Contextualizing psychological contracts research: a multi-sample study of shared individual psychological contract fulfilment

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Research on psychological contracts has made significant contributions to theoretically advancing our understanding of the employee-employer exchange relationship and its implications for organizational practice. However, the predominant emphasis of this empirical research has been on the individual level of analysis and in the process does not give sufficient attention to contextual influences. Teams have become a common feature in organizations today and provide a proximal context through which to understand how teams affect individuals? evaluation of their psychological contract. Based on the macrosociological perspective of social exchange theory as well as theories on the role of social influence in psychological contract evaluations, we examine how shared individual psychological contract fulfilment (PCF) shapes the relationship between individual PCF and outcomes (employee?s own contributions and contextual performance) at the individual level as well as the predictors (group POS) and consequences (average employee contributions and average contextual performance) of shared individual PCF at the team level. Our findings from three studies, representing a total sample of 995 employees and 170 teams, provide support for the study hypotheses. This paper contributes to the psychological contract literature by conceptually and empirically addressing the role of a team context (shared individual PCF) and its impact on individual- and team-level relationships.