

The Association of Work-to-family Enrichment, Psychological Contract Fulfillment, and Organizational identification

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Abstract

To contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between work–family integration and employee–organization relationship, this study developed and found support for a mediation model to elucidate the impact of work-to-family enrichment (WFE) on psychological contract fulfillment and organizational identification. Based on a sample of 178 full-time employees, the results of this study reveal that WFE facilitates employees' perception of psychological contract fulfillment and, in turn, increase their organizational identification.

Keywords: work-to-family enrichment, psychological contract fulfillment, organizational identification

1. Introduction

Work–family interface has been a topic of much research in the past two decades (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007). Even though literature in this field has been dominated by research on work–family conflict, researchers recently are beginning to shift their focus to work–family enrichment, which is defined as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in the other role (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This emerging focus supplements the conflict perspective by identifying new ways of cultivating human resource strength (Siu et al., 2010).

Accumulating evidence demonstrates that work–family enrichment has positive effects on a lot of employee outcomes, including satisfaction, health, commitment and performance (e.g., Carlson et al., 2011; McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010). However, more research is still needed on how enrichment is related to work–related outcomes to inform organizations of its importance (Carlson et al., 2011). A noticeable omission from the outcomes of work–family enrichment is employee–organization relationship (EOR). Understanding whether and how work–family enrichment may link to EOR is very important because the growing complexity of the business environment, coupled with the economic recession, has made positive EORs critical for an organization's survival and success (Shore et al., 2012). The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to examine the impact of work-to-family enrichment (WFE) on two important EOR variables—psychological contract fulfillment and organizational identification.

2. Theory and hypotheses

Work–family enrichment is bidirectional in that work potentially enriches family life and family life also potentially enriches work (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The present research focuses on work-to-family enrichment (WFE) because the primary purpose of this research is to examine how organizational favorable treatment to employees, which directs to the positive spillover from work to family, influences the EOR.

2.1. WFE and Psychological Contract Fulfillment

The psychological contract is defined as employees' beliefs regarding the promises of the reciprocal exchange agreement between the employee and organization (Rousseau, 1995). The perception of psychological contract fulfillment is largely influenced by employees' psychological needs and expectations that are expected to be met in employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995). Due to greater numbers of employed mothers, dual-earner families, and employed individuals with elder care responsibilities, employees increasingly expect their organization to assist them in integrating these two most important life roles (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011). Surprisingly, little attention has been paid to the role of work–family enrichment for employees' psychological contracts. The signaling theory (Spence, 1973), which has been extensively applied to explain the influence of information asymmetry, may provide a particularly useful lens for examining the impact of WFE on employees' perceived psychological contract fulfillment. Due to the information asymmetry, employees tend to seek, process, and interpret information about their organization gained from various possible sources (Shore & Tetrick, 1994). Perceivable organizational information may be interpreted as a signal of more unperceivable characteristics such as an organization's care and concern for its employees (McNall et al., 2010). Therefore, when employees perceive that their work resources have enriched their family life and helped them become a better family member, they will interpret this information as that the organization cares for their psychological needs for a positive work–family relationship, and thus perceive psychological contract fulfillment.

Hypothesis 1. WFE is positively related to employees' perception of psychological contract fulfillment.

2.2. Psychological Contract Fulfillment and Organizational Identification

Organizational identification has been viewed as a desirable individual attachment to the employing organization (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Psychological contract and organizational identification are conceptually related. They are even integrated into a conceptual framework representing the overall employee–organization social exchange relationship—perceived organizational membership (Masterson & Stamper, 2003). Studies have lent empirical support to the negative association between psychological contract breach (non-fulfillment) and organizational identification (Epitropaki, 2013). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees tend to reciprocate beneficial treatment they receive from the organization with positive work–related attitudes and behaviors.

Hypothesis 2. Psychological contract fulfillment is positively related to employees' organizational identification.

2.3. Psychological Contract Fulfillment as a Mediator

As discussed previously, the signaling theory suggests that the positive impact of work on family life may act as an important signaling mechanism, through which employees will interpret their organization's attitudes towards them. WFE perceptions can provide employees with information regarding their organization's efforts to fulfill its obligations of accommodating employees' personal well-being (Hypothesis 1). According to the social exchange theory, such positive organizational information will have critical implications for employees' willingness to identify with the organization (Hypothesis 2). Thus, I further argue that the experience of WFE should facilitate employees' perception of psychological contract fulfillment, which, in turn, enhances employees' organizational identification.

Hypothesis 3. Employees' perception of psychological contract fulfillment mediates the relationship between WFE and organizational identification.

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and Procedures

Data are collected through survey administration to full-time employees enrolled in the part-time MBA program offered by a large university located in a major city in southern China. The researcher and two trained graduate students visited classrooms during breaks and invited potential participants (employed full-time and married or cohabited) to participate in a survey. In all, 178 (77.1%) participants completed all sections of the survey. Out of these participants, 60.1% are female, with the majority (87.5%) being 31 to 45 years old. Approximately 82.6% had been working 1 to 6 years for the organization.

3.2. Measures

Work-to-family enrichment (WFE) was measured using the nine items developed by Carlson et al. (2006). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .86.

Psychological contract fulfillment was measured using the five-item scale developed by Robinson and Morrison (2000). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .78.

Organizational identification was measured using the four-item scale from Carmeli et al. (2007). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .80.

Consistent with past research on social exchange and organizational identification, I controlled for gender, age, and tenure.

3.3. Results

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Tenure	2.34	.89	–				
2. Age	2.16	.75	.51**	–			
3. Gender	.40	.49	.18*	.01	–		
4. WFE	3.85	.57	.02	.02	.04	–	
5. PSF	3.02	.57	.14	.16*	.01	.20**	–
6. OID	3.29	.82	.26**	.16*	.11	.18*	.44**

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; PCF = Psychological contract fulfillment; OID = Organizational identification.

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables are presented in Table 1. WFE was positively correlated with psychological contract fulfillment ($r = .20$, $p < .01$) and organizational identification ($r = .18$, $p < .05$). Moreover, psychological contract fulfillment was positively correlated with organizational identification ($r = .44$, $p < .01$). These results provide initial support for our hypotheses.

Table 2. Regression results of the mediation model

	B	SE	t
<i>Partial Effect of Control Variables</i>			
Tenure → OID	.17	.07	2.35*
Age → OID	.01	.08	.14
Gender → OID	.12	.11	1.08
<i>Direct Effect</i>			
WFE → PCF	.21	.07	2.80**
PCF → OID	.57	.10	5.83**
WFE → OID	.13	.10	1.39
<i>Total Effect</i>			
WFE → OID	.25	.10	2.44*

Notes: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; PCF = Psychological contract fulfillment; OID = Organizational identification.

Hypotheses 1 – 3 identify a set of relationships that constitute a mediation model. Since researchers (Muller et al., 2005) recently have proved that using the bootstrapping method to create confidence intervals for testing the significance of the indirect effect is far superior to the traditional causal steps approach or the Sobel test, this study used Preacher and Hayes's (2008) SPSS macro (INDIRECT) to estimate the indirect effect of WFE on organizational identification through psychological contract fulfillment with the bootstrapping method. Table 2 displays the unstandardized regression results for estimated coefficients of the mediation model after controlling the effects of tenure, gender, and age.

As shown in Table 2, the direct effect of WFE on psychological contract fulfillment ($B = .21$, $p < .01$) and the

direct effect of psychological contract fulfillment on organizational identification ($B = .57, p < .01$) are both significant and positive, supporting hypotheses 1 and 2. Further, Hypothesis 3 predicts that psychological contract fulfillment mediates the relationship between WFE and organizational identification. Results showed that the 95% bias-corrected confidence interval of the indirect effect from 5,000 bootstrapped samples did not contain zero ($[.04, .23]$), indicating that the indirect effect of WFE on organizational identification through psychological contract fulfillment was significant. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was supported. In addition, as can be seen in Table 2, the direct effect of WFE on organizational identification was non-significant ($B = .14, ns$), suggesting that psychological contract fulfillment fully mediated the relationship between WFE and organizational identification.

4. Conclusions

The present study developed an integrated model wherein work-family enrichment can be placed within a broader literature on employment relationship. More specifically, the present study contributes to the literature in two ways.

First, this study expands the literature by addressing the connection between WFE and psychological contract fulfillment. Taylor et al. (2009) hints at the importance of WFE to understanding psychological contracts of employees. The present study expands Taylor et al.'s work by measuring a more commonly used construct in the literature—psychological contract fulfillment. In particular, this study utilizes the signaling theory to explain the positive relationship between WFE and psychological contract fulfillment.

Second, the current research extends the social exchange theory by integrating it with the signaling theory to move the research beyond the main effects to an examination of psychological contract fulfillment as the mediating mechanism that underpins the relationship between WFE and organizational identification. This finding also echoes to McNall et al.'s (2010) call for exploring the processes through which work-family enrichment influences its outcomes. Also, it represents the first known empirical attempt to understand the impact of WFE on organizational identification.

Practically, the results of this study have highlighted the importance of WFE for the EOR management. As organizations increasingly depend on their human resources to create and sustain competitive advantage, it's critical to develop a positive employee-organization exchange relationship (Shore et al., 2012). Nowadays organizations rely primarily on promotion, training, or financial inducements to signal their efforts to fulfill the expected obligations. However, the findings of the present study contend that organizations may need to become more aware of employees' increasing psychological expectations for caring for their family life.

There are limitations of the present research that should be acknowledged. First, common method bias may be a concern in this study, because it relied on questionnaire-based, self-reported measures. Second, em-

ployees' conception of EOR can take many forms, but this study only investigates psychological contract fulfillment and organizational identification. Future studies might examine whether other EOR variables mediate the relationship between WFE and organizational identification.

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