

PERCEIVED PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT FULFILLMENT AND INDIVIDUAL AMBIDEXTERITY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

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ABSTRACT

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine, empirically the relationship between perceived psychological fulfillment (PCF), and affective commitment (AC) on individual ambidexterity (IA) in IT companies.

Design/methodology/approach – For this study, data were obtained from 180 respondents of middle level employees from IT companies of Delhi NCR region. Smart PLS was employed to analyze the data.

Findings – The paper found that psychological contract fulfillment and affective commitment emerged as significant predictors of individual ambidexterity in IT companies. It also examined how affective commitment mediates linkages between their contractual fulfillment and individual ambidexterity.

Originality/value – The results have implications for the management of product and service innovation in IT companies from both a theoretical and empirical standpoint.

Keywords – Perceived Psychological Contract Fulfillment, Affective Commitment, Individual Ambidexterity

1. INTRODUCTION:

The Indian IT sector is excelling its performance and competitive strength from many years. It has proven its capabilities by serving off-shore and on-shore clients. According to National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) report, India managed to reach at \$199 billion mark in FY 2024, which represents a year-on-year basis growth of 3.3%. Except from the significant contribution in country GDP it managed to attract a big chunk of foreign direct investment. Also, IT start-up ecosystem in India is also another attractive destination for FDI (IBEF 2024). Being a larger player in IT sector, it comes up with greater responsibility to provide high tech and novel technology at justified price to its client. This can be done when employees feel that their psychological needs are taken care of and promises made to them are fulfilled, which consequently affects their ambidextrous behavior.

A psychological contract is a collection of mutual interests between the employer and the employee (Levinson et al. 1962). These expectations can be held consciously or unconsciously, depending on the situation. A person's relationship with a company can be shaped by the HR management practices used by that business. These HR management practices help to create an atmosphere that is supposed to be favourable to meeting the expectations of the workers. The phrase "psychological contract" is used to refer to people's perceptions of their contractual terms and conditions, which might be implicit or explicit agreements about reciprocal obligations (Hopkins, 1998; Millward & Brewerton, 1999; Rousseau, 1989). Another study by (Blau, 1964) linked the transactional obligation to the economic exchange and relational obligation as a social exchange concept. Social exchange, in contrast to economic exchange, "involves ambiguous obligations, the fulfillment of which relies on faith because it cannot be enforced in the absence of a legally enforceable contract". Economic exchange views assert that transactions between parties are independent phenomena that are neither long- standing nor persistent, while social exchange beliefs place a greater emphasis on reciprocity between parties.

Ambidextrous individuals set themselves apart from less ambidextrous individuals by pursuing exploitation and exploration at the same time, despite learning challenges, boosting their chances of survival and prosperity. The study further clarified how ambidextrous individuals facilitate firm survival and success more specifically than previous works by highlighting the function of learning obstacles. Recent empirical evidence supports this view,

demonstrating that individual learning ambidexterity is positively related to job performance in service organizations, even under varying organizational structures (Ceptureanu et al., 2025). Studies focusing on employee ambidexterity also show that the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation, when coupled with supportive organizational conditions, enhances competitive advantage and performance outcomes (Zhang, 2025).

Numerous angles can be used to operationalize psychological contracts. In this context the third aspect another type of psychological contract referred to ‘balance contract’, which includes both transactional and relational components (Rousseau, 2000). Further, numerous studies (Rousseau, 1990; Rousseau & McClean Parks, 1993) explained the two types of the employment obligation: transactional obligation concern about the monetary payment and career advancement an employee receive and relational obligation about the job security for his loyalty and length of employment with the organisation. PCF aspect is a multidimensional aspect and measured by different author such as pay, supervisor support, fair policies, organisational and resource support etc. It is also treated as two-way framework from the point of view of employer and employee (Aggarwal & Bhargava, 2000; Irfan Ahmed Lashari, Dr. Mohmammad Saleh Memon, 2017).

Organizational commitment (OC) refers to the psychological attachment that employees develop toward their employing organization (Chen et al., 2002). Prior research consistently demonstrates that organizational commitment is positively associated with favorable work outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation, and employee performance, while being negatively related to undesirable outcomes including absenteeism and employee turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Scholars have conceptualized organizational commitment from multiple perspectives. Allen and Meyer (1990) defined organizational commitment in terms of three distinct components—*affective*, *continuance*, and *normative* commitment—representing emotional attachment, perceived costs of leaving, and felt obligation to remain with the organization, respectively.

Earlier studies by (Mowday et al., 1982; Paul et al., 1974) conceptualized organizational commitment as the extent to which employees accept organizational goals and values, are willing to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization, and desire to maintain membership within it. In contrast, (C. O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986) proposed a multidimensional view of commitment consisting of *compliance*, *identification*, and *internalization*, emphasizing the psychological mechanisms through which individuals align themselves with organizational values. Further, (Allen, Natalie J., 1990) provided empirical evidence supporting the theoretical and empirical distinctiveness of *affective*, *continuance*, and *normative* commitment as separate attitudinal components. Employees' cognitive and emotional attachment to the organization is closely linked to both psychological contracts and *affective* commitment. Drawing on social exchange theory, economic and socio-emotional exchanges between employees and organizations foster psychological bonds that shape employee attitudes and behaviors. These reciprocal exchanges are considered precursors to higher levels of *affective* commitment, as employees respond to perceived organizational support and fulfillment of obligations with increased emotional attachment and loyalty (Inam Ul Haq, 2011).

The present study focuses on the IT sector, one of the fastest-growing industries that significantly contributes to both revenue generation and employment creation in developing economies. A major challenge in this sector lies in effectively managing employees while ensuring the proactive, efficient, and timely completion of tasks. In a developing country context, continuously exploring new avenues while optimally utilizing available resources to deliver high-end services remains particularly demanding (Tiwari & Herstatt, 2012). An organization's ability to capitalize on its existing competencies (exploitation) while simultaneously searching for new opportunities (exploration) reflects its learning capability (March, 1991). Accordingly, an ambidextrous organization is defined as one that can effectively explore new opportunities while exploiting existing processes and systems in the creation of products and services (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Raisch et al., 2009).

Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) conceptualize ambidexterity from a contextual perspective, emphasizing the simultaneous pursuit of exploration and exploitation within the organizational environment. However, much of the extant literature has primarily focused on organizational-level antecedents and contexts. In contrast, studies by Bonesso et al. (2014) and Raisch et al. (2009) demonstrate that individual-level traits and characteristics play a crucial role in the emergence of organizational ambidexterity. Recent literature reviews have further emphasized the need for multilevel research on ambidexterity, highlighting that its micro-foundations remain underexplored. These studies underscore the importance of individual preferences, capabilities, and psychological attributes in shaping exploratory and exploitative behaviors at work.

Addressing this gap, the current study examines psychological contract fulfillment as an antecedent of employees' ambidextrous behavior. Prior research suggests that incorporating mediating or moderating variables can enhance understanding of the relationship between psychological contracts and ambidextrous behavior (Karani et al., 2022). Psychological contracts encompass the perceived promises and obligations between organizations and employees, particularly those formed during recruitment and early employment stages. While previous studies have examined various dimensions of the psychological contract, only a limited number have investigated its direct influence on employees' ambidextrous behavior. Given the volatile and dynamic nature of the IT sector, employee ambidexterity becomes especially critical for sustaining competitiveness and organizational success.

The present study is based on the theoretical aspects of social exchange theory. (Blau, 1964) believed that social exchange is a crucial aspect of social existence and that it underpinned both group and interpersonal relationships. It paid particular attention to the mutual exchange of extrinsic benefits, forms of affiliation, and emerging social structures that this type of social contact produced. Social exchange is the exchange of at least two people's activities, whether they are tangible or intangible, more or less rewarding or expensive (Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958). (Gouldner, 1960; Perugini & Gallucci, 2001) denotes social exchange a reciprocal relationship; if something is given; there is an implicit promise to give it back in kind.

PCF and IA:

Organizations must be ambidextrous if they want to survive in the turbulent environment. Organizations must investigate new products and services while utilizing their current resources (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996). (Zhang et al., 2019) define individual ambidexterity as a set of ambidextrous behaviours at the individual level. (C. A. O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008) contended that ambidexterity may necessitate that exploitation and exploration be pursued simultaneously, with separate subunits, business models, and distinct alignments for each, given the complexity. In this conception, ambidexterity refers to multiple internal-aligned competencies, systems and processes in addition to distinct structural modules for exploration and exploitation. Previous studies have focus on ambidexterity but more of trough the HR practices. These studies stress on the organisational aspect which is in the form of macro analysis and had no discussion on the association between PCF and IA (Karani et al., 2022). Moreover, (Garaus et al., 2015; Patel et al., 2013) mentioned the ability of work practices to transform exploratory and exploitative behaviours into innovative work behaviour. Therefore, it can be demonstrated that ambidextrous conduct can be attained on an individual level when the business is successful in keeping its promises. Therefore, we imply that employees' perceptions of how work practices, namely their PC fulfillment, can foster ambidextrous behaviour at a personal level.

H1: There is a significant relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and individual ambidexterity.

PCF and AC:

Employees' perceptions of what their employers owe them and what they owe their employers in return make up psychological contracts (Lambert et al., 2003). (Allen, Natalie J., 1990) relate affective commitment with the employee's emotional attachment with the organisation/employer. The degree to which people's expectations of the organisation are matched by their actual experiences may have an impact on their perceptions. Additionally, (Robinson et al., 1994) explain psychological contract as an obligation, which is perceived as reciprocal in nature. This reciprocity may vary as the time of employment change. Positive association between psychological contracts and organisational commitment has been established in earlier research work (Bunderson, 2001; Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006). (Millward & Hopkins, 1998) associates relational contract positively with the organisational commitment. (Robinson et al., 1994) relate relational contract more of socio-emotional component like commitment and trust between employer and employee. Transactional contracts are of monetary nature and have a short-term orientation (Raja et al., 2004; Rousseau, 1990). Further, a study by (Rousseau, 1990) asserts that people who have transactional psychological contracts are more likely to have highly competitive pay and little organisational commitment. Therefore, the organisational commitment and psychological contract have a significant relationship (Millward & Hopkins, 1998; Raja et al., 2004).

H2: There is a significant relationship between PCF and AC.

AC and IA:

In ambidextrous organizations, human resource practices significantly influence organisational as well as individual ambidexterity (Caniëls & Veld, 2019; Fu et al., 2015). (Caniëls & Veld, 2019; Datta et al., 2005; Fu et al., 2015) A system of HR practices known as high Performance work system is intended to improve employees' competencies, commitment, and efficiency so that they become a source of long-term competitive advantage. Organizations with high commitment based human resources practices levels may encourage staff to perform at their best. Employees are likely to reciprocate by engaging in more "extra-role behaviours" if firms use CBHRP to demonstrate their commitment to their workforce (Farrukh et al., 2020). (Luo et al., 2021; van den Hooff & de Leeuw van Weenen, 2004) also explain this concept through the commitment and knowledge sharing behavior of the employee. Moreover, (Caniëls & Veld, 2019; Ng et al., 2010) examine the concept of commitment and innovative work behaviour through the psychological contract breach and high-performance work system. (Nayak et al., 2022) explain that commitment based human resources practices can foster an atmosphere where workers who are chosen, paid, evaluated, rewarded, benefited, trained, and encouraged to work with a commitment mindset to the company will exhibit better ambidexterity attributes at individual level.

H3: There is a significant relationship between AC and IA.

PCF, AC and IA:

There is no such study which talks about the direct relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and individual ambidexterity through the mediation of affective commitment. Various studied have work on these in indirect manner. A study conducted by (Ng et al., 2010) demonstrate that violations of psychological contracts have an impact on people's attitudes both immediately and long-term. That is, as time goes on, perceptions of

psychological contract violations are linked to deterioration in job attitudes (AC). Employees can only reduce their participation at work like innovation-related behaviors following the violation of psychological contracts. (Jørgensen & Becker, 2017) reveal the importance of Commitment based human resources practices, which may be created to improve employees' capacity for both exploration and exploitation. In addition, (Nayak et al., 2022) demonstrate that in order to achieve ambidexterity and flow experience at the employee level, organisational processes must include HR strategies including recruitment and selection, salary and benefits, incentive programmes, and learning and development. In this study we will try to find out the relationship between PCF and IA through the mediation of AC which is the gap of previous study (Karani et al., 2022).

H4: There is a significant relationship between PCF and IA through the mediation of AC.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Descriptive cum exploratory research design has been opted for this study. The study has been conducted in IT industry because this sector is more prone to rapid change every now and then. For this purpose, more autonomy and novel technology are required to sustain in the market in this sector. The target population for the study has been 5 (TCS, Infosys, HCL Ltd., Wipro, Tech Mahindra etc.) IT companies in the northern India region.

The companies have been selected on the basis of their latest market capitalization. Multi stage sampling technique has been used for selection of the sample. In stage one, major states have been selected as an IT hub as per software technology parks in India report in Northern India. The geographical scope of this study is limited to Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh and Delhi. Lastly, data has been collected from middle level employees having an experience of at least one year in abovementioned sector.

A self-reported questionnaire has been used for the purpose of data collection. The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section-A included items of psychological contract fulfillment (Transactional psychological contract fulfillment and Relational psychological contract fulfillment). Section-B comprises affective commitment. Section C and D of the questionnaire comprised of Individual ambidexterity (Exploration and exploitation) and demographics (age, gender, education, experience and location of the company) respectively.

Measures

PCF measured by using (Hopkins, 1998) original scale further modified by (Gupta et al., 2016) - 17 item scale.

Measurement of **AC** using (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2018) scale which is modified version of (Rhoades et al., 2001) a 4-item scale including “I am proud to work for the company”, “I feel committed to the company” etc.

IA measured through (Tom J. M. Mom, 2007) 11 items. Some of these items were “Searching for new possibilities with respect to services, activities or processes”, “Activities of which a lot of experience has been accumulated by yourself”, “Activities which serve existing (internal) customers with existing services or products” and so on.

Sampling profile

The sample consist the majority of males (80.83%) and female population is only 19.17% of the sample size. Taking the age of the respondents into consideration the majority falls between the age group of 26 – 35 years, which is about 40% of the sample. Furthermore, the maximum experience by respondents is between 10-14 years followed by 6-9 years in this profession.

Table 1: Sample profile

Characteristics	Frequency (180)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	97	80.83%
Female	23	19.17%
Age		
Below 25 Years	21	17.5%
26-35 Years	48	40%
36-45 Years	37	30.83%
46-55 Years	12	10%
Above 55 Years	2	1.67%

Experience		
Below 5 years	8	6.67%
6-9 years	37	30.83%
10-14 years	45	37.5%
15-19 years	18	15%

Above 20 years	12	10%
Education		
Graduation	55	45.83%
Masters	47	39.17%
Professional Degree	18	15%

Source: Author's own work

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The test the result of Hypotheses namely H1, H2 and H3 are done through the Smart PLS using path coefficient of construct. Moreover, to check the mediation effect of the AC between PCF and IA, Bootstrapping is followed in the Smart PLS.

The concept of the bootstrapping suggested by the Joseph F. Hair - the primary software used in partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) - this practical guide provides concise instructions on how to use this evolving statistical technique to conduct research and obtain solutions. The reliability of the data is measured through Cronbach Alpha. To analyse data and to test hypotheses, structural equation modelling - Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was used.

Measurement Model

The evaluation of the measurement model in PLS – SEM was based on reliability (Cronbach alpha and RHO), construct reliability, composite reliability and discriminant validity. This section of the paper presents the evaluation of the measurement model. Cronbach alpha coefficient presents the consistency of the items measured. Another measure of the internal consistency called composite reliability was also evaluated as some researcher argues that Cronbach alpha might not be a good measure of reliability. All the values of items were within the cut off criteria (≥ 0.7) for composite reliability. Similarly, Cronbach alpha was also lying within prescribed limits above 0.7. Average variance expected is a measure to assess the convergent validity of a reflective scale and must be above the cut off limit of 0.5. Discriminant validity was assessed with HTMT ratio of the correlation. The threshold value of 0.85 was achieved.

Hence, the factor loading were meeting the criteria and all items indicates a factor loading of above 0.6.

Table 2 presents all the values of Cronbach alpha, composite reliability, average variance expected and factor loading.

Table 2: Loadings, Reliability & Validity

Construct and items	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE	Factor Loadings
PCF	0.956	0.957	0.56	
PCF1				0.845
PCF2				0.758
PCF3				0.769
PCF4				0.725
PCF5				0.747
PCF6				0.733
PCF7				0.762
PCF8				0.794
PCF9				0.748
PCF10				0.746
PCF11				0.74
PCF12				0.693
PCF13				0.738
PCF14				0.735
PCF15				0.703
PCF16				0.75
PCF17				0.728
AC	0.789	0.79	0.52	
AC1				0.723
AC2				0.665
AC3				0.739
AC4				0.659
IA	0.926	0.927	0.532	

IA1				0.73
IA2				0.729
IA3				0.762
IA4				0.76
IA5				0.707
IA6				0.743
IA7				0.669
IA8				0.703
IA9				0.727
IA10				0.743
IA11				0.743

Source: Author's own work

Structural Model

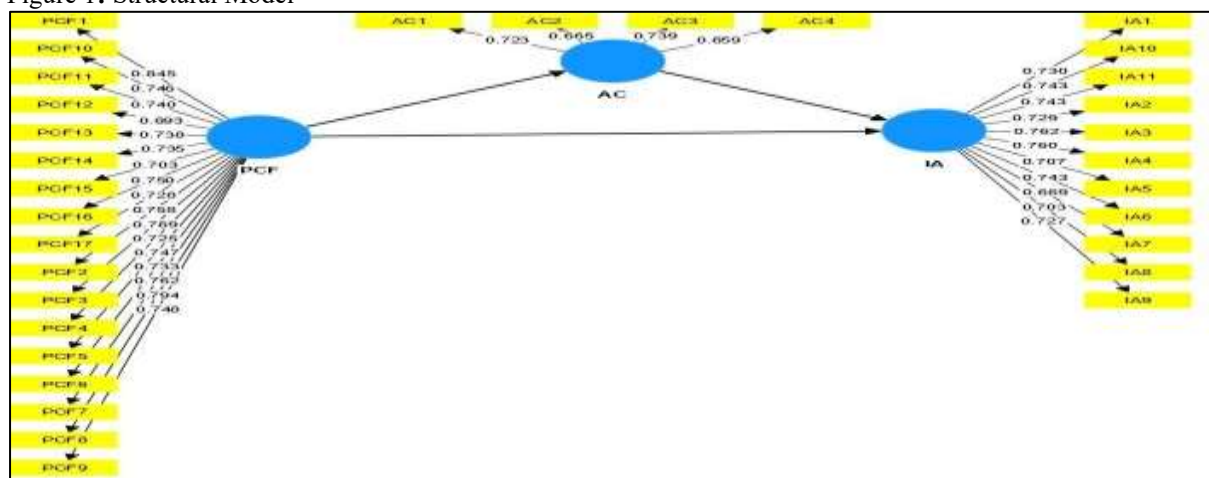
The result of the structure model was used to analyses the path of the relationship between the constructs. For this purpose, R^2 values of endogenous variables were calculated by running the bootstrapping in PLS-SEM. R^2 denotes the proportion of variation in the dependent variable predicted from independent variable. R^2 values of 0.75 and above indicate a substantial proportion of variance explained. In this study, these values were 0.921 and 0.950 for AC and IA respectively.

Table 3: R^2 for the construct AC and IA

	R-square	R-square adjusted
AC	0.921	0.922
IA	0.950	0.951

Source: Result of PLS Algorithm with Smart PLS.

Figure 1: Structural Model



Source: Smart PLS output Hypothesis Testing

Four different hypotheses in all were developed in order to perform this investigation. Analysis of the formulated associations' statistical significance was done using the structural model's bootstrapping results.

The path coefficient (β), standard deviation, t values, and p values were used to do this. H1: There is a considerable connection between PCF and IA. The findings showed that there is a significant association ($O=0.746$, p value

$=0.000$). Hence, **H1 was accepted**. The second hypothesis examined the importance of the connection between PCF and AC. It was supported with O value 1.071 and P value 0.00. Therefore, **H2 was accepted**. According to

the third hypothesis, there is a significant association between AC and IA ($O = .266$ & $p \text{ value} = 0.008$). Hence, **H3 was accepted**. The findings of the hypothesis testing are shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Hypothesis Testing Results

PCF -> AC	1.071	1.076	0.032	33.362	0.000	Supported
PCF -> IA	0.746	0.731	0.104	7.191	0.000	Supported
Hypothesized Relations	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values	Results
AC -> IA	0.266	0.282	0.101	2.64	0.008	Supported

Source: Bootstrapping with Smart PLS.

Mediation Analysis:

Furthermore, to test the mediation effect of AC on the relationship between PCF and IA again bootstrapping was run by following the approach of Joseph F. Hair. In the first step the indirect effect was checked and found significant ($O = 0.285$, $STDEV = 0.104$, $T \text{ statistics} = 2.732$ & $p \text{ value} = 0.006$). As per hair's approach it indicates the partial mediation results. Hence, **H4 was accepted**. Table 5; represent the mediating effect of AC on PCF and IA.

Table 5: Mediating effect of AC on PCF & IA

Hypothesized Relations	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ($ O/STDEV $)	P values	Result
PCF -> IA	0.285	0.302	0.104	2.732	0.006	Supported

Source: Bootstrapping with Smart PLS

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The social exchange theory (SET) and organisation support theory (OST) are the foundations of the current investigation. Since PCF is based on SET, it implies that there is a reciprocal relationship; if anything is given, there is an implicit promise to give it back in return. According to the OST theory, employees have seen how much their employers regard their contributions and show them care and support. Our findings demonstrated the consistency with the earlier research. First, an analysis of the relationship between PCF and IA revealed a substantial association. (Karani et al., 2022) also discussed how psychological contract fulfillment might change an employee's behaviour to one that is ambidextrous at work. According to the results of the current study, a sense of belonging that results from the completion of PC also promotes individual ambidextrous behaviour. Therefore, we suggest that the HR manager needs to make sure that the company appreciates the work that its employees do. This can be accomplished by giving dedicated workers a fair chance to advance in their positions, making them feel integral to the team, and clearly outlining their career path within the company.

Second, an analysis of the relationship between PCF and AC revealed a favourable result. Additionally, earlier studies also linked affective commitment to a worker's emotional ties to their company or organisation. Earlier research also concluded the same association between psychological contract fulfillment and affective commitment (Millward & Hopkins, 1998; Rousseau, 1990). Therefore, organisation should consider that people's perceptions may be influenced by how well their expectations of the organisation match their actual experiences. On the fulfillment of the emotional and monetary expectations employee will feel more connected to organisation. Thirdly, the association between affective commitment and individual ambidexterity have significant relationship. Organisational and personal ambidexterity are greatly influenced by human resource management practices. If companies utilize commitment based human resource practices to show their commitment to their personnel, employees are likely to respond by engaging in more ambidextrous behaviours. Hence, we can imply that high performance work system should focus on increasing employees' commitment and productivity so they can contribute to the organization's long-term competitive advantage.

Lastly, the link between variables highlights the influence of PCF and IA, and AC is a crucial element in accomplishing the same. The statistical analysis of the study indicates that PCF has an impact on employees' ambidextrous behaviour at work. The indirect effect of mediating increases affective commitment, which enhances individual ambidexterity at work. Therefore, managers should concentrate on tasks that fall clearly in line with corporate policy and evaluate several possibilities for services, activities, and procedures. The

management must be clear on how to carry out tasks and adjust to daily routines. The accomplishment of short-term goals can serve as the primary emphasis for reaching organisational goals.

6. Limitations and future research:

The current study on psychological contract fulfillment and individual ambidexterity has significant limitations that should be recognized notwithstanding its merits. First, the study used a cross-sectional research approach, which limits the capacity to analyze changes in associations over time or make causal judgments. Deeper understanding of the dynamic nature of psychological contract fulfillment and its long-term effects on individual ambidexterity would be possible through future study using a longitudinal methodology. Second, the study's sample was limited to IT industry workers, which restricts the findings' applicability to the larger service sector. Future research may incorporate workers from a variety of service industries, including banking, healthcare, education, and hospitality, to improve external validity. Furthermore, subsequent research could extend the proposed model by incorporating additional relevant variables—such as leadership styles, organizational culture, job crafting, or employee well-being—to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms influencing individual ambidexterity. Such extensions would not only strengthen the theoretical framework but also provide richer practical implications for organizations.

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