Relating employees’ psychological contracts to their personality

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to increase one’s understanding of psychological contracts by proposing and testing relationships between employees’ personalities and their psychological contracts and to consider the influence of gender on psychological contracts.

Design/methodology/approach – Data were collected from 163 employees in ten organizations. Regression analysis was used to explore the relationships between each of nine psychological contract dimensions plus gender and the Big Five personality dimensions.

Findings – It was found that personality is related to five of the nine psychological contract dimensions and that each personality dimension is related to one or more of the psychological contract dimensions. It was also found that gender had a significant impact on our results. Women held stronger obligation attitudes than did men. The personality of men related to varying obligation attitudes, whereas, women’s attitudes did not vary significantly within personality dimensions. The study suggests that employees’ psychological contracts may be more emotionally based than cognitively based.

Research limitations/implications – The self selection of participants limits the generalizability of the results. The data is cross-sectional precluding inference of causality. The paper assumed a linear career model for participants and did not consider alternate models.

Practical implications – Personality would appear to be an important factor in our understanding of psychological contracts, particularly in men. Personality provides a basis for psychological contracts being idiosyncratic. The interaction of personality and gender complicates the psychological contract management process.

Originality/value – Despite 17 years of research, the factors underlying employees’ idiosyncratic psychological contracts remain to be adequately explored through empirical research. This is the first study that connects employees’ personality to their beliefs about employee and organizational obligations. Gender appears to play a role in the development of psychological contracts.

Keywords Psychological contracts, Personality, Gender, Organizational behaviour

Paper type Research paper

Interest in psychological contracts has continued unabated since Rousseau (1990) revitalized study of this phenomenon seventeen years ago. Psychological contracts are defined as an employee’s beliefs and attitudes about the mutual obligations between the employee and his or her organization (Lemire and Rouillard, 2005; Chrobot-Mason, 2003; Rousseau, 2001). To date, research has primarily focussed on contract fulfillment or breach and its outcomes whereas there has been little attention paid to how or why employees develop particular contract attitudes. Two sources for the development of
employees’ psychological contracts have been suggested in the literature, organizational influences and employees’ personal dispositions (Rousseau, 1995, 2001). Employees’ interpretation of information from their employer and others, their observation of activities and actions in the workplace, together with their personal dispositions are theorized to create idiosyncratic contract attitudes in the minds of employees. Despite these theoretical propositions, there have been few studies that have attempted to determine the underlying factors that may create these idiosyncratic attitudes. This is a deficiency in the literature that has implications for research and management. Researchers cannot fully explore psychological contracts if they do not understand how they develop. At the same time, if management understands the factors that influence the development of employees’ psychological contracts, they may be able to take measures to manage these contracts more effectively.

Raja et al. (2004) took a step forward in filling this gap in our knowledge when they connected several facets of employees’ personality to their psychological contracts. They examined neuroticism, extroversion and conscientiousness from the Big Five model of personality (Goldberg, 1990) plus three narrow personality traits and the extent to which these personality constructs related to employees’ choice of a transactional or relational psychological contract. Their study indicated that employees’ personalities are related to their contract choice.

Raja et al.’s (2004) research is the only study to date that establishes a link between personality and employees’ psychological contracts. This paucity of research is surprising considering that studies have established links between personality and work attitudes (Lilly and Virick, 2006; Metz, 2004; Vakola et al., 2004). Our study differs from Raja et al.’s work in two important ways. The first is that we examine the Big Five model in its entirety. The second difference is that we examine the relationship between employees’ personalities and their beliefs about obligations that relate to employee and organizational behaviour rather than their choice of contract. From a management perspective, it is the content of psychological contracts that is important rather than the type of contract. It is the content of these contracts that is managed or determines employee’ behaviour and that determines feelings of fulfillment or breach. The purpose of this study is to clarify the relationship between employees’ personalities and their psychological contracts.

**Theory and hypotheses**

*Psychological contract attitude dimensions*

Although there is general agreement that there are two sets of obligations identified as employee and organization obligations, the dimensionality of psychological contract continues to be elaborated. Rousseau (1990) proposed that within these two sets of obligations there are subsets of transactional and relational obligations. Transactional contracts are a set of short-term economically focussed attitudes involving limited involvement between the parties (Raja et al., 2004). Relational contracts are a set of long-term and broader based attitudes that include factors related to loyalty, security and growth (Raja et al., 2004). A number of researchers have developed instruments based on this structure (De Meuse et al., 2001; Hui et al., 2004; Millward and Hopkins, 1998). Raja et al.’s (2004) study was based on the Millward and Hopkin (1998) instrument. Recently, a number of measurement instruments have been developed that, to a greater or lesser degree, move away from the transactional/relationa
Researchers have developed instruments by identifying potential obligations based on reviews of the literature (Cavanaugh and Noe, 1999; De Vos et al., 2003; Kickul, 2001; Porter et al., 1998; Turnley and Feldman, 1999), by adapting or expanding existing instruments (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002; Hui et al., 2004; Lester et al., 2002), by using features identified in psychological contract research to establish a framework upon which terms were developed (Janssens et al., 2003; Sels et al., 2004), or by eliciting employees’ beliefs about obligations (Herriot et al., 1997; Tallman and Bruning, 2005). The Tallman and Bruning (2005) instrument was chosen for this study as it reflects employees’ views of obligations and contains a relatively large number of obligation variables, consistent with the foundational work of Levinson et al. (1962) and Schein (1980) on psychological contracts.

Tallman and Bruning (2005) identified five employee obligation dimensions which were: commitment to the organization; commitment to the job; stewardship behaviours; show initiative and serve the needs of the organization. The dimension of commitment to the organization encompasses variables that relate to a demonstration of support for the organization in ways that go beyond job requirements and includes loyalty to and trust in the organization. Commitment to the job involves performing the job to the best of one's abilities, being honest, using one’s time well and using good judgement. Stewardship behaviours necessitate accepting and making the best of what you have at work. The dimension of show initiative focuses on employees’ supervision of others and their motivation to deal with issues encountered in the job. The last dimension, serve the needs of the organization, pertains to employees’ willingness to accept a transfer and remain in the organization. Four dimensions of organization obligations were identified as: support in the job; growth; support as a person; and existence. The dimension of support in the job involves providing information, training, feedback, respect and fair treatment to employees that enable employees to function effectively in their jobs. The dimension of growth embraces the organization’s requirement to provide interesting and challenging work and promotional and career opportunities. The dimension, support as a person, incorporates positive and supportive relationships within the work environment. The last dimension, existence, entails good pay and benefits.

**Personality and obligation dimensions**

Our research is an exploratory study that examines the relationship between employees’ Big Five personality dimensions and the obligation attitude dimensions proposed by Tallman and Bruning (2005). The Big Five personality dimensions of neuroticism, extroversion, agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness were chosen because they have been studied extensively and have been associated with a variety of work attitudes and behaviour (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Paunonen and Ashton, 2001). These five personality dimensions are broad dimensions that are theorized to subsume most narrowly focussed personality traits. The breadth of these dimensions is a benefit in that it distils a large number of personality traits into a parsimonious set of dimensions for use in research. It is also a problem as the relationships between the Big Five dimensions and other variables tend to be moderate. Individuals have a mix of greater or lesser emphases on the underlying facets that make up the dimensions, making the dimensions complex rather than unified (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Organ, 1994). Despite this concern, if personal dispositions influence employees’ psychological
contracts, then it stands to reason that employees’ personality disposition should significantly relate to their psychological contracts.

Costa and McCrae (1992) reported that persons high in neuroticism are fearful, angry and depressed. Neurotics function as poor team performers, have a tendency to be less giving to others and have poor attitudes towards change (Kichuk and Wiesner, 1997; Organ, 1994; Vakola et al., 2004). People high in neuroticism have poor job attitudes and they are unlikely to give of themselves other than what is necessary to maintain their jobs. Their negative attitudes towards their jobs are born out by their low job satisfaction (Judge et al., 2002). In terms of work outcomes, neuroticism has been negatively related to job performance, career success, and motivation (Judge et al., 1999; Judge and Ilies, 2002; Tett et al., 1991; Wright, 2003). Raja et al. (2004) argue that neurotic employees will avoid situations requiring long-term commitment, social skills, trust and taking initiative. The above relationships would suggest that employees high in neuroticism will develop obligation attitudes that reflect low organizational and job commitment and an unwillingness to take initiative in their work.

Neuroticism has been found to be negatively related to self-esteem, self-efficacy and locus of control (Judge et al., 1998). Persons low in self-esteem and self-efficacy look to others for approval (Brockner, 1988). Acceptance of job conditions and conforming to job requirements may be seen by neurotics as ways to gain approval of supervisors and co-workers. Neurotics’ acceptance of less than desirable job conditions may also be consistent with their negative overall work attitudes. As a result they may develop attitudes that are consistent with the stewardship obligations. It is more difficult to predict how neuroticism might relate to serving the organizations needs. Neurotics are likely equally fearful of a transfer as they would be of changing organizations. Whether or not this might translate into a sense of obligation to remain in the organization is not known. We do not expect to find a relationship between neuroticism and employees’ obligation to serve the needs of the organization.

Raja et al. (2004) found neuroticism positively related to transactional contracts and negatively related to relational contracts. Transactional contracts are short-term and economic whereas relational contracts are longer-term and socio-emotional in nature (Rousseau, 1995). These findings would suggest that neurotic employees are focussed on their immediate and instrumental needs and reject actions by the organization that relate to building a relationship with them or meeting employees’ goals. Our interpretation of these findings in relationship to our study is that neurotics will be primarily concerned with good pay and benefits. At the same time, although there may be some organization obligations neurotic employees may not want such as performance evaluations or challenging work as they might be fearful of the results of these actions, we would anticipate that most other organization obligations would be as desirable to neurotic employees as they would be to those who score at the emotionally stable end of the scale. There does not seem to be any reason to expect that employees’ level of neuroticism will relate to the organization’s obligation to provide support in the job, growth opportunities or support as a person:

**H1a.** There will be a negative relationship between neuroticism and employees’ obligation attitudes of commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, stewardship and show initiative. There will be no relationship between neuroticism and employees’ obligations for serving the needs of the organization.
H1b. There will be a positive relationship between neuroticism and the employees’ attitudes about the organization’s obligation to satisfy existence needs. There will be no relationship between neuroticism and the organizations’ obligations to provide support in the job, growth or support as a person.

Extroverts are gregarious, assertive, and activity- and excitement-seeking (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Raja et al. (2004) found extroversion was directly related to relational contracts and inversely related to transactional contracts indicating extroverted employees choose to develop a long term relationship with the organization. Not unexpectedly, extroversion has been related to high job performance, job satisfaction, and team performance, and low absenteeism (Judge et al., 1997; Judge and Bono, 2000; Judge et al., 2002; Kichuk and Wiesner, 1997; Tett et al., 1991). People high in extroversion tend to be high performers and committed to the organization and their work. They will develop psychological contracts that reflect their hard work, commitment and willingness to work with others. There is no reason to believe people high in extroversion will be more or less inclined to provide stewardship or serve organizational needs.

People high in extroversion also have a bias towards status, recognition and power (Costa and McCrae, 1992). These employees would look for growth opportunities that led to the satisfaction of their needs for status, recognition and power and may cause to them to have expectations that the organization would provide them with work that met these needs. Extroverts’ need for power and recognition may also cause them to take more risks in the job and they would expect the organization to support their work activities. The negative relationship between extroversion and transactional contracts found by Raja et al. (2004) likely reflects extroverts’ desire for long term relationships rather than an aversion to the organization providing for existence needs. We did not anticipate any relationship between extroversion and the organization’s obligations to provide job support or meet existence needs:

H2a. There will be a positive relationship between extroversion and employees’ obligations of commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, and show initiative and no relationship between extroversion and employees’ obligations to provide stewardship behaviours or to serve the organization’s needs

H2b. There will be a positive relationship between extroversion and the organizations’ obligation to satisfy growth needs and support as a person but no relationship between extroversion and the obligations support in the job and existence.

Raja et al. (2004) did not consider openness in their study expressing their concern for its relevance to organizational behaviour. Research indicates that openness has been directly related to important organizational behaviour constructs (Antonioni, 1998; Tett et al., 1991; Stevens and Ash, 2001; Nikolaou, 2003). In addition, openness has been found to interact with other personality variables (Bozionelos, 2004; Burke and Witt, 2002) which may help to explain the weak relationships between openness and other constructs in research where interactions have not been tested. People who are high in openness invite new experiences (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Openness has been related to high job performance (Nikolaou, 2003; Tett et al., 1991). High openness employees
seek challenging and interesting work and would expect the organization to satisfy this need. People who are open have a high need for autonomy and tend to be creative, adaptive and accepting of change (Costa and McCrae, 1992). They prefer an integrating conflict management style and participative leadership (Antonioni, 1998; Stevens and Ash, 2001). They have a low level of deference to others (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Employees high in openness are unlikely to feel they must be subservient to the organization or its managers. These employees will develop psychological contracts that reflect their need to go beyond the normal activities of the job and to try new ideas or approaches to their work. There does not appear to be any reported relationships that would suggest people high in openness would be more or less committed to the organization or job than those low in openness.

As indicated earlier, people high on openness invite new experiences and autonomy (Costa and McCrae, 1992). They appear to work at developing good interpersonal relations and participating in decisions (Antonioni, 1998; Nikolaou, 2003; Stevens and Ash, 2001; Tett et al., 1991). We would anticipate that these employees will be proactive in their work and look for work that allows them to grow. They may be risk takers and expect to be personally supported by the organization. The level of openness would not appear to have any relationship with support in the job or existence needs:

*H3a.* Openness will be positively related to employees’ obligation to show initiative and negatively related to their obligation of stewardship. There will be no relationships between openness and employees obligations to be committed to the organization or to the job and to serve the organization’s needs.

*H3b.* Openness will be positively related to the organizations’ obligation to satisfy growth needs and support them as a person. There will be no relationship between openness and the organization’s obligations of support in the job and existence.

Raja et al. (2004) predicted that agreeable people would establish relational contracts but did not use agreeableness in their study as they were unable to obtain acceptable reliability in their measurement. This difficulty may reflect cultural differences between participants from Pakistan used in Raja et al.’s study and participants used to establish the measure. Agreeable people have a strong inclination to trust others and to be altruistic, cooperative and compliant (Costa and McCrae, 1992; Organ, 1994). In addition, agreeableness has been associated with good team performance, high job satisfaction and high job performance (Judge and Bono, 2000; Judge et al., 2002; Antonioni, 1998; Kichuk and Wiesner, 1997; Tett et al., 1991). Employees who are high in agreeableness will trust the organization to complete its obligations in the employment bargain. Because of the reciprocal nature of psychological contracts, this trust together with the compliant and cooperative nature of these employees will cause them to do what is necessary to meet the organizations’ needs. However, agreeableness has been negatively related to work involvement (Bozionelos, 2004) and positively with an avoiding conflict management style (Antonioni, 1998). This would suggest that despite their high performance, agreeable people will not get involved in organizational issues or do anything that might be controversial or upsetting to others. Agreeableness will relate to employees’ attitudes about their obligations to serve the needs of the job and organization but there is no reason to believe that agreeableness will relate to employees’ obligations to be committed to the job or organization or to be innovative.
Agreeable people expect others to be equally helpful to them (Costa and McCrae, 1992). As a result, employees high in agreeableness will expect the organization to help them in their jobs and to support them in the workplace. As agreeable people avoid conflict, they are unlikely to have strong beliefs about the organizations’ obligations related to the nature of the work or their pay and benefits:

**H4a.** Agreeableness will be positively related to employees’ obligation of stewardship behaviours and to serve the needs of the organization and not related to their obligations to be committed to the organization, committed to the job or to show initiative.

**H4b.** There will be a positive relationship between agreeableness and the organization’s obligation to support the employee in the job and as a person but no relationship between agreeableness and the organization’s obligations of growth and existence.

Conscientious people value duty, competence, self-discipline and achievement (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Conscientiousness focuses on how people approach their work. People high in conscientiousness have a sense of duty and obligation to their work and have high job performance, career success, motivation and job satisfaction (Judge et al., 1999; Judge et al., 2002; Judge and Ilies, 2002; Tett et al., 1991; Wright, 2003). These people are committed to their work and they go beyond the job requirements (Raja et al., 2004). These relationships suggest that employees high in conscientiousness will be committed to their jobs and show initiative. Raja et al., 2004 found employees high in conscientiousness choose relational contracts which indicate that conscientious employees are concerned with developing long term relationships with the organization. If this is the case, we would expect that conscientious employees would be committed to the organization. There does not appear to be any evidence that conscientiousness is related to the employee’s obligations of stewardship or to serve the organizations needs.

As indicated above, Raja et al. (2004) found employees high in conscientiousness choose relational contracts but not transactional contracts. This finding suggests that conscientious employees will focus on long term success in their work and less on instrumental concerns. The organization’s obligation to fulfill existence needs may be of little concern. Valuing duty and competence, these employees would expect the organization would have a duty towards them to help them fulfill their roles. They would expect the organization to provide job growth, promotion opportunities and other rewards consistent with their success as employees (Raja et al., 2004) and to support them in their work. They would be less likely to need personal support:

**H5a.** Conscientiousness will be positively related to employees’ obligations to be committed to the organization, committed to the job and to show initiative but not related to their obligations of stewardship or serving organization needs.

**H5b.** Conscientiousness will be positively related to the organization’s obligation to support the employees in the job and satisfy growth needs but not to its obligations of support as a person or existence.

A secondary issue for this study is whether or not employees’ gender relates to their psychological contracts. Women have experienced difficulty in being treated equitably
at work. Powell and Graves (2003) and Reskin and Padavic (1994) detail the work related problems women have faced. They point out that these problems include sexual discrimination, stereotyping, and job segregation and the devaluation of “women’s” work that leads women to experience work quite differently than do men. Sexual discrimination can run from employers, supervisors and co-workers being openly hostile to women to employment practices that prevent women from obtaining certain jobs or not receiving the training, support or consideration because of their gender (Powell and Graves, 2003; Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Women are stereotyped as having traits that are different from men and that male traits are needed in most work and particularly in leadership positions. As a result, women do not get the same growth opportunities as men and even if they are in similar positions may be given less authority than men (Powell and Graves, 2003; Reskin and Padavic, 1994). Work in organizations has been segregated based on gender, relegating women to work that is devalued and under paid compared to the jobs where males are the dominant group. Job segregation means that women tend to be limited in their job choices and have fewer opportunities for promotion to better paying, more responsible and more authoritative positions (Powell and Graves, 2003; Reskin and Padavic, 1994).

In the past, the work conditions for women were justified based on the assumptions that women placed family ahead of work and that they were secondary wage earners. Today these assumptions are not valid as many women are primary wage earners and are as committed to their careers as men. Given the work difficulties women have experienced in the past and continue to experience, it seems likely that they may have stronger attitudes than men about the obligations of their employers to support them at work both in their jobs and personally, support their career aspirations through interesting and responsible work and to pay them equitably. Support for this proposition comes from research on work-family relations and job attribute preferences. Work-family research indicates that married women in particular benefit from supportive work environments and that many of the work/gender issues are lessened (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000). Job attribute preference research indicates that women place a greater level of importance on work attributes of good relations, support, growth and development opportunities, self-fulfilment, task interest, adequate resources and the like (Konrad et al., 2000). As these aspects of work are important to women, we would expect that this importance would be expressed in women’s attitudes about organization obligations. In addition, psychological contracts are reciprocal in nature whereby a greater sense of obligation for the organization should lead to a greater sense of obligation for the employee (Rousseau, 1995). As a result, we would also expect that women will have stronger attitudes than men that about their obligations to their employer:

H6. Gender will relate to employees psychological contract attitudes in that women will hold stronger attitudes about the mutual obligations than will men.

Method
Participants
Participants were 163 employees from 10 organizations in western Canada. We contacted senior managers in the organizations and asked them for assistance in the
research project. The managers who agreed were provided letters to circulate within the organization. These letters described the research project to employees and supervisors, explaining that participation was voluntary, and asked for their participation. Those who agreed to participate were mailed a set of questionnaires with a stamped and self-addressed return envelop. Responses were mailed by participants directly to us.

Participant demographics were as follows; 49.7 per cent were non-managerial and the balance managerial or technical/professional employees, 60.5 per cent were women, 77.8 per cent were 31 years old or older, 19.3 per cent were university educated, 71.4 per cent were married, 29.4 per cent had been in their current position for 5 years or longer, 43.8 per cent had been with their current organization for 5 years or longer, and 59.6 per cent had 10 or more years of full time work experience. The organizations were located in western Canada and can be described as follows: three were in various aspects of the forest industry, one was a government agency, one was an educational institution, one was in the hotel industry, one was a financial institution, and three were small organizations. Due to the design of the study, no records could be kept of the people who declined participation.

Variables and measurement instruments

Demographic and control variable. The demographic variable of gender was used as a study variable. Age and tenure in the organization and were used as control variables in the regression analysis. If psychological contracts are influenced by personal dispositions, age and tenure may play a role in determining obligation attitudes. Research would suggest that cohorts from different generations have different sets of needs, aspirations and values (Eisner, 2005). In addition, Bellou (2007) found that tenure had a significant impact on employees’ views of their psychological contracts. Older, more experienced, and longer tenure workers may have different needs and may view obligations differently than junior employees. As a result, these factors may subsume any relationship between personality and obligations.

Obligations. The obligation measures used were the instruments proposed by Tallman and Bruning (2005). These instruments produced five employee obligation dimensions containing thirty-three variables and four dimensions of organization obligations containing thirty-six variables. Responses were on a five point Likert type scale ranging from “not obligated” to “absolutely obligated”. Cronbach’s alpha reliability for the obligation dimensions in this study were as follows: commitment to the organization, 0.84; commitment to the job, 0.76; stewardship behaviours, 0.71; show initiative, 0.76; serve organization needs, 0.72; support in the job, 0.92; growth, 0.91; support as a person, 0.68; and existence, 0.59. As the reliabilities for all the factors except for existence were satisfactory, we duplicated the factor structure from Tallman and Bruning (2005) for the other eight dimensions. Examining the reliability for existence we found that removal of one variable increased the reliability of this factor to 0.68. We used the modified set of variables for this dimension. The instrument is shown in the Appendix.

Personality dimensions. The instrument used to measure the Big Five personality dimensions was the NEO Five-Factor Inventory purchased from Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc. This instrument involves 60 questions that measure the dimensions of Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and
Conscientiousness on a five point Likert type scale. The responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Reliability measures of the instrument are reported to range from 0.86 to 0.92 (Costa and McCrae, 1992). Reliabilities for this study were as follows: neuroticism, 0.87; extroversion, 0.78; openness, 0.71; agreeableness, 0.73; and conscientiousness, 0.81.

Results
Descriptive statistics, correlations and reliabilities of the variables are presented in Table I. Correlations above 0.16 in magnitude are significant at $p < 0.05$ and those above 0.20 are significant at $p < 0.01$. In addition, we ran a hierarchical regression analysis with each psychological contract dimension. The control variables of age and organizational tenure together with gender were entered in the first step of this analysis. The big five personality dimensions were added in the second step. As we were interested in the impact of both gender and personality on employees’ psychological contracts, we created interaction variables of personality times gender. These interactions were entered as a third step. Results of the regression analyses are shown in Tables II and III for employee and organization obligations respectively. The beta values shown are the values at the stage where the variable was entered into the regression equation.

As shown in Tables II and III, age was marginally and negatively related to the organization obligation to support employees in the job ($\beta = -0.14, p < 0.10$) but not to other employee or organization obligations. Tenure was not related to any employee or organization obligations.

$H6$ proposed that women would hold stronger attitudes about psychological contracts than men. Gender was negatively related to the organization obligations of support in the job ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.01$), growth ($\beta = -0.19, p < 0.05$), support as a person ($\beta = -0.24, p < 0.01$), and existence ($\beta = -0.24, p < 0.01$). Gender was also negatively related negatively to the employee obligations to be committed to the organization ($\beta = -0.20, p < 0.05$) and committed to the job ($\beta = -0.26, p < 0.01$) and positively related, although only marginally, to serving the organizations needs ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.10$). As women were entered as a 1 and men entered as 2 in the data, the above relationships provide good support for $H6$.

In $H1a$ and $H1b$, we proposed that there would be a negative relationship between neuroticism and employees’ obligations to be committed to the organization, committed to the job, stewardship and to show initiative and that there would be a positive relationship between neuroticism and the organizations’ obligation to satisfy existence needs. Neuroticism was marginally related to the employee obligations of stewardship behaviours ($\beta = 0.17, p < 0.10$) but the relationship was in the wrong direction. In addition, neuroticism was positively related to the organization obligation to provide for employees’ growth needs ($\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$). This relationship was not predicted. $H1a$ and $H1b$ were not supported.

$H2a$ and $H2b$ proposed that there would be a positive relationship between extroversion and employees’ obligations to be committed to the organization, be committed to the job and show initiative as well as the organization’s obligations to satisfy employees’ growth needs and provide support employees as a person. In the regression analyses, extroversion was significantly related to employee’s obligations to be committed to the organization ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.01$) and marginally related to show
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Show initiative</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>(0.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Serve organization needs</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.54</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Support in job</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>(0.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Growth</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Support person</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Existence</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>(0.68)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Neuroticism</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>(0.87)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Extroversion</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.46</td>
<td>(0.78)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Openness</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Agreeableness</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>5.17</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>-0.42</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>(0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Conscientiousness</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>5.40</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.40</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>(0.81)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** Cronbach’s alpha reliabilities are given in parentheses; correlations greater or equal to 0.16, $p \leq 0.05$; correlation greater or equal to 0.20, $p \leq 0.01$.
### Table II. Regression analysis for employee obligation dimensions and personality/gender interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Committed to organization</th>
<th>Committed to job</th>
<th>Stewardship</th>
<th>Show initiative</th>
<th>Serve organization needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
<td>( \Delta R^2 )</td>
<td>( \beta )</td>
<td>( R^2 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control variables</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.20**</td>
<td>-0.26***</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Big five personality dimensions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>0.11**</td>
<td>0.07**</td>
<td>0.23***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroversion</td>
<td>0.31***</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>v0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.19**</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.14*</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>v0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.32***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personality/gender interaction</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism × gender</td>
<td>0.26***</td>
<td>0.13***</td>
<td>0.41***</td>
<td>0.17***</td>
<td>0.19***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroversion × gender</td>
<td>1.29***</td>
<td>1.22***</td>
<td>0.91***</td>
<td>0.66*</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness × gender</td>
<td>1.18***</td>
<td>1.85***</td>
<td>1.30**</td>
<td>1.02*</td>
<td>0.98*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness × gender</td>
<td>0.86***</td>
<td>0.97***</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness × gender</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>-0.48</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.53***</td>
<td>1.21**</td>
<td>1.25*</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** * \( p \leq 0.1; ** \( p \leq 0.05; *** \( p \leq 0.01; control variable beta’s are before inclusion of personality variables**
Table III. Regression analysis for organization obligation dimensions and personality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Support in job</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Support person</th>
<th>Existence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>**</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>*</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big five personality dimensions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroversion</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality/gender interaction</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism × gender</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extroversion × gender</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness × gender</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness × gender</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness × gender</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: * $p \leq 0.1$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$; control variable beta's are before inclusion of personality variables
initiative ($\beta = 0.17, p < 0.10$) as predicted. Extroversion was also related to stewardship ($\beta = 0.16, p < 0.10$), which was not predicted. From the organization obligation perspective, extroversion was related as predicted to the obligation to provide for employees’ growth needs ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.01$) and to providing support as a person ($\beta = 0.15, p < 0.10$). H2a and H2b were only moderately supported in the regression analysis.

H3a and H3b proposed that there would be a positive relationship between openness and the employee’s obligation to show initiative and the organization’s obligations to satisfy growth needs and support employees as a person. H3a also predicted a negative relationship between openness and employees’ stewardship obligation. Only the negative relationship between openness and stewardship ($\beta = -0.19, p < 0.05$) was found in the regression analysis. H3a and H3b was poorly supported.

H4a and H4b predicted that there would be a positive relationship between agreeableness and employees’ obligations to stewardship behaviour and to serve the needs of the organization, as well as, the organization’s obligations to support the employee in the job and as a person. There was no relationship between agreeableness and employees’ obligation to provide stewardship behaviours or to serve the needs of the organization. There was a positive and significant relationship between agreeableness and the organization’s obligation to support employees as a person in the regression analysis ($\beta = 0.20, p < 0.05$). There was a negative relationship between agreeableness and employees’ commitment to the job. This relationship was not predicted. H4a and H4b were poorly supported.

H5a predicted that would be a positive relationship between conscientiousness and the employee’s obligations to be committed to the organization, to be committed to the job and to show initiative. H5b predicted that there would be a positive relationship between conscientiousness and the organization’s obligations to support employees in the job and satisfy growth needs. There was a significant relationship in the regression analyses between the personality dimension of conscientiousness and the employee’s obligation to be committed to the job ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$) as hypothesized. Employees’ obligations to be committed to the organization and show initiative were not related to employees’ conscientiousness personality dimension. The organizations’ obligations to support employees in the job and to satisfy growth needs were not related to conscientiousness. H5a was only marginally supported and H5b was not supported.

The addition of personality dimensions to the regression analysis resulted in significant increases in explained variance in four of the nine obligation models, commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, stewardship, and growth. There also was a marginally significant increase in explained variance for the organization obligation to provide support to employees as a person.

The interaction terms of personality and gender resulted in significant increases in explained variance over that found for gender and personality alone for the employee obligation dimensions of commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, and stewardship as well as for the organization obligations of support in the job and growth. Commitment to the organization was significantly related to the interaction terms of gender and the personality dimensions of neuroticism ($\beta = 1.29, p < 0.01$), extroversion ($\beta = 1.18, p < 0.05$), openness ($\beta = 0.86, p < 0.05$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = 1.53, p < 0.05$). Commitment to the job was significantly
related to the interaction terms of gender and the personality dimensions of neuroticism ($\beta = 1.22, p < 0.01$), extroversion ($\beta = 1.85, p < 0.01$), openness ($\beta = 0.97, p < 0.01$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = 1.21, p < 0.05$). Stewardship was significantly related to the interaction terms of gender and the personality dimensions of neuroticism ($\beta = 0.91, p < 0.01$), extroversion ($\beta = 1.30, p < 0.05$), and marginally to conscientiousness ($\beta = 1.25, p < 0.10$). Although the change in explained variance was not significant for show initiative and serve the organization needs, the interaction terms of gender and neuroticism ($\beta = 0.66, p < 0.10$) and extroversion ($\beta = 1.02, p < 0.10$) were marginally significant for serve initiative and extroversion ($\beta = 0.98, p < 0.10$) was marginally significant for serve the organizations needs. The organization obligations of support in the job was significantly related to the interaction terms of gender and the personality dimensions of neuroticism ($\beta = 0.87, p < 0.01$) and agreeableness ($\beta = 1.44, p < 0.01$). Growth was significantly related to the interaction terms of gender and the personality dimensions of neuroticism ($\beta = 0.97, p < 0.01$), openness ($\beta = 1.15, p < 0.01$), and conscientiousness ($\beta = 1.44, p < 0.05$) and marginally to extroversion ($\beta = 0.80, p < 0.10$). In addition, although the changes in $R^2$ were not significant there was a marginally significant relationship between the interaction term of gender and agreeableness with support as a person ($\beta = 0.94, p < 0.10$) and a significant negative relationship between the interaction term of gender and extroversion and existence ($\beta = -1.18, p < 0.05$).

In order to determine the influence of the interactions of gender and personality on employees’ obligation attitudes, we created three approximately equal groups based on the scores for each personality dimension. These groups were labelled low for the lower third scores, medium for the middle third scores and high for the upper third scores. Using the score ranges for each group, we then calculated, for men and women separately, the mean scores for each group and each obligation variable where there was a significant relationship between the gender/personality interaction term and an obligation. The relationship gender and neuroticism on the organization obligation variable growth is show in Figure 1.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the scores for the organization’s obligation to provide growth is relatively flat for women across the three groups. The scores for men, on the other hand, are lower than those of women for men who were either low or high in the personality dimension of neuroticism and about the same as women in the mid-range

![Figure 1. Influence of gender and neuroticism on growth obligation](image-url)
of neuroticism scores. We observed this pattern as well for the interactions of gender and neuroticism with the obligation variables support in the job, commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, and show initiative. We also saw this pattern in the interaction of gender and extroversion and the obligations of existence, stewardship and serving organizational needs.

A second pattern we observed was an increasing score for the obligation variable as the personality score of men increased. The scores for women remain essentially the same across the personality groups or increased slightly and were above those of the males except for the high male group where the scores were similar or above those of females. This pattern is shown in Figure 2 for the obligation variable growth and the personality dimension of conscientiousness. This interaction pattern for gender and personality also appeared for the obligation variables of support in the job and support as a person with agreeableness; the obligation variables of growth, commitment to the job and show initiative with extroversion; and the obligation variables of commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, and stewardship with conscientiousness.

A third gender-personality interaction pattern observed was a V shape for the data for men with the obligation variables of growth, commitment to the organization and commitment to the job and the personality dimension openness. In these three cases, the scores for the low and high male groups were high whereas the score for the medium group was low. The scores for women descended slightly from the low to the high groups resulting in the male scores exceeding the female scores for the high groups. This pattern is shown in Figure 3.

In two cases, gender and extroversion with the variable commitment to the organization and gender and neuroticism with stewardship, the obligation variable scores were lower for the low personality group than they were for the medium and high groups. Men’s medium and high group scores were similar. Women’s obligation variable scores increased linearly from the low personality group to the high group.

**Discussion**

A growing body of evidence has related personality to beliefs and attitudes. Our findings add to this evidence by demonstrating that employees’ personalities relate to the contracts which they believe exist between themselves and their employer. Our
data show that employees’ personalities contribute significantly to the explained variance for five of nine obligation dimensions (commitment to the organization, commitment to the job, stewardship, growth, and support as a person). In addition, we found that each of the Big Five personality dimensions are related to at least one obligation dimension, indicating that the use of the full Big Five personality model is important in the study of these contracts. These relationships add to our understanding of the association between personality and psychological contracts beyond the contribution made by Raja et al. (2004).

Although each of the personality dimensions is related to one or more psychological contract dimensions, none of the relationships are particularly strong. The use of broad-based personality and psychological contract dimensions may result in only moderate relationships between them. Raja et al. (2004) found stronger relationships between contract types and the narrow personality measures than they did with the broader Big Five dimensions. Examining specific facets of each personality and psychological contract dimension may provide stronger relationships. This would require further study with a much larger sample.

Employment is a strong situation because it involves compelling incentives and demands for behaviour that are external to employees’ personal dispositions. Personality is expected to be predictive only in weak situations (Organ, 1994). The fact that significant relations emerged between employees’ personalities and their psychological contracts in a situation that would tend to submerge those relationships reinforces our belief that personality influences these contracts.

Our regression analysis indicates that, based on explained variance, there may be a greater connection between personality and employee obligations than between personality and organization obligations (significant explained variance was 7 per cent, 7 per cent and 17 per cent for three of five employee obligations versus 6 per cent and 7 per cent for two of four organization obligations). If personality influences attitudes and behaviour and employees maintain consistency between their dispositions, attitudes and behaviours (Festinger, 1957), then it follows that employees will modify their attitudes and behaviour to maintain that consistency with their more stable disposition, personality. Thus, in the case of employee obligations, employees have control over the behaviours that relate to their obligations and can modify their behaviour to maintain consistency with their
obligation attitudes and beliefs. On the other hand, in the case of organization obligations, employees do not have control over the actions needed to fulfill these obligations. If the organization acted in ways that were contrary to what employees believed were its obligations to them, there may be little employees could do to change those actions. One response to this situation would be for employees to quit. If this were the case, the employees remaining would be those with attitudes about organization obligations that were consistent with the organization’s actions and with their personality as those with inconsistencies would have left the organization. This would produce results opposite to what we found. On the other hand, rather than quit, employees might modify their organization obligation attitude reducing its consistency with their personality.

Of particular note were the relationships between gender and the obligation dimension variables. These relationships indicate the women in our study hold stronger obligation beliefs than do the men with the exception of serving organizational needs. These relationships would appear to be consistent with the difficulties faced by women at work. Considering that our participants average substantial work experience, women’s strong beliefs about the obligation of organizations to treat them well across all aspects of their work may spring from past injustices they have experienced. Men who have been the beneficiaries of discrimination (Reskin and Padavic, 1994) do not appear to be as concerned about those obligations based on the primary relationship between gender and obligations. This observation changes somewhat when we considered the interaction of personality with gender.

In addition to gender and personality both being directly related to obligation dimensions, the interaction of gender and personality variables also explain substantial amounts of variance in employees’ attitudes about obligations. Our analysis would indicate that although personality has relatively little influence on the obligation attitudes of women, it appears to have a significant effect on the obligation attitudes of men. This study indicates that the attitudes of men about the organization’s obligations and their obligations change depending on the level of a particular personality dimension.

Psychological contracts have been presented in two different ways in the literature. The initial writings on psychological contracts by Levinson et al. (1962) and Schein (1980) suggested that psychological contracts developed more from needs than conscious thought processes and many times employees were not fully aware of their contracts. Although there is some acknowledgement of the role of personal dispositions, to a large extent, the current literature presents these contracts as rational outcomes of employee-organizational interactions (see for examples Herriot and Pemberton, 1997; Rousseau, 2001). This literature suggests that either through negotiations or information presented to employees, employees’ psychological contracts are the logical outcome of employees’ cognitive and interpretive processes of these interactions. Neuroticism and extroversion are emotionally based dimensions of personality. Agreeableness can be characterised as primarily emotional in nature. While openness to experience and conscientiousness involve emotions, they are more cognitively based dimensions that direct peoples’ responses to information or tasks. Given the way psychological contracts have been presented and the nature of the different personality dimensions, it is informative that the most frequent and strongest
relationships between employees’ personality and their psychological contracts are with the emotional dimensions of personality. This indicates that employees’ psychological contracts may be more emotionally based than cognitively based and also may be less rational than we would like them to be, resulting in important implications for management. It may be that managers will have more success influencing employees’ psychological contracts through emotional appeals rather than rational appeals when circumstances require management to restructure the employment bargain with employees.

One of the strengths of this study is that participants covered a fairly broad range of industries and organizational levels. Most previous studies of psychological contracts have used graduate students, managers or professionals, groups who only represent a small segment of society (Raja et al., 2004). A limitation of the study is the self-selection of the participants which may mitigate the study’s generalizability. The cross-sectional nature of the study limits our ability to infer causality. Research has shown that a person’s personality is very stable over time. Further investigation is required to determine if employees’ psychological contracts are also stable and whether employees’ psychological contracts develop as a result of a person’s personality or in conjunction with a person’s personality. A second limitation of the study is that we assumed a traditional career model. This model may be appropriate for some of our participants but not likely for all. Participants in managerial ranks or professionals in the governmental and educational organizations may have careers that better fit the boundaryless or protean career models (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996; Baruch, 2004; Briscoe et al., 2006; Hall, 2004). These models emphasize a commitment to the profession and to the work rather than the organization and to self-managing ones career. Our underlying career model assumption potentially creates two concerns. The first concern is that there are likely psychological dimensions that would more appropriately capture obligations under boundaryless or protean career models than those used in this study. The second concern is that we do not have a way of determining the effect on the relationships studied if participants held these alternative views of their careers. Research is needed that examines employees’ perceptions of the nature of their careers and how their perceptions and different career models impact their psychological contracts.

A number of implications for management come out of this study. One implication is that the risks and payoffs may be greater with women employees. Women’s stronger organization obligation attitudes present a challenge to management to live up to those obligations or run a greater risk of women experiencing higher levels of violation then men. On the other hand, women appear to have a greater commitment to the organization and their jobs than do men. The personality of women does not appear to have an influence on their obligation attitudes as there is little change in attitudes over different levels of personality. If management can meet their obligations to their female employees they should receive higher commitment and loyalty in return. Our study suggests that personality may have a material effect on men’s attitudes about obligations. The obligation attitudes of men vary with personality but, in a number of cases, not in a linear way. This potentially complicates the hiring process with men as the organization may have to consider not only the desirability of certain personality types but also how people’s personality relates to their psychological contracts. Management and restructuring of the employment relationships with men may also be
more complex as men may be less likely to respond in any uniform way to changes. Finally, as discussed earlier, our study suggests that employees’ psychological contracts may be more emotionally based than cognitively based, which also has significant implications for the management of these contracts.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated a connection between employees’ personalities and gender and their psychological contracts. Personality would appear to be an important factor in understanding these contracts, but the relatively moderate relationships would suggest that there are a number of other factors which are also important. Personality provides a basis for the proposition that psychological contracts are idiosyncratic. Gender would also appear to be important to the study of psychological contracts. Gender has not been adequately considered in this field of study. This study provides support for the theoretical proposition that personal dispositions have a role to play in psychological contracts but the nature of that role is still relatively unknown.

References


Appendix

Organization obligations

Support in the job
Keep its promises.
Provide regular feedback and evaluations.
Provide enough training.
Keep employees informed about goals, policies and changes.
Let employees know what is going on in the workplace.
Provide support for work related problems.
Respect your privacy.
Make you feel safe at work.
Have reasonable expectations about the job.
Provide you with everything you need to do your job.
Reward performance based on fair evaluations.
Follow the labour code and workplace policies.
Treat everyone the same.
Make sure your supervisor treats you with respect.
Provide an organized workplace.
Let you be part of the decisions that affect you.
Not ask you to do anything wrong or illegal.

Growth
Provide challenging work.
Provide interesting work.
Provide opportunities for personal growth.
Provide status and prestige in the job.
Provide responsibility in the job.
Provide a sense of meaning and purpose in the job.
Provide opportunities for promotion.
Place you in a job in which you can be true to your values.
Provide career development.
Base my pay on my performance.
Tell you when you have gone as high as you can in the organization.
Cover membership costs related to your work.

Support as a person
Help people get along at work.
Make sure your supervisor is on your side with higher management.
Support your job-related actions.

Existence
Provide good benefit.
Provide good pay.
Employee obligations

Committed to the organization

Be active in your workplace social community.
Represent the workplace favourably to outsiders.
Refuse to support competitors.
Adopt and share the workplace culture.
Be loyal to your employer.
Contribute to workplace improvements.
Trust your employer.
Contribute beyond your job requirements.
Do things that make their supervisors’ job easier.
Accept your workplace values as your own.

Work extra time.

Commitment to the job

Do your work to the best of your ability.
Be open and honest in your workplace.
Use your work time well.
Use good judgement in making decisions.
Provide advance notice if taking a job elsewhere.
Attend work and be on time.
See what needs to be done and do it.
Act professionally inside and outside of work.

Stewardship

Make do with what you have available.
Do work that is not part of your job including covering the workload of absent employees.
Show respect to and follow the instructions of your supervisor and managers.
Use management’s presentation and reporting style.
Learn the job as you work.
Follow instructions even though they do not make sense to you.
Do work that you are not qualified to do.

Show initiative

Supervise and direct the work of others.
Plan and organize the work of yourself and others.
Solve unusual problems.
Act independently.
“Go the extra mile” at work.

Serve organizations needs

Accept a transfer.
Spend a minimum of two years in the organization.
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