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Empirical Study on the Organizational Commitment of IT Expatriates in Different Matching Patterns of Employees' and Enterprises' Psychological Contracts

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Abstract: With the rapid development in China's IT outsourcing industry, the number of employees in software outsourcing enterprises increases rapidly. IT expatriates not only bring huge economic benefits to the software company, but also reduce the customers' development and operation costs, improving IT performance. However, since these expatriates who are away from the parent company, are working in customer side for a long time, and do not belong to the client company either, they are always regarded as "third country citizens". Thus, identity disorder and lack of organizational commitment to their parent companies are always haunting around them. This paper studies the influences of employees' and enterprises' psychological contract in different matching patterns on organizational commitment by empirical analysis method. This research finds that employees' relational psychological contract has a higher positive influence on organizational commitment than employees' transactional psychological contract in both matching and mismatching situation, while enterprises' relational psychological contract only affects the organizational commitment more positively than the transactional psychological contract in a matching situation. The employees of mutual-loyalty pattern and employee-dominating pattern will have a stronger organizational commitment in matching and mismatching situation separately. This research develops the relevant theory of psychological contract and organizational commitment in the background of IT outsourcing, improving the staff management for IT outsourcing enterprises efficiently.

Keywords: IT expatriates; Psychological contract; Organizational commitment; Matching Pattern

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, service outsourcing industry has developed rapidly in China, and outsourcing industry has become large-scale and professional. More and more companies choose to outsource some business including IT development, operation and maintenance to save labor and time costs, quickly adapting to rapidly changing market environment.

IT expatriates break the traditional enterprise-employee employment relationship. IT outsourcing enterprises, customer companies and IT expatriates are connected together through the outsourcing projects. In such a special business model of IT outsourcing service, the labor relations and adscription management of IT expatriates are in IT companies, but the working content and the evaluation is determined by customers according to the specific circumstances of the projects. On the customer side, customer companies can achieve the human resource purpose of "not for ownership, but for work" through the project outsourcing^[1], leading to the treatment differentiation between IT expatriates and their inner staffs. With the development of outsourcing industry in China, the special employment relationship of IT outsourcing projects has been increasing. However, with the decreasing of the demographic dividend of the labor, the labor resource of IT outsourcing has been gradually drying up. Considering the salary, work environment and promotion training cannot meet the expectations of IT expatriates, the turnover rate of professional and technical staffs still remains high, hindering the development of enterprises seriously^[2]. IT expatriates are regarded as the core human resources of IT

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service outsourcing enterprises since their quality, capability, work efficiency and stability determine the success of outsourcing projects due to their direct service to customers, reflecting the core competitiveness of IT enterprises. Unless the problem of their organizational commitment decreasing gradually is solved, their performance and service capabilities will be directly affected.

At present, the researches of employee relationship management have been expanded from the significant labor contract to the explicit and implicit psychological contract. The studies of employee management not only focus on the remuneration, but also attach great importance to the employees' demand for training, career development and enterprise culture. Lack of understanding of the individual needs of IT expatriates results in inadequate material and spiritual incentives for them. Among the researches in advantage of psychological contract theory to study the organizational commitment of employees, targeted relevant study of IT expatriates in outsourcing enterprises are not common.

Therefore, this research applies the 2*2 employee-enterprise psychological contract model to explore the organizational commitment of IT expatriates under different psychological contract matching modes, making profound significance in both academic research and practice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL HYPOTHESIS

2.1 Psychological contract

The essence of the psychological contract is that both sides of the contract establish the mutual perception of the psychological expectations, including the responsibility for each other and the commitment of reciprocal exchange^[3]. According to the different concerns of psychological expectations, psychological contract can be divided into relational and transactional^{[4],[5]}. The former concerns about the financial or property division less, but focuses on the emotional basis, trust and obligation of the two sides. The latter aims to reach an agreement on financial indicators, while private intimate relationship is not involved.

In the related studies, some scholars believe that psychological contract is the internal cause of both organizational commitment and job satisfaction, so that psychological contract can be used to explain the change of the relationship between employers and employees^{[6]-[9]}. Yan, Wang et al. have studied the different modes of the psychological contract between internal staffs and expatriates^{[10],[11]}. Li has found the significant influence on the sense of responsibility and working attitude in the organization caused by the employees' cognitive gap of psychological contract^[12]. Jacqueline has studied the bi-directionality of reciprocity based on psychological contract theory and found that both obligations and fulfilment of obligations of the employees had positive correlation relationship with those of the employers^[13], implying that psychological contract of both employers and employees might affect the fulfilment of obligations together. In addition, some studies have extended the psychological contract to the relationship between enterprises (organizations) and external customers (individuals)^[14], and applied the theory to the relationship between customers and suppliers in the area of IT outsourcing^{[15],[16]}. Yan et al. proposed a matrix model for matching the employees' and enterprises' psychological contracts in outsourcing projects^[10], providing a new perspective to the coefficient influence of two-sided psychological contracts on the IT expatriates' commitment to the parent company.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment refers to that an employee is willing to take on the responsibilities and obligations involved in the work and work hard with the sense of responsibility and professionalism, finding work value and growth as a member of the enterprise^{[18],[19]}. Organizational commitment measures the willingness to make endeavors for the organization, the desire to stay in the organization and the acceptance of organizational goals and values of an employee, which can be divided into three categories: emotional commitment, normative commitment and continuous commitment^[19]. Porter defined organizational

commitment as "the relative intensity of individual identity and the involvement in a particular organization", containing three factors: a high degree of commitment and acceptance of organizational goals and values (recognition); willingness to make great efforts for organizational goals achievement (input); strong desire to maintain organizational membership (loyalty) ^[20].

Organizational commitment has a good predictive power for turnover rate, work performance, absence rate and willingness to retain of employees. Employees with higher organizational commitment have a lower turnover rate and higher work performance ^[21]. Part of scholars believe that communication, fairness, interpersonal relationships ^{[22], [23]}, training ^[24], corporate culture ^{[25], [26]}, development opportunities ^[27] will significantly affect employees' organizational commitment. There are also some scholars pointing out that *"insufficient attention to employees' career development guidance leads to the lack of organizational commitment and sense of sureness, preventing employees from foreseeing their working situation after 3-10 years"*, which can be an important reason for the lower organizational commitment ^[28].

Based on the above research review, we divide employee-enterprise psychological contract matching pattern into four types: employee-dominating, enterprise-dominating, mutual loyalty, mutual selection. The specific definitions are as follow:

(1) Employee-dominating: The parent company adopts relational psychological contract, while IT expatriate adopts transactional psychological contract.

(2) Enterprise-dominating: The parent company adopts transactional psychological contract, while IT expatriate adopts relational psychological contract.

(3) Mutual loyalty: Both the parent company and IT expatriate adopt relational psychological contract.

(4) Mutual selection: Both the parent company and IT expatriate adopt transactional psychological contract.

Among four types above, mutual loyalty and mutual selection belong to the matching mode, while employee-dominating and enterprise-dominating belong to the mismatching pattern.

As for an employee, relational psychological contract influences both task and contextual performance positively ^[29]. Also, it is more correlated to employees' emotional, continuous and normative organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract ^[30], so we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Employees' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

H1.a: In the matching pattern, employees' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

H1.b: In the mismatching pattern, employees' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

The perceived employer obligations have a positive effect on the fulfilment of obligations of employees ^[13]. Factors of organizational commitment were based on their perceived obligation of the employee ^[31]. Meanwhile, as a component of organizational commitment, affective commitment has a more significant positive influence on organizational commitment than normative and continuance commitment ^{[32], [33]}. Enterprises' relational psychological contract can enhance the affective perceived obligation of employees, thus it can makes more contribution to the whole organizational commitment, improving the staffs' obligation fulfillment. So we propose the second hypothesis:

H2: Enterprises' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

H2.a: In the matching pattern, enterprises' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

H2.b: In the mismatching pattern, enterprises' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.

Studies have found that employees will have the tendency to resign when psychological contract balance is broken^[29]. In the condition of imbalance of psychological contract, it may gradually cause the decline of organizational commitment of IT expatriates, leading to a higher turnover intention. The final result will let the customers reduce the trust of IT outsourcing enterprises. The third assumption is as following:

H3: The employees' organizational commitment in the matching condition is higher than it in the mismatching condition. (Matching condition means the enterprises' and the employees' psychological contract are matched with each other)

An employer's less obligation fulfillment was more significantly associated with decline in employee relational obligations^[34]. As an important factor of employees' psychological contract, relational obligations is more susceptible to negative effects, including the situation where enterprise-employee psychological contract mismatches when employees hold relational psychological contract. In this condition, IT outsourcing expatriates pay less attention to the communication mechanism and the working environment, in which employees' relational needs might not be satisfied, so their organizational commitment is easier to be damaged. The fourth assumption is made:

H4: In the mismatching condition, organizational commitment in employee-dominating situation is higher than it in enterprise-dominating situation.

Finally, in the situation where an enterprise-employee psychological contract equilibrium reached, both sides maintain an interdependent relationship in a mutual-loyalty situation^[35]. In the relationship of mutual-loyalty, IT enterprises usually have a sound care system for employees, and employees also emphasize the care and attention of their parent companies, resulting in higher loyalty and lower turnover rate. However, in a mutual-selection situation, both IT expatriates and enterprises pay more attention to their own interests. When the treatment cannot meet the psychological expectations of IT expatriates, organizational commitment will be reduced, leading to a turnover intention. Therefore, this paper proposes the following assumption:

H5: In the matching condition, organizational commitment in mutual-loyalty situation is higher than it in mutual-selection situation.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Data Collection

The process of data collection follows the standard of random sampling. We distributed the questionnaires in two ways including sharing the link to questionnaires through WeChat and mailing the questionnaire. All the questionnaires were distributed to the expatriates of IT outsourcing enterprises. 650 questionnaires were sent out, while 591 questionnaires were collected, including 562 valid questionnaires and 29 invalid questionnaires. The valid return rate is 86.8%.

3.2 Variable Measurement

Psychological Contract Inventory comes from the psychological contract questionnaire designed by Rousseau^{[36], [37]}. Organizational Commitment Inventory derives from the questionnaire designed by Porter et al.^[20]. All variables are measured using the Likert scale. In addition, the questionnaire in this research also covers demographic characteristics of employees, including working years, position and whether a technician or not in the IT outsourcing project, and enterprise characteristics including qualification and the total number of employees. The sample distribution is showed in Table 1.

Table 1. Sample distribution

Feature	Category	Amount	Percentage
CMM/CCMI Qualification	Passed	213	37.90%
	Not passed	349	62.10%
Number of employees	Not more than 500	367	65.30%
	More than 500	195	34.70%
Whether a technician or not in outsourcing project	Yes	261	46.44%
	No	301	53.56%
Position	Middle/senior managers	100	17.79%
	First-line managers	171	30.43%
	Ordinary employee	291	51.78%
Working Experience	Above 5 years	460	81.85%
	Above 5 years	102	18.15%

This research uses SmartPLS 3 to test the reliability and validity of our questionnaire in advantage of partial Least Square Regression (PLS). As shown in Table 2, Cronbach's α coefficients of all latent variables are above 0.895. The values of Composite Reliability (CR) are all above 0.920. The values of Average Variance Extracted (AVE) are all above 0.670. Three indicators reveal that the questionnaire scale in this study has high reliability.

Table 2. The loads, Cronbach's α , AVE and CR of the questionnaire scale

Latent Variables	Measured Items	Loads	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Enterprises' rational psychological contract	ER1	0.845	0.938	0.951	0.763
	ER2	0.886			
	ER3	0.813			
	ER4	0.838			
	ER5	0.894			
	ER6	0.881			
Enterprises' transactional psychological contract	ET1	0.847	0.929	0.944	0.739
	ET2	0.890			
	ET3	0.875			
	ET4	0.898			
	ET5	0.842			
	ET6	0.888			
Employees' rational psychological contract	SR1	0.766	0.895	0.920	0.656
	SR2	0.883			
	SR3	0.814			
	SR4	0.750			
	SR5	0.819			
	SR6	0.874			
Employees' transactional psychological contract	ST1	0.814	0.901	0.924	0.671
	ST2	0.828			
	ST3	0.789			
	ST4	0.822			
	ST5	0.795			
	ST6	0.811			

Latent Variables	Measured Items	Loads	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE
Employees' organizational commitment	PC1	0.858	0.944	0.956	0.782
	PC2	0.878			
	PC3	0.864			
	PC4	0.897			
	PC5	0.908			
	PC6	0.899			

Fornell and Larcker's test was used to validate the discriminant validity of the model^[38]. As shown in Table 3, all the square roots of AVE were greater than the absolute values of the correlation coefficients between the latent variables. Therefore, this article has great discriminant validity between the latent variables.

Table 3. Discriminant validity and correlation coefficients between the latent variables

Latent Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Enterprises' rational psychological contract	0.874				
(2) Enterprises' transactional psychological contract	0.884	0.860			
(3) Employees' organizational commitment	0.765	0.793	0.884		
(4) Employees' rational psychological contract	0.712	0.737	0.778	0.810	
(5) Employees' transactional psychological contract	0.559	0.560	0.598	0.794	0.819

4. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Identification of psychological contract matching patterns

In this study, the method of identifying the psychological contract matching pattern is: we calculated the weights of factors based on standard factor loads shown in Table 4. The calculation formula of weights is as shown in equation (1)-(2). Equation (1) made the quadratic sum of all factors' contribution degree for a latent variable equal to 1. Then equation (2) made the sum of all factors' weight for a latent variable equal to 1. f_{ij} means the standard load of the factor j on latent variable i . w_{ij} means the weight of the factor j on latent variable i .

$$s_{ij} = f_{ij} / \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^n f_{ij}^2} \quad (1)$$

$$w_{ij} = s_{ij} / \sum_{j=1}^n s_{ij} \quad (2)$$

Then, we used the method of weighted averages to obtain the aggregate scores of each latent variable based on the calculated weights and factor scores.

Next, comparing the difference of the latent variables between transactional and rational psychological contract for both employees and enterprises, we defined the identification of psychological contract matching pattern was not clear if the absolute value of the difference was less than 0.1. Only if the enterprise's and employee's psychological contract matching pattern were clear, the identification of the psychological contract for an IT expatriate succeeded. For each investigate individual, if the score of enterprises' transactional psychological contract was 0.1 greater than the enterprises' rational psychological contract, the individual considered the enterprises' psychological contract as transactional; otherwise, he considered it as rational. The same applies to the employees' psychological contract.

The results of identification are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. The results of identification of psychological contract matching patterns

One-sided matching patterns	Amount	Matching patterns	Amount
Enterprises' transactional psychological contract	263	Mutual-selection	175
Enterprises' rational psychological contract	139	Mutual-loyalty	38
Not clear for enterprises' psychological contract	160	Enterprise-dominating	48
Employees' transactional psychological contract	289	Employee-dominating	75
Employees' rational psychological contract	108	Not clear	226
Not clear for employees' psychological contract	165		

4.2 Settings of control variables

We set the latent variables of employees' and enterprises' psychological contract as dependent variables, while the variables such as working years, position, whether a technician or not in the IT outsourcing project, qualification and the total number of employees were taken as the independent variables separately. By ANOVA analysis, we found the latent variables had significant differences on these independent variables. Therefore, we needed to set these variables as control variables. Among them, "more than five years" was regarded as the reference variable of working years; "ordinary staff" was regarded as the reference variable of position; "no" was regarded as the reference variable of whether a technician or not in the IT outsourcing project; "500 or more" was regarded as the reference variable of the total number of employees; "not passed in CMM/CCMI certification" was regarded as the reference variable of qualification.

4.3 Hypothesis testing

In Model 1, the dummy variable was added to indicate whether the employees' and enterprises' psychological contract of the sample were matching or not, and the reference variable was "mismatch". In Model 2, the dummy variable was added to represent the matching pattern when employees' and enterprises' psychological contract mismatched, and the reference variable was "enterprise-dominating". In Model 3, we increased a dummy variables to show the matching pattern in matching situation, and the reference variable was "mutual-selection". As shown in Table 5, the R Square of the three models are all above 0.54, indicating that the models can explain the change of organizational commitment well.

Table 5. Indicators of model fit

Model	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
R Square	0.598	0.729	0.572
R Square Adjusted	0.584	0.702	0.549

Using Bootstrap testing of SmartPLS 3, we can get the path coefficients and T-value. As shown in Figure 1, The T-value of "enterprises' and employees' psychological contract matching-> organizational commitment" in Model 1 is 0.517, showing that the influence of "enterprises' and employees' psychological contract matching" on organizational commitment is not significant. As shown in Figure 2, the coefficient of "employee-dominating in mismatching situation-> organizational commitment" is 0.178 and the T-value is 1.988, which indicates that employee-dominating pattern has more significant positive influence on organizational commitment than enterprise-dominating pattern. As shown in Figure 3, the coefficient of "mutual-loyalty -> organizational commitment" is 0.064 and the T-value is 2.654, indicating that mutual-loyalty pattern has a more significant positive effect on organizational commitment in matching situation. That is to say, under the same conditions, the organizational commitment of mutual-loyalty pattern is slightly higher than mutual-selection one.

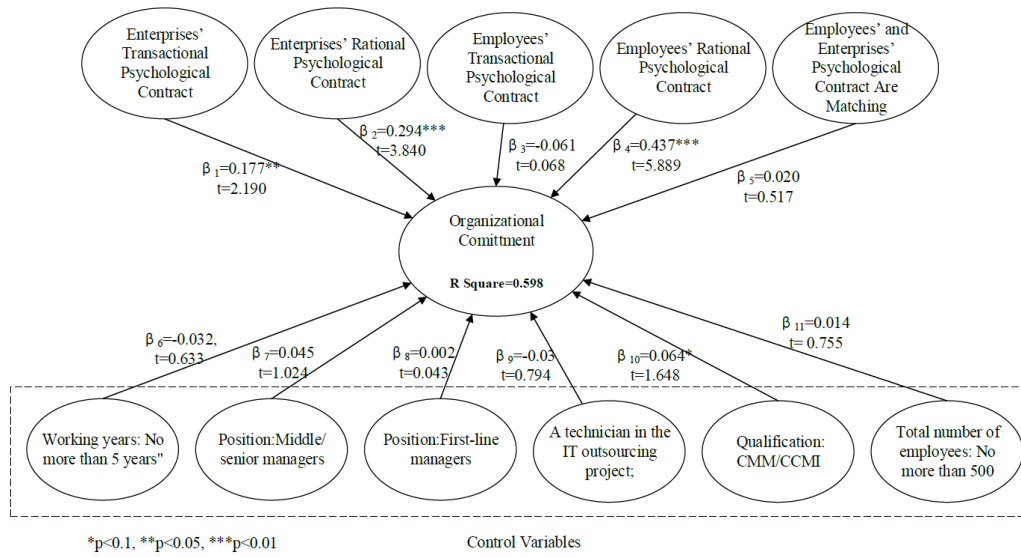


Figure 1. Testing results of Model 1

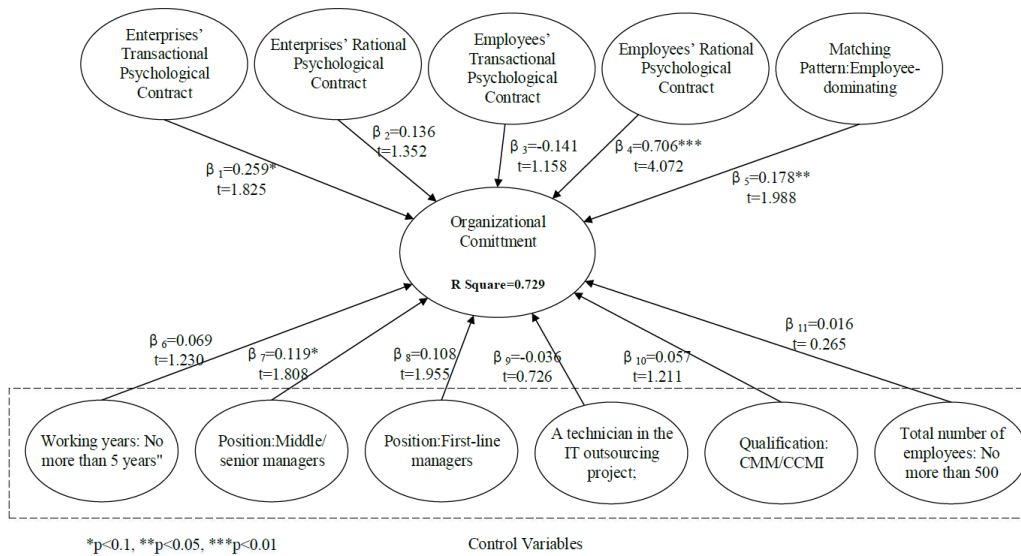


Figure 2. Testing results of Model 2 (Mismatching Situation)

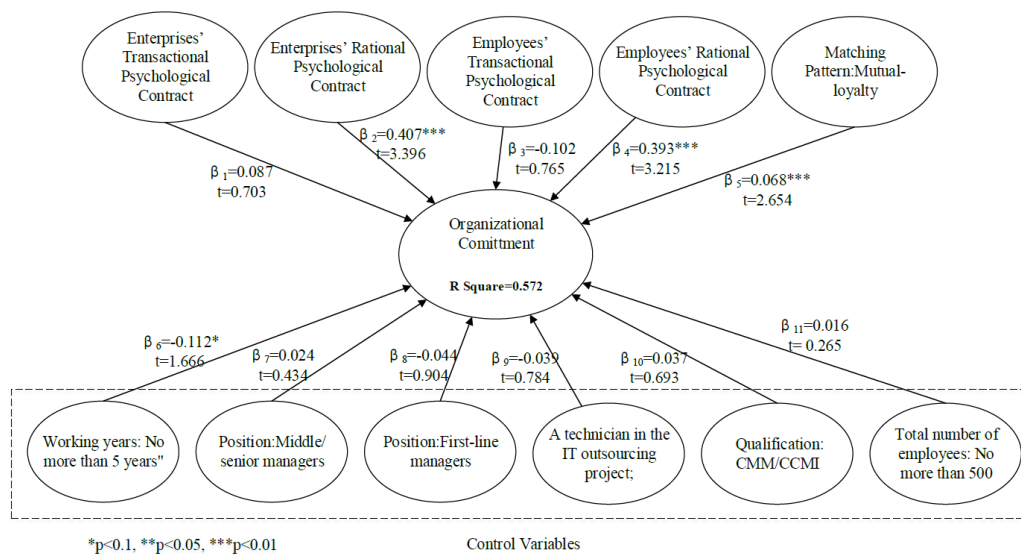


Figure 3. Testing results of Model 3 (Matching Situation)

In the significance test of path coefficient difference, we run T-test in advantage of Lin's research method^[39], and get the significance of the path coefficient difference with the path coefficients and standard deviation from Bootstrap testing according to Chin's calculation formula^[40]. The formula is as shown in equation (3), and l_1 and l_2 respectively represent different path coefficients. The results are shown in Table 6.

$$t = \frac{l_1 - l_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)^2 \times SE_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)^2 \times SE_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2}}} \times \frac{1}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}}} \quad (3)$$

According to the data in Table 6, it can be seen that under the matching situation, the enterprises' relational psychological contract has significantly stronger influence on organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract. However, in the mismatching situation, the previous conclusion is not significant.

As for employees' psychological contract, T-values of the two models (situations) are 3.103 and 3.302 respectively, and the differences of the path coefficients are 0.847 and 0.494, indicating that employees' relational psychological contract is more effective than the transactional contract for organizational commitment with a very significant comparison result.

Table 6. Comparison of path coefficients in matching and mismatching situation

Path 1	Path 2	Model	Coefficient difference	t-value
Enterprises' rational psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Enterprises' transactional psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Model 2	-0.123	-0.465
Employees' rational psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Employees' transactional psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Model 2	0.847***	3.103
Enterprises' rational psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Employees' transactional psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Model 3	0.320**	2.260
Employees' rational psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Enterprises' transactional psychological contract -> Organizational commitment	Model 3	0.494***	3.302

*p<0.1, **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

5. CONCLUSION

Table 7. Hypothesis testing results

Number	Contents	Result
H1.a	In the matching pattern, employees' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.	Pass
H1.b	In the mismatching pattern, employees' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.	Pass
H2.a	Enterprises' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.	Pass
H2.b	In the mismatching pattern, enterprises' relational psychological contract is more correlated to organizational commitment than transactional psychological contract.	Pass
H3	The employees' organizational commitment in the matching condition is higher than it in the mismatching condition.	Reject
H4	In the mismatching condition, organizational commitment in employee-dominating situation is higher than it in enterprise-dominating situation.	Pass
H5	In the matching condition, organizational commitment in mutual-loyalty situation is higher than it in mutual-selection situation.	Pass

As shown in the Table 7, hypothesis passes the test except H2.b and H3. Therefore, main conclusion is illustrated as following.

In the first place, whenever the psychological contracts between organization and employee are matching or not, employees' relational psychological contract contributes to organizational commitment more than transactional psychological contract does. That is because employees' relational psychological contract encourages employees to agree with the culture and value of an organization which are also the main content of organizational commitment.

Secondly, once the psychological contract of the enterprises matches the one of employee, organizational commitment rises more if the relational psychological contract is strengthened, compared with transactional psychological contract. With the balance of matching situation of psychological contract, IT outsourcing

employees generally satisfy with the present working conditions. In this situation, employees' initiative can be stimulated which boosts their organizational commitment, if enterprises pay appropriate attention to employees' words and enhance their decision engagement. However, with the mismatching psychological contract pattern, IT outsourcing enterprises have to recognize whether their employees' core needs deriving from material or mentality, in order to increase employee's organizational commitment and decrease turnover.

Furthermore, taking no account of the consideration of the dynamic process if the balance of matching situation is broken, employee's organizational commitment under the matching condition is not necessarily higher than that under the mismatching condition. Currently, the market of IT outsourcing is booming with expanding enterprises and a great number of professional IT workforce. Meanwhile, because of the increasing competitive business environment, more IT outsourcing enterprises promise better wages and welfare, which make IT outsourcing professionals with transactional psychological contract tend to job-hopping. Similarly, IT outsourcing enterprises with the same transactional psychological contract are willing to search for more economic workforce, which also accelerate the employees' turnover phenomenon. Thus, in the situation of mutual-selection psychological contract, IT outsourcing enterprises are suggested to add value to salary, promotion and training opportunity to control the brain drain.

In addition, dummy variable introduced in the mismatching situation proves the influence of employee-dominating model on organizational commitment is stronger than that of enterprise-dominating. In an imbalanced organization-dominating situation, employees share relational psychological contract while the enterprise takes no account of working environment or staff care, the result of which is probably decreasing or even ruining organizational commitment. However, if it is the employee-dominating context with reasonable salary standard, enterprises' relational psychological contract can promote the process of the process of perceiving, accepting and agreeing enterprise culture for employees in a long term.

Last but not least, in the matching situation, the enterprises' psychological contract model of mutual-loyalty contributes more positive impact than mutual-selection. When mutual-loyalty occurs, employees concerns more about immaterial factors, under which condition, they appreciate more on the importance their employers attach to them and desire more internal communication. In turn, IT outsourcing enterprises holding the same psychological contract establish friendly system, offer work shifts to outsourcing employees and involve them into their internal activities. All these efforts help to meet employees' expectations and match them with enterprise value and culture perfectly.

However, there are still some shortcomings in this study and some questions to be studied in subsequent research work.

First, the psychological contract questionnaires to identify the enterprises' and employees' matching mode were completed by employees, so there still remains a certain subjectivity. In the subsequent research, the questionnaires about enterprises' psychological contract should be sent to human resources department in IT service outsourcing companies.

Second, some separate researches on internal staff and expatriates are needed so that we could find out differences of their organizational commitment and the psychological contract matching pattern, contributing more to human resources management for IT service outsourcing companies.

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