A Socialization Activity’s Effect on Reactions to Psychological Contract Breach/Fulfillment

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Abstract

This study examines the psychological contract breach/fulfillment experienced in a novice to expert socialization activity among student employees. Participants were surveyed regarding their reactions to psychological contract breach/fulfillment, which was manipulated through a socialization activity. Results indicated that reactions to breach/fulfillment were influenced by the activity and participants but not by the interaction between these variables. The findings have implications for the psychology of the socialization process and for the study of psychological contracts.

Introduction

Psychological contracts are defined as individual workers’ expectations of what they are entitled to experience regarding their terms of exchange and the obligations of both the employer and the employee. Psychological contracts are one’s beliefs about the obligations of both parties in the relationship. Individuals experience psychological contracts as a social contract between the individual and the employer. The role of the socialization experience is to socialize individuals into the organizational culture and to provide the training and knowledge needed to perform their roles. The socialization process can influence how well these contracts are met and, in turn, can influence an individual’s reactions to psychological contract breach/fulfillment.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were introductory psychology students from a large conferencetransfer-oriented university. Respondents average age was 21.8 (SD = 1.06) and 97% of the sample were women. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions and completed a survey as part of an experiential learning activity. The survey included items measuring individual differences, perceptions of the socialization activity, and reactions to breach/fulfillment.

Reciprocal Interview Activity

The participants were divided into two groups of 40 each. The groups were exposed to different conditions. The first group received a socialization activity where the employees shared their perceptions of both the promised and delivered inducements. A total of 473 surveys were collected. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a scale ranging from 1 = “Not at All” to 5 = “Very Much.”

The respondents were then asked to rate their agreement on a scale ranging from -3 = “Very Dissatisfied” to 3 = “Very Satisfied.”

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

| Variable | N | M | SD | Alpha | Correlations
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<td>Career Training Promised</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>-.291** -.041 .211 -.039 .374***</td>
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<td>Career Training Delivered</td>
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<td>Career Recognition</td>
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<td>Skill Development</td>
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<td>Inducements for Meaningful Work</td>
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Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Study Variables

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Results

The results of the activity should include more accurate perceptions of the promised and delivered inducements. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement on a scale ranging from -3 = “Very Dissatisfied” to 3 = “Very Satisfied.”

Discussion

The results showed that the activity did not affect the employee reactions to psychological contract breach.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for the psychology of the socialization process. The activities may help employees to better understand the expectations of the organization and to better manage their psychological contracts. The findings suggest that the socialization process can influence how well these contracts are met and, in turn, can influence an individual’s reactions to psychological contract breach/fulfillment.

References


