations (Rousseau 1995), and therefore the current method is deemed appropriate to assess the psychological contract measures. Specifically, team relationships could be measured by investigation of team members using multilevel designs, to gain a more accurate picture of how relationships are evaluated within teams.

Finally, generalizability of the study is limited because of the small sample size and the specificity of the sample. We investigated middle managers in education, where ideology is likely to play a major role in their work (Borghans and Golsteyn 2005; O'Donohue and Nelson 2007). This sample was chosen because of the relative prominence of ideological currency in their psychological contracts. It is very likely that ideology will be experienced differently throughout sectors, occupations, and individuals. It is therefore needed to assess the validity of the ideological contract measure in various contexts. Moreover, the current research setting was The Netherlands; it may be argued that psychological contracts, and in particular ideology, are experienced differently throughout cultures (Thompson and Bunderson 2003; Restubog, Bordia and Tang 2007).

Research and practical implications

The study was conducted among middle managers in education. To construct a survey that was appropriate for the setting of the middle managers, the questionnaire items were constructed to appropriately reflect the work situation of the respondents of this study. It has been argued that for refined analysis of the job-person fit and a more complete understanding of psychological contracts, specific measures are recommended over general measures (Robinson and Morrison 2000; Tett, Guterman, Bleier and Murphy 2000). Therefore, specific measures for the investigation of psychological contract of middle managers in education were used in this research project.

For the ideological contract measures (employee and employer ideological obligations), scales have to be adapted when tested in other settings. Since some items were aimed at contributing to pedagogical ideals of the organization, and educational results of the organization, these may be less appropriate in commercial and governmental organizations. When tested in non-educational settings, these items can be changed into appropriate items for the setting. However, we believe that the scales can be used in several different settings since the measures are aimed at general ideological principles.

The study found that ideological principles play an important role for employees in education. Employee motivation can be enhanced by organizations when they explicitly draw attention to opportunities for employees to fulfill their moral and societal ideals in their work. For many organizations, these types of motivators are underspecified in for instance human resource policies and practices (Geare et al. 2009). It could therefore be recommended for organizations to specifically focus on ideological motivators among employees, and create a work environment where employees have the opportunities to fulfill their needs of principles and moral beliefs. Through direct communication with employees about the ideological principles they hold and want to fulfill in their work, managers have the opportunity to motivate their employees to put more effort in their work, and a greater contribution to organizational performance, even beyond the motivational potential of providing interesting work and autonomy.

Furthermore, team relations bolster the motivational potential of interesting work and autonomy in the job, such that middle managers will feel more highly obligated when team relations are strong, and they have high levels of responsibility and autonomy in their work. However, financial inducements may have different effects; therefore to motivate middle managers, organizations are recommended to focus not only at financial inducements because this might create inequity with team members. Instead, it is suggested that organizations look for adequate support for middle managers to have sufficient autonomy and responsibility in their job, and strengthen team relations by, for instance, team building and organizational support.

Conclusion

This study investigated ideological currency in the psychological contract, and found that employer and employee ideological obligations constitute separate dimensions within the psychological contract. Moreover, employer ideological fulfillments contribute to employee felt obligations above other aspects of employer contract fulfillment. Employee obligations are enhanced when organizations show commitment to contribute to a principle or a cause, which is valued by the employee.

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