Dimensions of the Psychological Contract:
A study of employee expectations in an IT organization

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Abstract

This paper presents the findings of an exploratory study and identifies areas of employee expectations within the broad framework of Psychological Contract in the IT sector. It is a case study in a small scale IT organisation. The scope of the study was restricted to understand expectations only and did not extend to assessing satisfaction levels. The study was conducted in two phases – (i) Exploration to identify the areas of expectations, and (ii) Validation through collection and analysis of data. Based on a survey tool specifically developed for this purpose, data was collected from 78 employees. Factor analysis was conducted to identify and confirm certain factors in employee expectations. All the areas clustered into nine factors accounting for 68% of the cumulative variance. Based on the criterion of qualitative content fit as observed from literature as well as the organisational context, the individual items were categorised into the four factors of employee expectations. Among these, learning expectations are found to be strongest, followed by project expectations, the next being mentoring and leading expectations and the last work environment expectations.

Keywords: Psychological contract, employee expectations, learning, project expectations, mentoring and work environment.

Introduction

The implications of globalization, organizational restructuring and downsizing on employment relations have renewed interest in the concept of the Psychological Contract (Shapiro et al, 2000). There are two broad approaches to defining Psychological Contract (Grant, 1999). One focuses on the employer employee perceptions of the exchange implied by the employment relationship and includes the social processes that shape these perceptions. The second definition focuses on how an expectation or a belief gets formed in the mind of the employee. It is important to understand how the Psychological Contract is formulated in the mind of the employee (Herriot, 1995). These two broad approaches form the basis of a number of definitions of the Psychological Contract. The definitions vary considerably. However, between them they posit that the contract comprises, among other things, obligations, promises, goal setting, reciprocity, perceptions, beliefs and trust.

Chris Argyris (1960) wrote that the psychological contract is an implicit contract between the individual and his organization which specifies what each expects to give and receive from each other in their relationship. Stiles (1995) had noted that the Psychological Contract is the set of reciprocal expectations between an individual and the organization. Often covertly held and infrequently discussed, the Psychological Contract involves both employee and employer perceptions of reciprocity and exchange within the employment relationship (Atkinson, 2003). Green & Francis (2005) refer to the Psychological Contract as the relationship between the employee and employer in terms of the unwritten expectations that exist, not in a formal written contract, but as implicit expectations. Based on the employees' perspective, Psychological Contracts specify the contributions that they believe they owe to their employer and the inducements that they believe are owed in return (Robinson, Kraatz & Rousseau, 1994). These researchers have enlisted various categories of employer and employee obligations. Employer obligations are about providing opportunities for advancement, high pay, merit pay, training & development, job security, and support, while employee obligations have been regarding overtime, loyalty, extra role behaviour, notice transfers, no

competitor support, proprietary protection, and minimum stay. Rousseau (1990) has defined the Psychological Contract as an individual's belief regarding reciprocal obligations, which arise in the context of the relationship between the organization and the employee and shape this relationship. Psychological Contract is multi-dimensional (Robinson, 1996). Most conceptualizations of the construct of Psychological Contract components focus on intrinsic outcomes that relate to the work environment and the job itself, while other components focus on extrinsic outcomes that relate to the consequences of completing the job, (Lester et al, 2002).

Herriot, Manning & Kidd (1997) through their study have identified seven categories of employee obligations towards the organization and twelve of organisational obligations towards the employee. The organizational obligations included training (providing adequate induction and training, fairness (ensuring fairness of selection, appraisal, promotion and redundancy procedures) needs (allowing time off for personal and family needs), consult (consulting and communicating with employees on matters which affect them), discretion (minimal interference with employees in terms of how they do their job), humanity (acting in a personally and socially responsible and supportive way towards employees), recognition (recognition of or reward for special contribution or long service), environment (provision of a safe and congenial work environment), justice (fairness and consistency in the application of rules and disciplinary procedures), pay (equitable with respect to market values and consistently awarded across the organisation), benefits (fairness and consistency in the administration of the benefit systems) and security (organizations trying hard to provide what job security they can). The set of employee obligations included hours (contracted work hours), work (to do a good job in terms of quality and quantity), honesty (to deal honestly with clients and with the organization), loyalty (staying with the organization, guarding its reputation and putting its interests first), property (treating the organisation's property in a careful way), self presentation (dressing and behaving correctly with customers and colleagues) and flexibility (being willing to go beyond one's own job description, especially in an emergency.

Through his study to understand the expectations of employees of the 21st century, Lester et al,(2002) has identified thirty two areas in expectations. They are opportunities for promotion and advancement, trust and respect, open and honest communication, fair treatment, challenges and interesting work, competitive salary, health care benefits, competent management, support from management, meaningful work, pay and bonuses tied to performance, opportunities for personal growth, opportunity for developing new skills, constructive feedback on performance, competent co-workers, consideration of employee's needs, clear goals and direction, enough resources to do the job, vacation benefits, adequate equipment to perform the job, continual professional training, increasing responsibilities, equal opportunities for all employees, participation in decision making, job security, cooperation and support from co-workers, tuition reimbursement, safe work environment, freedom to be creative and flexible work schedule. Among these one can discern that the expectations could be classified as either related to work content, work process or work outcomes and another factor related to whether they are tangible or intangible.

Occupations with a high knowledge content in their activity become increasingly central to economic activity and perhaps a critical source of competitive advantage to organizations as these employees are the ones to create most value to the organisation. The expectations of knowledge workers comprise of attributes such as pay & benefits, training and skill development, interesting work among others. One important determinant of satisfaction and thereby retention is 'met' expectations. This is particularly important in the case of knowledge workers where knowledge is more private and tacit. The implications are that, one cannot extract such knowledge unless the employee is willing to part with it on a voluntary basis. Unless they feel

satisfied at work, they may not do so. (Flood et al, 2001). In an era of shortage of knowledgeable and skilled employees, knowledge workers have great choice about which they want to work for, resulting in organizations competing for knowledge workers rather than knowledge workers competing to join a particular organization. While referring to the work force in the information technology organizations, Ferratt et al (2005) observe that human capital in the information technology organizations has been considered a strategic resource and its effective management represents an organizational capability.

In India, the IT software and services industry has grown rapidly over the last decade. In 2005, it encompassed about 6,50,000 employees and the prediction for the next five years, was that this number is expected to triple, to over 2 million persons, so as to meet the target of $75 billion in revenues, including exports of over $50 billion (Karnik, 2005a). Some of the challenges faced by the Indian IT Sector are attracting and retaining talent especially in an explosive growth phase, working conditions, pressure, stress, obsolescence and career growth issues of workers are predominant (Karnik, 2005b). It is speculated that a strong track record of the industry, will help it to achieve its aspired target of USD 60 billion in software and services exports and USD 73-75 billion in overall software and services revenues, by FY2010. However, there are global macro economic challenges and talent, manpower and infrastructure issues that will need to be addressed and resolved, collectively (Mittal, 2008).

A number of challenges have been generally observed in the context of managing the knowledge workers by Robertson (2000). Some of them have been the issues of competitors constantly trying to entice the employees for their expertise and skills and, consequently the need to take care of retention in the organization. He had noted that a unique work environment for knowledge workers with a high level of autonomy, trust and an egalitarian culture in inter-disciplinary projects of their choice enhances their professional development as well as the intellectual capital. As early as 1993,

Tampoe observed that the key motivators of knowledge workers were the need for personal growth, operational autonomy and task achievement. Kaminski et al (2004) have observed that the complexity and variety of skill sets required within IT contributes to career issues that are unique to employees in this industry. IT employees require extensive knowledge of the theories and principles within their field, as well as hands on training in hard ware and soft ware applications. Therefore, the employees have a high need to keep pace with technology changes and upgrade one's skills in order to be effective.

The fulfillment of the Psychological Contract reflects the extent to which expectations on both sides, especially the employees' side, is met regarding what they ought to give to the organization and what they get in return from the organization (Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). These challenges arise due to the fact that many expectations are not explicitly communicated from both sides and therefore, may never be met. This could result in resentment and consequently attrition. Gaylard et al (2005) have found five significant factors in retention of the IT work force. They are equity and enablement for high performance, liberated and empowered culture, effective and interactive communication channel, environment rich in personal growth opportunities, standard employment contract & benefits and social interaction. These factors signify strong expectations on the part of employees and their fulfillment has been associated with retention.

Based on the studies and research inferences presented on both the psychological contract as well as the knowledge worker, it was inferred that it is important to gain insights into the expectations of the knowledge workers in the IT sector in India. The objectives were accordingly set forth for the study.

Objectives

To identify dimensions of the psychological contract by studying employee expectations in an IT organization.

Research Design

The research design is case research.

This research involved both an exploration as well as a validation phase. Interviews and focus group discussions were conducted during initial exploration. A quantitative survey was conducted and the data was subjected to factor analysis and descriptive statistical analysis.

The sample

The sample consisted of the census within the organization. In the exploration phase, interviews were conducted with senior managers, a project manager and Project lead. A focus group discussion was also conducted. In the validation stage, all the available employees in the organisation have been taken for the survey. Some of them who were assigned on projects in other places including on-site / other countries were not taken for the study. 78 junior employees who were in the entry cadre were only considered for the study. This was to understand the very elementary expectations at entry level. They were in the first three levels of the organisational hierarchy either as a trainee software engineer or software engineer or Senior software engineer or a project lead. The experiences ranged from 1 to 6 yrs. The ages ranged from 21 to 26 yrs. There were 51 males and 27 females among the respondents. The inclusion criterion for the selection of the sample was that they were at the lower level in the organizational hierarchy, considered as juniors. The mean of work experience for males and females is between 29 and 30 months and the mean age for males and females is around 25 years. The ratio of distribution of education is the same for the male and female samples. There is a larger representation of graduate as well as post graduate engineering as well as Computer applications. Most of them are engineers.The average work experience in months is about 30 yrs for males and 28 yrs for females. This variable is also balanced in the study sample. Mid level as well as senior level employees were not considered for the study.

Based on exploration during the initial part of the study, Open ended interviews were conducted with three senior managers, the HR General Manager, HR executive, a project manager and Project Lead as well as a sample of five employees. The broad areas of exploration were expectations from a new entrant to the organization, expectations from employees who moves through different stages of growth and the cultural norms of the organization. Based on their inputs of managers, it was found that some of the key areas of expectations from the organization are certain qualities in the entrant and progressive upgrading of skills and knowledge of the employees as they grow. There are codes of conduct, of which commitment, honesty and integrity are important. Employees are expected to learn continuously through their efforts and make use of every opportunity. Based on the focus group discussion, with employees, it was gathered that their expectations include the need to upgrade oneself, an anxiety to grow and keep pace with technology changes and also the need for recognition and flexibility at work. We also find that they have identified the area of soft skills as important to progress in their career.

Based on an indicative list of identified factors enlisted after exploration, a schedule was developed to assess the level of expectations.

The Tool

Perceived obligations within the Psychological Contract are often more important to job-related attitudes and behaviour than formal and explicit contractual agreements (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Therefore, the focus of this scale was to measure the level of expectations on certain identified factors. These factors had been gathered from the exploration phase, some of which had also been subject to prior research.

In this study, a nine point interval scale was developed to assess the level of expectations. The tool went through three iterations of design in consultation with the HR manager. The initial factors included in the study are Project-based Learning opportunities, Individual learning initiatives, Visibility and appreciation, Work environment, Social culture, Leadership expectations, Mentoring and Training & learning. The broad factors that were proposed were learning, work, mentoring and work environment. These factors were operationalised based on the inputs gathered during the exploration phase with employees.

The final design of the survey tool was based on the interval scaling procedure to measure the level to which these factors were preferred /desired by them. 'How much would you like to'.....format was used to introduce each item in the schedule. A nine-point scale was adopted for the study. Heriot, Manning & Kidd (1997) have suggested that the use of rating scales as more appropriate for investigating 'implied' contracts where there is a high degree of social consensus about obligations, and where these are routinely met. The rating scale was designed for a quantitative response, while the blank space with 'because' triggered qualitative responses. The prefix 'because' was provided, against each item, below the rating scale. The respondents were given a small box in which they could add what they wanted to share or feedback. The data collected was subject to quantitative as well as qualitative analysis. A reliability coefficient of the scale of 0.88 was found to be highly significant. The 'F' value of 32.854 also emerged very significant at 0.00 level.

Analysis & Results

The quantitative analysis dealt with factor analysis and descriptive statistical analysis and calculation of percentages. Factor analysis helped to identify the factors of expectations in the Psychological Contract. The descriptive statistics helped to understand the average level of those expectations with specific reference to each area within a factor.

Hypothesis of the study

Employees maintain certain expectations on learning in the organisation.

Employees maintain expectations regarding support from the organizations for upgradation and growth.

Employees maintain certain expectations regarding the nature of work.

Employees maintain certain expectations about the work environment.

Inference from factor analysis

The factor loading results and the factors that evolved finally are presented in tables 1 & 2 below. Based on varimax rotation, those factors with eigen values ≥1 have only been considered. It can be seen from Table 1 that there are nine factors that explain 68% of the cumulative variance .This variance has ensured considerable validity of the areas taken for assessment of expectations. The areas with the highest factor loadings have been highlighted in the table entries of Table 2. Based on the strength of factor loadings, the items were grouped under each of the factors.

Table 1: Total Variance Explained through the items in the schedule

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.454	26.620	26.620	7.454	26.620	26.620	3.396	12.128	12.128
2	2.140	7.641	34.262	2.140	7.641	34.262	2.680	9.573	21.701
3	1.810	6.465	40.727	1.810	6.465	40.727	2.572	9.187	30.887
4	1.584	5.656	46.383	1.584	5.656	46.383	2.107	7.524	38.411
5	1.461	5.219	51.602	1.461	5.219	51.602	1.867	6.667	45.078
6	1.264	4.515	56.117	1.264	4.515	56.117	1.774	6.335	51.413
7	1.196	4.273	60.390	1.196	4.273	60.390	1.702	6.077	57.490
8	1.108	3.957	64.347	1.108	3.957	64.347	1.673	5.977	63.467
9	1.031	3.683	68.030	1.031	3.683	68.030	1.278	4.563	68.030
10	.981	3.503	71.532						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2: Factor loadings through Rotated Component Matrix

Factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Large client projects	.062	.566	.405	.102	.054	-018	-150	.015	.238
On site opportunity	.182	.058	.248	.000	-183	.736	-037	-082	.172
Product development projects	-029	.657	.248	.240	-032	-025	-88	.054	-184
Development projects	.048	.360	.382	.449	.010	.266	.034	-072	.005
Maintenance projects	.022	-063	.197	.010	-183	-099	.082	.834	.103
Moving across technologies	- 094	.061	-058	.051	.176	.653	.108	.468	-181
Learning through team discussions	.205	.061	.059	.821	.041	.193	-05	.002	.122
Stretching to learn	.351	-210	.121	.351	.111	.052	.126	.330	-362
Willingness to offer technical help	.068	.288	.103	.807	.056	-159	.088	-005	-026
Participate/present technical seminars	.585	-013	.220	.229	.064	.268	.107	-008	-068
Offering solutions to correct team members mistakes	.649	.287	-040	.245	.142	-047	.313	.085	-061
Perceived Value add from members' criticisms	.470	-020	-248	.218	.015	.008	.468	-015	.361
Interactions with project manager	.347	.442	.244	.172	.332	.331	.011	-139	.024
Appreciation from manager / Lead	.111	.374	.100	.268	.349	.433	.184	.039	.255
Appreciation from client	.305	.556	-008	.183	.365	.263	.112	.039	.163
Fun & Social environment	.075	.095	.285	.073	.066	.095	.029	.145	.793
Flexible timings	.031	.124	.099	.000	.830	-062	.080	-024	-034
Job security	.255	.672	.058	.025	-061	.081	.233	.109	.144
Short breaks during work	.444	-225	.012	.029	.536	.138	-12	.200	.076
Close-knit culture to share personal and family concerns	.037	.239	-192	-050	.182	.170	.006	.674	.059
Culture of sharing work problems openly	.062	.205	.675	.063	.112	.259	.071	.082	.158
Competent manager	.780	.090	.276	.004	.049	-111	-58	.027	.128
Manager's openness to suggested project ideas	.764	.385	.155	.036	.125	.184	.042	-076	.047
Career guidance by manager	.474	.290	.580	.031	.159	.140	.193	.115	.005
Manager's interest in employee's personal growth	-.016	.123	.166	.007	.138	.098	.835	.022	-.061
Regular feedback on strengths and improvement	.248	.182	.676	.125	.023	.007	.245	-059	.064
Sponsored soft skills training	.346	-123	.342	.063	-036	-060	.614	.185	.086
Training while on bench	.308	-031	.512	.236	.512	-069	.091	-111	.135

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Based on the assumption of validity that was explained through 68% of factor variance, the qualitative fit between the factors and the items were assessed through the principle of content validity supported by literature. In order to make a meaningful interpretation, four factors were finalised and named appropriately. They are on learning, on projects, on mentoring & leading and on work environment.

Table 3: Four critical factors of identified expectations

Factor	The areas/ items
Learning expectations	Training while on bench
	Learning through team discussions
	Sponsored soft skills training
	Offer technical help
	Open sharing of work problems
	Participate and present technical seminars
	Offer solutions to team members mistakes
	Stretching to learn
	Value add from team members' criticisms

Project expectations	Job security	
	Appreciation from client	
	Development projects	
	Large client projects	
	Interactions with project manager	
	On site opportunity	
	Product development projects	
	Moving across technologies	
	Maintenance projects	
Mentoring & leading expectations	Appreciation from manager / Lead	
	Regular feedback on strengths and improvement	
	Career guidance by manager	
	Manager's openness to suggested project ideas	
	Competent manager	
	Manager's interest in employee's personal growth	
	Appreciation from manager / Lead	
Work-environment expectations	Flexible timings	
	Fun & Social environment	
	Short breaks during work	
	Close-knit culture to share personal and family concerns	

The next section deals with the descriptive statistics of the areas under each factor. They are presented in order of strength within each table.

Descriptive statistical analysis

The quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics by calculating the mean and Standard deviation for the various factors within expectations. The qualitative responses of the employees have also been gathered and analysed. The key inferences were based on content analysis identifying key words and related phrases conveying verbs, adverbs and adjectives (Strauss, 1987). The data of specific areas within the four broad factors are presented and discussed.

Factor I - Learning Expectation

There are nine areas within this factor of employee expectations. They are training while on bench, learning through team discussions, sponsored soft skills training, offering technical help to others, open sharing of work problems, participating and presenting technical seminars, offering solutions to team member's mistakes, stretching oneself to learn and value adding to oneself through team member's criticisms. Each of these factors and areas within these will be discussed separately.

Table 4: Mean and SD of areas within the Learning Expectation

Area	Mean	SD
Training while on bench	7.91	1.28
Learning through team discussions	7.60	1.38
Sponsored soft skills training	7.55	1.51
Offer technical help	7.43	1.26
Open sharing of work problems	6.97	1.75
Participate and present technical seminars	6.89	1.91
Offering solutions to team member's mistakes	6.89	1.91
Stretching to learn	6.67	1.77
Value add from team member's criticisms	6.56	1.95

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are keen about making productive use of their time on bench. The employees feel that learning something during this time can help in future projects too. We can infer a 'proactive' orientation among the employees, with a mean score of 7.91 and a SD of 1.28.

The expectation on learning through team discussions has a mean score of 7.60 and an SD of 1.38. Employees are keen about learning through discussions with their team members for new ideas and perspectives, which they feel, may not have occurred to them, but through the participation during the discussion. They also believe that learning can happen faster through discussions and it a good way to seek clarifications.

The employees are keen on soft skills training, either because they find it difficult to afford it, or because they feel this deficiency in their work environment, and want to enhance these skills to deal effectively with clients as well as in future roles. It helps improving on professional and communication skills while interacting especially with the client and also with members within one's team. Soft skills are considered as important as technical skills and equally important to one's career growth. The mean and SD scores are respectively 7.55 and 1.51.

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are keen about learning by offering technical help to others. They feel that it helps meet the project deadlines as well as keep in touch with new trends. Some employees feel that it is challenging and helps one to keep abreast and updated. Employees also feel that one can learn from another's mistake in an attempt to correct that mistake. Offering technical help to others helps one to brush up one's own concepts. It is found to be challenging and interesting. The mean score is 7.43 and SD 1.46.

The employees are also moderately keen on an open sharing of work culture. The mean score is 6.97 and SD of 1.75. The benefits they perceive out of this exercise are quick redressal of issues, better solutions; gaining clarity on problems or misunderstanding if present, eliminating politics and a free communication channel that can help promote a good working environment.

Participating and presenting technical seminars is important as it enables them to understand new technologies, update oneself with trends in the IT industry and keep abreast with the present scenarios. Others feel that it will help them to hone their technical as well as participation skills. Some employees feel that it is difficult to accommodate this within the present work requirements. This expectation has a mean score of 6.89 and an SD of 1.91.

Employees are quite keen to offer solutions to team member's mistakes. They have also expressed that it requires a condition where the provider should be clear on the criticism and the help seeker should be open to receive it. This practice enhances quality of work, as well as team work. This expectation has a mean score of 6.89 and an SD of 1.91. According to some of them this practice will be helpful especially during performance appraisals, as evidence to good performing behaviours.

The employees are moderately keen about stretching to learn. The mean score 6.67 and the SD is 1.77. Some of the constraints they have mentioned are about the present load in the project and the pressure to meet present deadlines. The advantages they foresee are about updating one's skills and technological competence which can be beneficial in the future.

The mean score on expected value add from other member's criticism is 6.56 and the SD of 1.95. The employees are only moderately eager and open to improve themselves through criticisms. The benefits they perceive are in terms of improvement in the quality of work, reduction in repetition of mistakes and better performance, if the criticisms are taken positively. The requirements are about the attitude to take criticism. From the seeker's point of view, the expectation is fair criticism.

With reference to the learning expectations, there are two categories. One is self-driven initiative and the other is organization-driven initiative. Among organizational initiatives, training while on bench is of a high order of expectation, nearly as much as sponsored soft skill training. Among

the self-driven initiatives, learning through team discussions and offering technical help is of moderately high expectation in most employees. There is a moderately high expectation on open sharing of work problems offering solutions to team member's mistakes and the need to participate and present technical seminars. These expectations are important in the learning process and seem to necessitate attention similar to that given to explicit promises, like policies on promotion. Stretching to learn beyond the present project as well as a need to add value through team member's criticisms is also of moderately high expectation. Rousseau (2004) refers to those aspects of employment that workers find satisfying but that are not part of the Psychological Contract (for e.g. - camaraderie of colleagues). These can over time, come to be viewed as part of the promised status quo.

We can infer that in all the areas identified within learning, the expectations are high or at least moderately high, the lowest mean score being 6.67. One can infer that expectation is not low for any of the areas. The SD is below 2 for all the areas. This factor evolves as the most critical expectation in the Psychological Contract. Employees are most keen to use any opportunity for learning and upgrading themselves.

Factor II - Project Expectations

There are six areas identified under this factor. They are job security, appreciation from clients, development projects, product development projects, maintenance projects (Beulen, Fenema and Currie, 2005) large client projects, onsite opportunities, appreciation from client, moving across technologies and interactions with the project manager. The results of the descriptive statistical analysis are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Mean and SD of areas within the Project Expectation

Area	Mean	SD
Job security	8.03	1.22
Appreciation from client	7.96	1.32
Development projects	7.70	1.35
Large client projects	7.55	1.77
Interactions with the project manager	7.52	1.37
On site opportunity	7.00	2.20
Product development projects	7.00	1.86
Moving across technologies	5.21	2.43
Maintenance projects	3.78	2.11

It can be inferred based on their responses that job security within the project context is most important to them. The highest mean score among all the areas is for the expectation of job security. It is 8.03 with an SD of 1.22. The employees feel that it gives them a sense of stability which enables them to concentrate well at work. They also seem to be clear that it is not a 'given' state. The key focus is on a 'sense of security' which is believed to positively influence areas like family and also life in particular.

Appreciation from the client is of a high order of expectation and they view it as a feedback on their strengths. It has a mean score of 7.96 and an SD of 1.52. It is seen to be a great motivating force in a project. The criticality of this area is high and

the qualitative responses point to certain benefits like boost of confidence, as an apt reward for the hard work which helps sustain and enhance the motivation levels in the project.

The employees are very eager to learn through the development projects. 7.7 and 1.35 are the mean and SD scores respectively for expectation to work on development projects. The employees feel that it provides them a complete cycle of learning from analysis to delivery in software development and gives them an opportunity to learn new technologies. There is an opportunity to experiment and use innovative ideas. Another set of employees do feel that attending to client requirements, time and the nature of technology determine the level of learning and that there will

be time constraints in implementing own ideas in such projects.

The mean score of 7.55 and SD of 1.77 reflect a moderately high expectation to work with large clients. The employees think that it will help improve the global perspective by interacting with global clients. It would enable a good exposure to technology and can help in improving career prospects. Some employees are however keen about the nature of work and technicalities rather than the type of client. They are more bothered about the roles and responsibilities that are assigned to them, rather than the nature of the client.

The employees are also keen about the project manager's inputs in order to have a common understanding on the requirement in the project as well seek clarifications and set common expectations. This expectation has a moderately high mean score of 7.52 and SD of 1.57. The benefits they perceive, of this area is feedback which will help to discuss the technical difficulties, proper guidance at the right time which can lead to easier handling of tasks. 'Seeking clarifications' from the Project manager is inferred to be the prime motive to interact with the Project manager.

Expectations on an onsite opportunity is moderately high reflected by a mean score of 7.00. The SD of 2.20 indicates a certain amount of variability in the preferences. The employees feel that they can get international exposure as well as understand global communities. It broadens outlook and give an opportunity to be engaged in high quality work of on site clients and earn more money as well. However, the responses given by the few who are not so keen is that they would not prefer to be away from their families and that there are other preference criteria for choosing projects, other than it being onsite.

High expectation to work on Product development projects is reflected from the mean score of 7.00 and an SD of 1.86. The expectation pattern is slightly different from that of development projects. On comparison, expectation on development projects has a mean of 7.7 and an SD of 1.37 as against this. It is

perceived to improve domain expertise and a good learning experience to improve on technical knowledge. It also does not have the pressure of development projects in terms of periodic deadlines. It is perceived to be a difficult project in understanding and catering to user requirements and as consisting of more complex modules than development projects.

The mean score on expectation in moving across technologies is 5.21 and an SD of 2.43. Variability of responses is quite high. There are different view points on moving across technologies. Those who are highly keen to move between different technologies see it as an advantage in terms of breadth of exposure ensuring professional growth. Those who are not keen to move across technologies cite reasons that they can build expertise only with experience and exposure to one technology. They feel that expertise building requires a lot of time. Some of them would like to opt for a change, only if there is a good demand for that technology in the market.

Maintenance projects is yet another area where expectations are low as is reflected from the mean score on expectation is 3.78 . The SD is 2.11 reflects vatiability in responses.. Employees hold only a low or only moderate expectation to work on these projects. The variability is higher compared to other expectations within projects. Those who have a preference to work on these projects perceive that these projects enable learning and equipping oneself in strong domain knowledge and learning of problems in implementation of the project. Those who do not prefer these projects perceive that they are not creative and hence not challenging, while others feel that it is less flexible, difficult and passive and it is a drudgery to rework on something already created by someone.

Amongst the Project expectations, job security is of the highest order of expectation as well as appreciation from clients. Large client projects development projects and the need to interact with the project manager are areas with next higher expectations. Employees prefer an onsite opportunity as well as product development projects at the next lower level. However, there is

a predominantly high expectation in all the areas based on the norm of interpretation using the nine-point scale of measurement. Moving across technologies and ánd maintenance projects show a greater variability in responses. Maintenance projects have been lowest on priority and employees; overall have indicated a very low expectation to work on these projects.

Balanced Psychological Contracts (Rousseau, 2004) combine commitment on the part of the employer to develop workers, while anticipating that workers will be flexible and willing to adjust if economic conditions change. Combining the nuances of learning as well as project expectations, there are many opportunities within projects for employees to upgrade themselves. However, if the organization tries to give the employees, the extra advantage of equipping them with additional and upgraded skills at its cost, the employees will be willing to give back their contribution to a committed project team in return, in order to maintain a sense of equity.

From the qualitative responses, we can gather that the employees are more interested in product development and development projects which are perceived as more challenging, interesting and value-adding to them. With reference to knowledge workers, those organisations concerned about improving the levels of organizational commitment and retention among knowledge employees must ensure, first that merit and fairness govern the organisation's rewards. They should ensure that the jobs they do are interesting and challenging (Flood et al, 2001).

Factor III - Mentoring and Leading Expectations

In this factor, five areas have been identified. They are appreciation from the manager or Team Lead, regular feedback on one's strengths and areas of improvement, career guidance by the manager, manager's openness to one's suggestions and ideas on project, competence in the manager and manager's interest in one's personal growth. The details of expectations in all the six areas are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Mean and SD of areas within the Mentoring and Leading Expectation

Area	Mean	SD
Appreciation from manager / Lead	7.88	1.39
Regular feedback on strengths and improvement	7.84	1.31
Career guidance by manager	7.70	1.33
Manager's openness to suggested project ideas	7.38	1.43
Competent manager	7.38	1.61
Manager's interest in employee's personal growth	6.57	2.06

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are extremely keen about appreciation and recognition from managers, which they feel will be a source of motivation and encouragement. This expectation has the highest mean score of 7.88 and an SD of1.39. The employees perceive that this will be a good source of motivation, build up a good self image and provides a good input to gaining employee responsibility and efficiency at work.

Expectations on regular feedback on strengths and improvement have a mean score of 7.84 and an SD of 1.31. It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are keen about improving themselves technically and have different benefits perceived out of the feedback process. Among the reasons for this expectation

are improvement of styles, professional grooming, feedback to correct mistakes, improvement of technical knowledge and shaping up to become a highly skilled resource.

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are highly keen about getting career guidance. The respective mean and SD scores are 7.70 and 1.33. The experience of the managers is perceived to be a foundation which can help employees to learn a lot. It is felt that this would also help build a relationship with the managers. They suggest periodic reviews by the manager.

High expectation on the openness of managers to the ideas one suggests is reflected in the mean score of 7.38 and a SD of 1.43. It can be inferred

based on their responses that they perceive it to be an opportunity to test the quality of their ideas. They feel that this is a good platform for even the juniors to contribute good ideas, provided they have developed an area of expertise.

The means score of 7.38 and the SD of 1.62 also reflect a high employee expectation on the manager being more competent. The employees feel that the amount of benefit that they get is directly proportional to the experience and expertise of the manager. Competence in the manager is perceived to contribute to better assessment and also as a source of inspiration and guidance for the employees.

Regarding expectations on the manager to be interested in one's personal growth the mean score 6.57 and the SD of 2.06 reflect a moderately high expectation, with some amount of variability among respondents. It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees have two views. One view is that it will help them personally and professionally. They perceive the manager to be like a teacher who takes more interest and this will enable them to learn non-technical things like values at work. The other view is that it may not be possible in a business environment which is formal.

In the mentoring and leading expectation, nearly five areas, namely appreciation from the Team Lead and manager, regular feedback on strengths and improvement, career guidance by the manager, manager's openness to suggested project ideas and level of competence in the manager is of a high order of expectation. There is also an indication that employees have a moderately high expectation on the manager to guide/involve and be interested in their personal and professional growth. This has important implications because socialisation events, particularly initial assignments with bosses and

coworkers can have pervasive effects over time on beliefs that a worker holds about the employment relationship (Thomas & Anderson, 1998).

The most important aspect of the 'employer's' side is the role that managers play. Managers, both immediate supervisors and higher-ups play the central role in shaping a worker's Psychological Contract. The presence of a supportive immediate manager can serve to amplify or downplay messages sent by the firm's HR practices regarding the nature of the employment relationship (Takleab & Taylor, 2003). Managers report actively using the notion of the Psychological Contract in the way they reward, motivate, and otherwise signal to employees about what to expect from the firm in the future (Guest & Conway, 2002).

It is evident from this study that regular feedback from the manager is found to be of a high order of expectation. It is required due to the nature of their job; in which there is a need for continuous upgradation of knowledge and skills as was expressed by the respondents of the focus group discussion. Regular feedback is critical. Coaching role has the potential to allow for critical dialogue about how managers could make sense of an inevitable array of competing messages about the Psychological Contract. The role of job-related and personal communication in 'managing' the contract and allowing feedback from the employees is important (Green & Francis, 2005).

Factor IV - Work Environment Expectations

In this factor, there are four areas. They are expectations on flexible timings at work, fun and social events at work, short breaks at work and a close-knit culture to share personal and family concerns. The mean and SD data are presented in table 8.

Table 7: Mean and SD of areas within the Work Environment Expectation

Area	Mean	SD
Flexible timings	7.60	1.61
Fun & Social events	7.32	1.76
Short breaks during work	6.58	2.01
Close-knit culture to share personal and family concerns	4.60	2.37

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are quite keen about flexible timings. This expectation has a mean score of 7.60. The SD of 1.61 indicates some amount of variability. The view is that the end or outcome is what matters in terms of quality of work and adherence to deadlines more than the manner in which time is spent in doing work. Flexible timings can enable better fulfillment of personal commitments and better work-life balance. There is also a view that this may not be helpful, when time synchronization is required between members in a team.

It can be inferred based on their responses that the employees are very keen about fun & social events which they feel will help develop bondages between team members and also between the employee and the organisation. This expectation has a mean score of 7.32 and an SD of 1.76. Low inclination towards these is more due to personality make- up of not wanting to socialize as expressed in a qualitative response.

The mean score of 6.58 and the SD of 2.01 is indicative of a moderately high expectation on short breaks at work. There is also a high variability in responses. People who do not prefer breaks feel that it can affect the flow and momentum of work, while those who are keen about breaks, feel that this time will help them to relate to other employees, refresh and reduce physical discomfort if any with a little rest. There are grounds to believe that there are some factors in well-being that include task characteristics such as attention demands and level of physical activity and the working environment and ergonomic design and equipment usage(Sparrow & Cooper 1998).

Regarding expectations on a close knit culture to share personal and family concerns, the mean score of 4.60 and SD of 2.37, it can be inferred based on their responses that the overall expectation is not on the higher side. employees also have different view points on the same. One view is that a close knit culture will be a good relationship building input. Deep bonding, knowledge sharing and work sharing / accommodation between each other are perceived benefits. The other view is that one should differentiate between professional and personal needs. It is felt that in reality, the chances of this close-knitting may never happen and that the work place is a formal environment.

Work environment expectations are varied in their intensities. There has been a moderately high expectation for flexible timings at work and also for having fun and social events at work which is organized by the HR department. Expectations are varied regarding short breaks at work. Among the many factors measured, the one of least expectation is the need for a close-knit culture of openness and sharing of personal and family concerns. Some of the reasons given are that there is a need to segregate personal life from professional life. Bocchino et al (2003) has found through a study that employee retention is best explained because an organizational culture that emphasizes interpersonal relationship values is uniformly more attractive to employees than a culture emphasizing work task values. However, the findings based on this study seem to convey that the employees do not have a great need for bonding at the workplace and view work as impersonal.

Based on the following findings in the 28 different areas within the four factors, the Hypotheses are confirmed.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the insights gathered in the dimension-Learning expectation, we can understand that employees' use of their learning to enhance their work situation can be related to their career contracts with the organization. In addition to fulfilling their obligations of the exchange relationship, the evidence suggests that most of the sample group were career resilient self-starters, whose goals were personal development, employability in the long run and psychological growth (Hall and Moss, 1998). Career management is firmly seen as the individual knowledge worker's own responsibility based on continuous updating of a portfolio of skills. An astute employer needs to support this process in an active way in order to retain the best and most productive employees (Lepak and Snell, 1999).

Some issues in expectations of employees are that employers expect employees to change their attitudes and behaviour; they have to learn to deal with customer demands more effectively, they have to be more goal oriented and not just concentrate on their work, and they have to be willing to work on non-traditional working hours. There is a continuous need for enhancing one's skills and abilities in such a context. Flood et al (2001) state that a Psychological Contract emerges when one party believes that a promise of future returns has been made and thus an obligation has been created to provide future benefits. These promised future returns on the part of the organization engender expectations among employees. Specifically, such expectations may encompass attributes such as pay and benefits, training and skill development, interesting work and so on. The expectations on organizational initiatives on training substantiate these claims.

Kalra's (1997) conception of the need for a paradigmatic shift in philosophy from HRM to HPM (Human potential management), seems to be relevant in today's scenario where the focus has to be on an integrative and continuous process of developing employee's capabilities. On a similar note, this study has been able to infer clearly that learning and development and gearing towards career growth through opportunities in projects (work) is of utmost importance to them. Knowledge transfer is likely to be mediated by employee's perceptions of the Psychological Contract, including organizational justice (Wooten & Cobb, 1999), fairness and trust in management (Guest, 1998) and the extent to which promises on the career development 'deal' has been delivered through the organization (Tennant, 1999).

Freese and Schalk (1996) have referred to elements like job content included as challenging work, opportunities for personal development, opportunities for promotion, social aspects, being part of a team, appreciation for one's work, HRM policies, clarity of rules, absenteeism guidance as well as rewards & bonuses. The results of their study imply that if the Psychological Contract of an employee has only

been partially fulfilled, commitment to work & the organisation and identification with the organization is lower and the intention to leave is greater. Employees emphasise fundamental hygiene factors while organizations stress more relational factors. (Her riot, Manning & Kidd, 1997).There is evidence that if attention is limited to employee perceptions, then some clear' contractual stances' emerge that have ramifications for the design of HRM policies and practices (Sparrow, 1996). The series of distinctive practices contractual stances towards HRM include the 'frustrated mobile', 'still ambitious', 'passive flexible', 'guidance seekers', 'buy me outers', 'just pay me more', and 'don't push me too fast'. These reflect some of the expectations of employees in today's IT context as seen from the study.

Pate et al (2000) had proposed and confirmed a hypothesis that the degree and type of investment in HRD policies and practices will lead to a the delivery of a 'career' development deal and a perception of fairness and trust among employees and which has positive outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to remain. Investing in training that could contribute to the growth of the employees can pay rich dividends. This is based on the understanding that employees are very keen towards soft skills training as much as technical training. Employees tend to take the socio-emotional aspects of the Psychological Contract very seriously (Shore & Barksdale, 1998).

The discrepancies between perceived importance and perceived fulfillment of Psychological Contract obligations are positively related to intention to leave the organisation and negatively related to job satisfaction (Lester et al, 2002). In order to enhance their ability to fulfill Psychological Contract obligations by targeting highly valued Psychological Contract areas in their job previews, information should be gathered during recruitment on the employee's most valued outcomes, early in the process, it would then be able to specifically address that in the employment relationship, as a retention strategy. They were able to identify that the larger discrepancies in terms of fulfillment of

expectations focused more on intrinsic outcomes and relational issues implying that supervisors and other organisational representatives need to be cognizant of and responsive to employee's desire for things such as meaningful work, recognition, creative freedom and opportunities for personal growth. Open and honest communication as well as a competent management also affects employee experience and satisfaction in the organisation. This study has been able to substantiate these findings on the expectations of the employees on the mentoring and leading factor.

Morrison & Robinson, (1997) have proposed that a high quality social exchange relationship between employee and the organization will diminish the likelihood that the employee will perceive Psychological Contract violation. This observation substantiates the importance of the factor of mentoring and leading as a critical factor as evolved in the study. The quality of relationship, the usefulness of the feedback and the support offered will play a role in determining whether the expectations in this direction are met, and therefore, whether the Psychological Contract is balanced. This feedback will help in minimising the self-serving bias that may cause employees to believe that the organization alone is responsible for violations. When expectations are fulfilled, they result in increased commitment and intent to remain with the organization (Wanous et al, 1992).

The components that were considered to test the violations of Psychological Contract in a study by Bocchino (2003) were high pay, promotion, training and regular feedback. This is confirmed through this study. An employee's perception of promises is shaped by organizational actors, such as coworkers and supervisors (Rousseau & Greller, 1994). This social influence, in turn, causes an employee's perception of promises to be aligned with those of others, thereby creating a shared Psychological Contract that acts as a common denominator to be used in fulfillment evaluation (Ho, 2005). These observations substantiate the factors of team- supported learning expectations as well as mentoring leading expectations of the employees, a critical

factor identified in this study.

Flood et al (2001) have stated that with reference to knowledge workers that the perceived fairness of an organisations' reward and recognition practices plays a very critical role in encouraging employees to part with the value-creating knowledge, which builds organisational advantage. The employee responsibilities encouraged under this regime are to be entrepreneurial and innovative, to provide both product and process innovations to add value and reduce costs. Contractually the emphasis in this emergent contract will b· individual-level negotiations between the knowledge worker and employer.

After employees are hired, the organization must provide frequent communication and clarification regarding obligations and expectations. The organizational agents can focus on giving clear feedback of employees whom they believe are failing to uphold their part of the Psychological Contract obligation (Bocchino, Hartman & Foley, 2003). The Psychological Contract is a product of a complex web of exchanges between worker and employer, with the latter represented by several parties at the same time. Many employees simply have no clue on how many different contract makers in the organization shape the beliefs that their workers hold (Rousseau, 2004). Identifying expectations is the first step. Understanding dissonant messages passed over by the different contract makers could be another. The findings have been able to throw some light on the dimensions of expectations with specific reference to an IT organisation.

Conclusions

Four significant factors evolve in employee expectations. The strongest one is expectations on learning followed by expectations on work content in projects in the IT context. The third strongest factor is the expectation on mentoring and leading and the last one is expectation on the work environment. The organisation can take this into account while prioritising its efforts on fulfilling these expectations.

The limitation of this study is that the findings are

based on one case site only. They are strongly indicative, but not yet conclusive. Further research needs to be taken up to validate the same.

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