Social Systems & Organizational Culture

by

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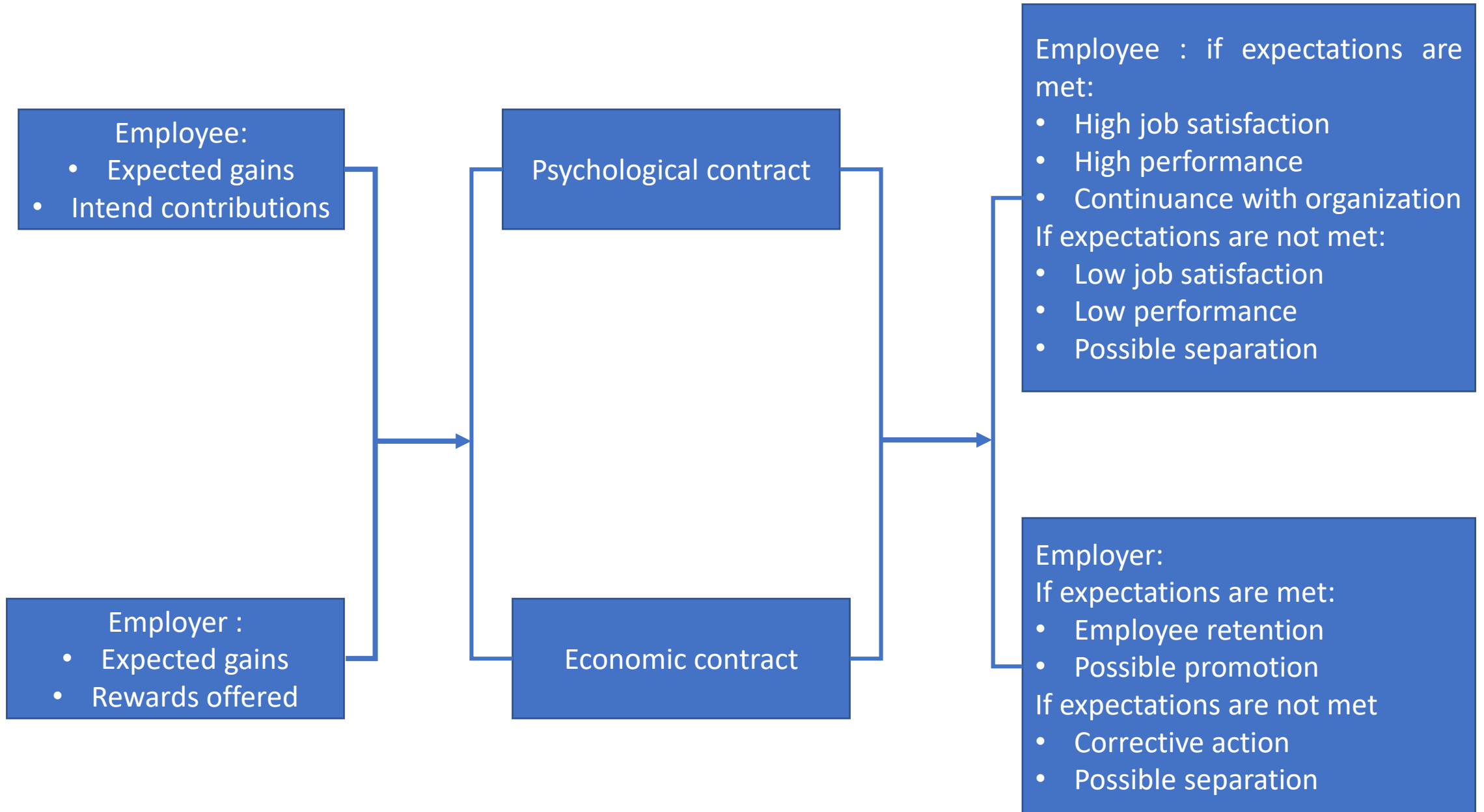**Dept. of Comp. Appl.**

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Understanding a Social System

- Social System is a complex set of human relationships interacting in many ways. Possible interactions are as limitless as the stars in the universe.

- Within a single organization , the social system includes all the people in it and their relationships to one another and to the outside world.

- Two points stand out in the complex interactions among people in a social system.

(i) The behaviour of any one member can have an impact, directly or indirectly, on the behaviour of any other. Although the impacts may be large or small, all parts of a system are mutually interdependent.

(ii) The second point revolves around a system's boundaries. Any social system engages in exchanges with its environment, receiving input from it and providing output to it.

- Social systems are, open systems that interact with their surroundings. Global trade and international marketplaces expand the need for organizations to anticipate and react to changes in their competitive environment.

- **Social Equilibrium** : A system is said to be in social equilibrium when its interdependent parts are in dynamic working balance. Equilibrium is a dynamic concept. Despite constant change and movement in every organization, the system's working balance can still be retained.

- When minor changes occur in a social system, they are absorbed by adjustments within the system and equilibrium is regained.

- A single significant change or a series of smaller but rapid changes throw an organization out of balance, seriously reducing its forward progress until it can reach a new equilibrium.

Functional and Dysfunctional Effects

- When an action or a change creates favourable effect such as cross-functional design teams at Ford it is called **functional effect**.

- When an action or change creates unfavourable effects, such as decline in productivity, for the system it has a **dysfunctional effect**.

- Employees also have functional and dysfunctional effects on the organization.

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┌─────────────────────────┐                                    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Employee:               │       ┌──────────────────────┐     │ Employee : if expectations are  │
│  • Expected gains       │──┐    │                      │     │ met:                            │
│  • Intend contributions │  └───►│ Psychological contract│──┐  │  • High job satisfaction        │
└─────────────────────────┘       │                      │  │  │  • High performance             │
                                  └──────────────────────┘  │  │  • Continuance with organization│
                                                            ├─►│ If expectations are not met:    │
                                                            │  │  • Low job satisfaction         │
                                                            │  │  • Low performance              │
┌─────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────┐ │  │  • Possible separation          │
│ Employer :              │──┐    │                      │ │  └─────────────────────────────────┘
│  • Expected gains       │  └───►│ Economic contract    │─┘
│  • Rewards offered      │       │                      │    ┌─────────────────────────────────┐
└─────────────────────────┘       └──────────────────────┘    │ Employer:                       │
                                                               │ If expectations are met:        │
                                                               │  • Employee retention           │
                                                               │  • Possible promotion           │
                                                               │ If expectations are not met      │
                                                               │  • Corrective action            │
                                                               │  • Possible separation          │
                                                               └─────────────────────────────────┘
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Employee:
- Expected gains
- Intend contributions

Employer :
- Expected gains
- Rewards offered

Psychological contract

Economic contract

Employee : if expectations are met:
- High job satisfaction
- High performance
- Continuance with organization

If expectations are not met:
- Low job satisfaction
- Low performance
- Possible separation

Employer:

If expectations are met:
- Employee retention
- Possible promotion

If expectations are not met
- Corrective action
- Possible separation

- When employees join an organization, they make an unwritten psychological contract with it, although often they are not conscious of doing so.

- The psychological contract defines the conditions of each employee's psychological involvement- both contributions and expectations- with the social system.

- Employees agree to give a certain amount of loyalty, creativity, and extra effort, but in return they expect more than economic rewarding from the system. They seek job security, fair treatment, rewarding relationships with co-workers, and organizational support in fulfilling their development expectations.

- The psychological contract is continually examined and often revised as new needs emerge and new rewards become available.

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- **Social Culture** : Whenever people act in accordance with the expectations of others, their behaviour is social. The environment of human-created beliefs, customs, knowledge, and practice is social culture.

- Social cultures can have dramatic effects on behaviour at work. Some of the ways in which cultures differ include patterns of decision making, respect for authority, treatment of females, and accepted leadership styles. Knowledge of social culture is especially important.

- **Cultural diversity**: Employees in an organization are divided into subgroups of various kinds. Formation of group is based on two broad set of **conditions**: **(i) Job-related differences and similarities (ii) non-Job related conditions**. Problem may arise due to the cultural diversity between **discrimination** and **prejudice**. Discrimination is generally exhibited as an action, whereas prejudice is an attitude. If the employers adapt the cultural diversity, then both individual and group performance will improve.

- **Social Cultural Values**: **Work ethic**- many people view work as very important and as a desirable goal in life. They tend to like work and derive satisfaction from it. Research on work ethic derive two **conclusions**:

- (i) the proportion of employees with a strong work ethic varies sharply among sample groups. Differences depend on factors such as personal background, type of work performed, and geographical location.

- (ii) The general level of the work ethic has declined gradually over many decades. The decline is due to the different attitudes between younger and older workers.

- **Social Responsibility** : is the recognition that organizations have significant influence on the social system and that this influence must be properly considered and balanced in all organizational actions.

ROLE

- **Role** is the pattern of actions expected of a person in activities involving others. Role reflects a person's position in the social system, with its accompanying rights and obligations, power and responsibility.

- A person has roles both on the job and away from it. One person performs the occupational role of worker, the family role of parent, the social role of club president, and many others. In those various roles, a person is both buyer and seller, supervisor and subordinate, and giver and seeker of advice.

- **Role Perceptions** : is how they think they are supposed to act in their own roles and how others should act in their roles. For a manager, the three roles are: (a) Manager's role perception for the job being performed (b) Manager's role perception for the employee being contacted (c) Manager's role perception as seen by the employee.

- **Mentors** : A mentor is a role model who guides another employee by sharing valuable advice on roles to play and behaviours to avoid.

- Mentors teach, advise, coach, support, encourage, act as sounding boards, and sponsor their proteges so as to expedite their career progress.

- **Tips for Mentors** : 1. Identify protégé strengths, and help them build on them. 2. Foster self-discovery by asking insight-generating questions. 3. Let the protégé make decisions, for that increase ownership. 4. Choose your words carefully; avoid being directive or judgmental 5. Listen; watch from a distance, intervene only when necessary. 6. Don't place yourself on a pedestal; avoid sounding like an expert. 7. Be real; be authentic; be supportive; eliminate signs of power. 8. Be open to alternative views and choices; help the protégé refine them.

- **Role Conflict** : When others have different perceptions or expectations of a person's role, that person tends to experience role conflict. Such conflict makes it difficult to meet one set of expectations without rejecting another.

- **Role ambiguity** : When roles are inadequately defined or are substantially unknown, role ambiguity exists, because people are not sure how they should act in situations of this type.

- When Role Conflict and Role ambiguity exist, job satisfaction and organizational commitment will likely decline.

- A better understanding of roles helps people know what others expect of them and how they should act.

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