

The Effect of Psychological Contract Fulfillment on Employee Work Engagement In Case of Woldia University Employees

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Abstract

This main objective of the study is analyzing the effect of Psychological contract fulfillment on employee engagement. This study used quantitative research approach. The study used explanatory study type with cross-sectional survey research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data are utilized to achieve the objective of the study. The target population is considered as all permanent academic and administrative employees of Woldia University, and the total population of the study was 1374 employees. This research applied simple random sampling techniques to collect the data. From the total 1374 population, the number of samples was 310 respondents and which were considered as the representative number of the total population. For analysis of this study data, the researcher used descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation following Bivariate correlation and also multiple linear regression analysis. The instruments used for this study purpose were valid, reliable and ethical. The study result shows that there is a positive significance relationship with overall psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement. Independently, there were a significance positive relationship with employee engagement and transactional psychological contracts and also it verifies the negative significance relationship of employee engagement and relational psychological contracts. The overall result showed that woldia university employees' engagement was affected by psychological contract fulfillment and there was a big deviation with what the employees expected and what the university was performed. Based on the study results reached, general conclusions and recommendations are reached.

key words: 1 PC: psychological contract, 2 EE: employees engagement

Introduction

During past years, organizations have suffered adequate changes in order to strive in the marketplace. Operating within a compound and modest work environment has changed the internal work arrangements as well as modified the nature of psychological contract that exists between the employees and employer. To succeed in the marketplace, employers need to understand what employees expect from the organization and must pay attention on fulfilling their expectations to fulfill organization's side of contract (Festing and Schafer, 2014). Psychological contract

expresses personal promises and obligations among the employees arising from mutual relationship between the employees and the organization (Rousseau, 1989). There is always a written contract between the employee and employer but psychological contract exists over and above this written contract. The concept of psychological contract entails that employees have variety of expectations from their organization and organizations have variety of expectations from them respectively (Roehling, 1997).

Rousseau (1989) defined psychological contracts as the beliefs that are held by an individual regarding what they owe the organization, and what the organization owes them. Thus, fulfillment of employer promises, obligations, and commitments increases employee engagement (Coffman & Gonzalez-Molina, 2002; Bal et al., 2013; Chang et al., 2013). Violation of the psychological contract occurs when one party perceives that the other has failed to fulfill its obligations or promises (Wolfe Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Rousseau (1995) defines the psychological contract as individual, subjective beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization. The binding nature of the psychological contract then becomes much stronger than the generic perception of social exchange.

Employee engagement refers to creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and really care about doing a good job. Employee engagement is one of the most researched constructs of positive organizational behavioral research which reflects a positive, fulfilling and work-related state of mind and is seen as anti-pole of job burnout. Work engagement is “a positive, fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by strength, commitment and interest” (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Engaged employees are more eager about their work and have high levels of energy. They are fully engrossed in their work as they find it hard to detach themselves from work (Bakker et al., 2008). According to Shuck and Wollard, (2010) employee engagement is an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes. Recently, Rice, et al., (2012) defined engagement as „full employee engagement represents an alignment of maximum satisfaction for the individual with maximum contribution for the organization’s success i.e. $EE = MS + MC$). The focus of all definitions was on two things, employee satisfaction and contribution to organization success.

Psychological contract and engagement are important physiological constructs which are closely related but not the same. When psychological contracts are fulfilled, employees are more engaged and motivated to contribute their effort to the organization (Aggarwal, Datta & Bhargava). These concepts are very important for

the purposes of this study focused on Woldia University employees, since it is aimed at determining whether psychological contract fulfillment can have an effect on employee engagement, establish whether this effect is positive or negative, and also whether, if the effect is negative, it will lead to breach of the psychological contract and in turn, effect on employees' intention to stay in the organization or it will affect employees engagement as well as organizational performance.

Theoretical Background

This is an explanatory study that examines the extent to which psychological contract fulfillment is related to employee engagement. Two distinctive strains of literature will be used as a theoretical foundation. Employee engagement serves as the first stream of literature for the current thesis, as an understanding of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement is of essential. The second theoretical element is psychological contracts.

Psychological Contracts

Based on Rousseau (1989, p. 124) psychological contract is a mutual obligation existing at the level of the relationship. This is quite obvious that sometimes organizations are unable or unwilling to meet up the obligations or promises made to the employees, resulting in the breach of the contract and known as psychological contract breach.

The origins of the psychological contract construct date back to the early 1960s. Argyris (1960) used the term psychological work contract to describe the mutual respect he observed between foremen and workers and that he gathered from interview conversations. The foremen supported their employees' informal culture norms that they too had experienced before being promoted to their foremen positions.

Isakson et al. (2003) define the psychological contract as "the perception of reciprocal expectations and obligations implied in the employment relationship" (p. 3). It must be noted that reference to the psychological contract usually refers to the employee's experience of perceived promises, in the form of employee and employer obligations. Technically, however, the psychological contract is of a reciprocal nature, where the employer also participates in the experience of the psychological contract.

Understanding the individual and organizational consequences of breach or violation of psychological contract justifies continuing research into the phenomenon. There are two major reasons why understanding the consequences of the breach or violation is very important. Firstly, organizations are better positioned

to manage the expectations employees have and secondly, organizations can implement management practices that will minimize the effect on the organization of breach or violation of psychological contract (Cable, 2008). Empirical studies and evidence suggest that contract breach results to reduced psychological well-being (Conway, et al 2005).

Transactional and Relational Psychological Contracts

Psychological contracts have been often defined according to their particular characteristics. For example, Rousseau (1995 and 2000) distinguishes between two types of psychological contracts:

Transactional Contracts, which are structured with emphasis on material rewards that have a short-term duration and are relatively narrow in their scope; and relational contracts, which are structured around less tangible rewards, have a significant duration (often without an implied end-date) and are subject to the individual parties' beliefs.

Relational Contracts, like reciprocal forms of exchange, generally define work relationships that are broader, more unstructured, and are based on promises and agreements that are more subjectively understood by the exchange partners (e.g., job security in exchange for organizational commitment) (Conway and Briner, 2005). These relationships tend to develop from repeated discretionary exchanges (e.g. from annual bonuses to everyday assistance with a particular tasks). They also tend to be open-ended in terms of the time horizon for exchange (McLean Parks, Kidder and Gallagher, 1998), involve less attention of the actions of the other party, and allow for more tolerance of changes in the dynamics of the exchange relationship (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

What is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement refers to creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and really care about doing a good job. It is a concept that places flexibility, change and continuous improvement at the heart of what it means to be an employee and an employer in a twenty-first-century workplace." (CIPD 2009). Kahn (1990:694) defines employee engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". One of the first challenges presented by the literature is the lack of a universal definition of employee engagement. Kahn (1990:694) defines employee engagement as "the connecting of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances".

Psychological Contract and Work Engagement

Perceived organizational support and psychological contract mediates the relationship between distributive justice and engagement which further explains the existence of a positive relation between psychological contract and engagement (Biswas, Varma & Ramaswami, 2013). Psychological (relational) contract mediates the relationship between developmental HRM and engagement. Developmental HRM provide long term support from organization perspective which in turn helps in building the relationship among employee-employer strengthening the psychological (relational) contract and thus it induces employees to reciprocate by becoming more engaged (Bal, Kooij & Jong, 2013). Psychological contract is a predictor of employee engagement (Bhatnagar & Biswas, 2010). Psychological contract and engagement are important physiological construct which are closely related but not the same (Aggarwal, Datta & Bhargava, 2007). Following the proper data collection and organization the data analysis is conducted using most widely used statistical analysis computer software in the Social Sciences researches, namely Statistical Package for the Social sciences (SPSS). This is because SPSS is enabled to compute correlations, regressions and other descriptive statistics in relation with effects and relationships between variables in an easy mode.

The Current Study

The study was aimed at analyzing the effect of psychological contract fulfillment on employee engagement in Woldia University employees. Based on the overall findings of the study the general conclusions and recommendations are drawn. Thus the study has two major hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Transactional psychological contracts fulfillment has a significant effect on employee engagement.

Hypothesis 2: Relational psychological contracts fulfillment has a significant effect on employee engagement.

Method

Subjects and Procedures

This study followed quantitative research approach and it used explanatory study type with cross-sectional survey design. Because, to explain position of variables studied and effect of one variable to another variable, it is advisable to use this design. For the purpose of this study both the Primary sources data and secondary sources data are utilized to achieve the objective of the study. Primary data was collected directly from the employees of the institution with Standardized closed questionnaires are adopted to collect data necessary to meet the objectives

of the study. And also, secondary data was collected through the various sources like; Previously Published Materials as a literature review specially Research Papers, organization's Human Resource Reports and internet websites. The target population were considered as all permanent academic and administrative employees of Woldia University, which is found in Amhara region, north wollo zone woldia town. The total population of the study was 1374 (635 academic and 739 administrative staff) employees. Based on Taro Yamane, (1967) sample size determination formula, the researcher got a grand total sample of 310, at 95 % confidence level and 0.05 precision levels The researcher applied simple random sampling techniques to collect the data.

Materials

Measures of Independent Variable (Psychological Contracts)

The psychological contract was measured using the 17 item shortened versions of the Psychological Contract Scale (PCS) of Millward and Hopkins (1998). This scale is able to assess the transactional (10 items) and relational contract (7 items) of the psychological contract. Each item was presented in the form of a statement with a seven-point Likert scale response range (from 7-strongly agree to 1- strongly disagree) comprising two facets transactional and relational.

Measures of Dependent Variable (Employee Engagement)

According to Kahn (1990), engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. For this study employee engagement was measured by Gallup's 12 questions and used five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

Results

Based on Pearson product moment correlation analysis result, there was a strong positive significant relationship between the relational psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement. And also there was a weak negative significant relationship with transactional psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement. Generally the study finds out there is existence of a positive significant relationship between overall psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement. Additionally the study result showed that there is no a problem of multi co Linearity, Normality and Linearity in the study variables. Multiple regression analysis result portrays that 27.8% variation in employee engagement is explained by psychological contract fulfillment in Woldia University. In addition, the significance value of F statistics indicates a value .000 and it was less than $p < 0.05$, so that it mean the model was significant enough. Relational psychological contract fulfillment was the most contributing factor for the dependent

variable employee engagement in the organization. Since, the beta value is 0.243 with significance level 0.000 and transactional psychological contract's beta value is $B = -0.061$ at sig. 0.029. This implies that that relational psychological contracts fulfillment has a positive significant effect on employee engagement and also transactional psychological contract fulfillment has a negative significant effect on employee engagement. As a result, the regression coefficient clarifies the average amount of change in employee engagement is affected by a unit of change in psychological contract fulfillment. In all cases of hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted. Because, transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillments have a significant effect on employee engagement at significance level of 0.029 and 0.000 respectively.

Based on the result of this study most of the employees were expected many things from the organization in addition to their main contract. But most respondents said that nearly most of their psychological contracts are violated/not fulfilled. This clearly demonstrates that when relational psychological contract are fulfilled the same to that employee engagement is increased and also transactional psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement are inversely related. This showed that there is a significant relationship of overall psychological contract fulfillment with employees' engagement.

Conclusions

The main objective of the study was analyzing the effect of psychological contract fulfillment (relational and transactional) on employee engagement at Woldia University employees. The study result shows that employee engagement has a strong significant positive relationship with relational psychological contract fulfillment and transactional psychological contract fulfillments have a weak negative relationship with employee engagement. And the effect analysis result showed that Relational psychological contract fulfillment was the most contributing factor for the dependent variable employee engagement in the organization and it has a positive significant effect on the dependent variable. In other way, transactional psychological contract fulfillment has a negative significant relationship with employee engagement. In general, the average amount of change in employee engagement was caused by a unit of change in psychological contract fulfillment. Hypothetically, transactional and relational psychological contract fulfillments have a significant effect on employee engagement at significance level of 0.029 and 0.000 respectively. So that in all cases of hypothesis testing, the null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis was accepted.

- ✎ The study result displayed that there is a great psychological contract violation with employees' expectation and the organizations fulfillment performance at WoldiaUniversity. Employees expected both relational and transactional benefits but they have a big complain on relational ones. This violation also decreases employees' engagement at work in WoldiaUniversity and it leads their decision to leave the organization to search other opportunity.
- ✎ The overall study finding showed that psychological contract fulfillment has a significance effect on employees' engagement in WoldiaUniversity and most of employees' expectations are not fulfilled. And this study objective is meted up well by originated findings as previously supposed.

Recommendations

The empirical result verified that there is a significant relationship with psychological contract fulfillment and employee engagement and also relational psychological contract is the key contributor to employee engagement. Accordingly, the university's management should seek a great attention for these contracts to make employees more engaged at work by arranging its policies and practices. Based on this finding employees' expectations are greatly violated in WoldiaUniversity and it decreases employees engagements at work as well as most employees are decided to search other best opportunity for future time. So that this university is better to take a speedy solution by rearranging its working environment, teaching learning material supply and compensation system, increase infrastructure performance (including internet connection, sufficient water and electricity, staff office & soon). Additionally the university should give good training and support, satisfactory promotion and scholarship opportunity specially for administration staff, periodic and fair performance reward system, open and fair decision making system, have to create a good interpersonal relationship with its employees by designing different strategies and specially employees have a big complain about lunch time service unavailability so the university should to supply service in that time or could give a high quality café service within the campus to make employees more engaged.

Generally, WoldiaUniversity should communicate employees regarding how looks like their expectation, which are not fulfilled and it could clearly provide believable reasons about why these violations are happening. The organization be supposed to know and fulfill critically performance affective employees expectations and also the university's management could assess more factors that are most important to increase employees engagement at work and it should make important corrective actions, it will make employees more engaged, strengthen their relationship with the university as well as it will make employees more loyal to the organization.

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