

Psychological Contracts and Employment Relationships (A Review Paper)

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ABSTRACT

A psychological contract comprises of a personal viewpoint about mutual commitments in employment relationships. Unlike a traditional service contract, the psychological contract remains unspoken in the employment relationship between employer and the employees. Employees anticipate, for example, working in a secure and clean environment; to work with qualified and regimented co-workers and to be appreciated for their good work, free from harassment etc. Employers, on the contrary, expect staff to be careful and dedicated; to be trustworthy; and to maintain or enhance the organizational image etc. This shady nature and often conflicting nature of psychological contract can often harm the health of employment relationship. This paper explores the nature of psychological contracts and their significance within the domain of employment relationships. The paper first reviews the general theory of psychological contract, its types and factors governing them. Next, a theoretical examining the research contributions of scholars who have contributed to the literature is being carried out. Finally, the paper thoroughly and critically analyzes the effects of breach or non-conformity of psychological contracts. Psychological contract plays a key role in manipulating workers job related commitment. It must be highlighted that effective observation, agreement and execution of psychological contracts could add to increased levels of workers commitment. Considering the literature studied, it becomes extremely important for the management to be responsive of, and to some degree control, the psychological contracts that the employees may hold. Offering the aggrieved employees a practical psychological contract diminishes the probability that the workforce will see the agreement as void. Increased levels of work independence is also found to reduce incidents of psychological contract breaches.

INTRODUCTION

A psychological contract is the unspoken part of employment relationship. It embodies a chain of shared prospects and requirements on part of the employer and the employee. According to the theory of social exchange, the relationship between an employer and employee in provisions of mutual talents exists as a shared desire to incorporate faith, dedication, and earnings (Mullins 2002). Therefore, psychological contract is central in selecting, defining and

explaining considerations of this social trade relationship. Service agreements in either social or economic language are primarily psychological and intrinsically personal, including the foundation of the employment relationship (Millward and Brewerton 1999).

The specifics of the commitments and demands of all parties are tricky to classify, because they are modified periodically (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001) and may differ from person to person and from organization to organization. One important feature of psychological contract is that exists between one employee and the organization and between all the employees and the organization (Huczynski & Buchanan 2001). The provisions and expectations should be fulfilled within the relation; or else the contract will start to break down. This distrust manifest in unexpected employee' departure or mass firings on the organizational level. This results in adverse conditions for both the organization and the employees. According to Thomas & Au, Ravlin (2003), any of the psychological contract affects both the sides. From the employees' perspective, it is the loss of trust in the corporate identity and the economic hardships. For the organization, the loss of talented and dedicated employees is often the worst possible scenario. Psychological contract has long been understood as an important part of a contractual obligation. Functionally, psychological contracts achieve three effects. Firstly, they diminish insecurity. As indicated by Raja, Johns & Ntalianis (2004), the mere presence of a contract (whether perfect or not) boosts the employee's thoughts of security and guarantees a conducive workplace environment. Secondly, psychological contracts dictate performance at a given task. The employee will achieve the performance for which they consider themselves duty-bound to achieve without having to be continuously supervised by a supervisor. Lastly, a psychological contract offers a good judgment for management in that the person under contract consider themselves "well settled" under the terms of the contract (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

TWO TYPES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS: TRANSACTIONAL AND RELATIONAL

Despite the distinctive nature of the psychological contract, it is understood that employees and employers have one of two general types of contracts; Transactional and Relational. Transactional contracts are short-term in character, recognition or intent and in general based on especially extrinsic relations. The employee may desire to carry out only the job sketched out in the attached job description for a salary or remuneration mentioned in the contract (Huczynski & Buchanan 2001). In the transactional agreement, the short duration means that the relations between the parties are short lived. For example, one anticipates to be remunerated in a specific time frame after the job is done; in most companies, salaries are dispersed weekly or monthly (Restubog, Bordia & Bordia 2009). Similarly, workforce with the transactional agreement frequently does not put forward any effort that is unlikely to be instantaneous or substantially satisfied. In addition, instant reciprocity is preferred by both the parties (employees and the employers) under transactional psychological contracts.

Relational contracts are long-standing, regularly reviewed and very individual contracts that involve such expectations such as devotion and loyalty from the worker in return for job safety and security offered by the organization (Mullins, 2002). Because of the long-term prospect of the relational psychological contract, the implications of the relations between employee and employer may not be visible instantaneously. For example, a member of staff may keep late hours to complete an essential business goal, not looking forward to be "reimbursed" for their work instantly. In theory, the relational psychological contract is extremely elastic (Raja, Johns and Ntalianis 2004). The employee feels at ease completing any quantity of everyday workload without the anticipation of instant remuneration or appreciation. Because of this elasticity, these contracts are normally preferred by companies. The drawback of relational contract is that the employee could form unrealistically high expectations from the employer. These

expectations generally become a part of the psychological contract. According to Gilley & Gilley (2000), this usually results in a higher ratio of dissatisfaction of the permanent workforce.

One theme is common in both types of contracts. Though they are considered to be perceptual, it is essential to understand that psychological contracts are constantly reviewed by both the parties in the contract. The compensation offered is constantly evaluated against the goals assigned at both personal and organizational levels. Psychological contracts work in the same way as other undertakings or responsibilities (Sparrow & Cooper 2003). If in the judgment of all the parties involved, they are satisfied, the level of satisfaction increases proportionally. Job agreement and motivation are coupled with contract completion. Similarly, unsatisfactory or dishonored contract may have harmful outcomes. Staff who assumes that the agreement has been dishonored may display unconstructive outlook modifications in behavior, a break in work routine, turnovers, and other behavioral indicators (Chiang et al. 2012).

FACTORS GOVERNING PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

The factors governing the nature of a psychological contract include the employee's own character, aims and job experience. These individual personalities are the lenses from which people witness the purposeful information in the surroundings (Conway & Briner, 2005). In other words, what a person anticipates may be due, in large reason, to what he or she has witnessed. Thus, if somebody has ambitions of constructing a lasting relationship with a company, they may supply information in such a way so as to shape a relational psychological contract (Scott et al. 2002). Similarly, if an employee has a strictly held idea of a reasonable pay for a reasonable day's work, they might opt for a further transactional contract.

Two main areas of study are combined in the Human Resource and Organizational Behavior literature. One stream focusing on, psychological contract type, explains the type of employer-employee relationship – for example, whether it is based on concrete/tangible dealing or embedded in long term relationships. Psychological contracts are classified as either transactional or relational. A relational agreement is expected to streamline the progress of constructive individual and organizational results better than the transactional agreement (Mullins 2002). Psychological contracts made on relations have a propensity to reveal a high level of worker loyalty to the company. This judgment is in stark contrast to those employees depending on more tangible, distinct contract.

Psychological contracts are developed partially and then completed based on the feedback of both the HR department and employees (Conway & Briner, 2005). The organization's vision and mission statements, rules and regulations, and the volume and content of communication sent by superiors and peers may have a say in an employee's psychological contract. For example, executive perks such as the existence of internal career ladder might comprise embedded guarantee about the chance of promotion after an employee has undergone a certain period and has accumulated a certain skill set (Azim 2012).

Official guidelines and course of action guidebooks may sketch the circumstances for provisional service, routine work values and the infractions for which workers can be reprimanded. Last but not least, supervisors or peers may perhaps give their word and exchange a few verbal guarantees to staff that might assist in the formulation of a later agreement or the strengthening of the current one.

This development points out another development related to the topic at hand. Psychological contracts are evolving in such a way that they might become harder to administer and

organize. In the early days, businesses were willingly capable of providing job safety in exchange for trustworthiness and offer a more attractive relational contract. However, because of down scaling and stresses of short-term consequences, few guarantees for long-standing service and psychological contracts are still available (Gilley & Gilley 2000). Furthermore, in view of the devastation of managerial structure and the elimination of many levels of management, organizations can no longer assure promotions and professional growth for employees. In response to these managerial inclinations, employees have come to anticipate a lowered standard of perks and services from the organizations (Sparrow and Cooper 2003).

Employees now insist on a challenging job, growth incident, and experience that can be transferred to other companies. These needs are frequently named "employability," because they agree in principle that a worker preserves his or her abilities when a downsizing happens (Fang, Lee and Koh 2005). In such an event, the employee stands a chance to deal with the consequences of the event. In return, these employees offer hard work and originality to the company but not trustworthiness.

There is an evident theme of the development of non-traditional employment in which the employer-employee correlation is changing to a short-range (transaction-based) from a long-standing (relational-based) relationship, motivated by international business rivalry, downsizing, streamlining, and outsourcing (Sparrow and Cooper 2003). Such transformations in employment relationships probably are important factors in a choosing a side. Adding together the issue regarding the kind of contract in place, the importance of a psychological contract is decisive in an employment relationship.

BREACH OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS AND THEIR EFFECTS

A breach of the psychological contract is a perceived failure in fulfilling the commitments of the agreement and results in broken relationships. The breach of the psychological contract is a rash course of action whereby the member of staff receives a real or imagined assumption from the company which proposes that a responsibility within the deal has not been met (Raja, Johns and Ntalianis 2004). The infringement starts with the insight of a disagreement between a guaranteed result and the actual result. How the people understand the conditions of breach determines whether they think that a breach has occurred or not. Because the agreements are constantly being reshaped and continued, employees and employers make adjustments for many unintentional breaches. Confusion may be unseen or overlooked for a good reason (Mullins, 2002). However, when a breach takes a more severe form, such as a breach of undertaking or faith, the mind-set of disloyalty occurs. Such a breach of psychological contract has high costs for both the parties. The breach indicates a disparity in the accepted procedure of things. Experiences have shown that the infringement is expected to have an invasive negative impact on workers' work attitude and behaviors (Azim 2012).

Raja, Johns & Ntalianis (2004) believe that the cost of a psychological contract breach has a higher negative impact on workers' feelings and behaviors. Breach by the company result in a worker's abandonment of dedication. The failure of dedication in either situation often results in an eventuality of departure from the company. It is advantageous that the most important work force to be dedicated, be concerned, and see the employment as a satisfying source of income. In other words, they must have a highly compatible relationship with the company. This point out that the vital information system workforce should be party to relational psychological contracts (Millward and Brewerton, 1999). On the other hand, employment relationships in contemporary business have undergone extensive improvements (Barling, Cooper & Clegg, 2008).

The breach of psychological contracts should also be understood in the context of employee retention. If employees think that they have not received an adequate contract, they might become unattached with their current organization. In other words, employees will leave the company if a better opportunity exists somewhere else. This is the most current problem for companies. Many think that the best way to attract this kind of employee is by contributing guidance and experience. The experience offered should be such that it could prove profitable in any number of situations that the employees may desire to follow (Millward and Brewerton 1999).

Apparent breach may stimulate a member of staff to quit. Restubog, Bordia & Bordia (2009) put down the analysis of such condition with an eye to employee turnover which argues that the turnover is frequently affected by distress, an incident that motivate workers toward a premeditated decision about their employment. As per Smithson and Stokoe (2005) the distress is then deduced and incorporated into the personnel's system of values which may activate a plan of action - the person departs. In this sequence, apparent commitment and breach of a psychological contract should be measured in upcoming turnover models.

While psychological contract stands at the base of the worker and company relationship (Rousseau 1995), workers frequently grieve that their company has been unsuccessful in sufficiently completing the agreement. Robinson and Rousseau (1995) state that 55 percent of the sample of their administrators thinks that their company has been unsuccessful in providing one or more guaranteed commitment in the initial two years of service relationship. These observations, factually right or wrong, usually cause decreased worker commitment, job happiness, motivation to stay with the business, sense of responsibility etc. Because of the prospective for these unconstructive ideas, it is very important to appreciate the circumstances under which awareness of psychological contract breach occurs.

The opinion that the psychological contract of an can be breached is an intrinsically individual experience. In a number of cases, it may perhaps occur because of a genuine violation of the agreement. For instance, an employer may evidently guarantee a new worker will be promoted within two years and for some reason promotion is not granted. In further cases, it is to a large extent less obvious whether a genuine breach has occurred or not (Gilley & Gilley 2000). Perhaps the employers made some fuzzy declaration such as employee have a propensity of gaining promotion quickly and frequently within two years, and the worker take this as a guarantee that he or she would be promoted within two years. When this promotion does not take place, the worker may think that a violation of the psychological contract has occurred.

In recent times, many companies have changed or bettered the technique they use to handle their employees. A number of these modifications is the result of research in human resource practices (Mullins, 2002). For instance, as the demand for skillful workers has increased exponentially, a lot of companies have introduced multi-scale salary and promotion packages in order to draw and keep key information system workers. To keep the attraction of the organization, many businesses now offer their workers monetary motivations attached to business performance.

On the other hand, these efforts have done the employees more harm than good. For instance, extensive amalgamations, layoffs, and reorganizations have reduced job safety and amplified career related doubt among workers (Smithson and Stokoe, 2005). As an outcome of the progressively more active industry atmosphere, a lot of businesses have been forced to rethink and alter the clauses of the psychological contracts they conclude with their workers.

In view of the current research, psychological contract includes a person's attitude toward the mutual responsibility that exist between the employer and the employee (Sullivan and Smithson 2007). The majority of the previous studies pertaining to psychological contracts are focused exclusively on workers' opinion. For example, Morrison and Robinson (1997) describe breach of psychological contracts as a failure of companies in fulfilling one or more their responsibilities spelled the psychological contract. Earlier studies propose that psychological contract violation is expected to have a persistent pessimistic impact on workers' mind-set and attitude. For instance, these studies point out that psychological agreement violation is inversely related to job happiness directly related to the desire to leave the organization and pessimistically associated the workers' own reports of their work and job responsibilities.

Nonetheless, psychological contract cannot always be evident in the worker's viewpoint. Indeed, the initial debate on the issue defined psychological contracts as the joint prospects held by employers and their employees regarding the conditions and circumstances of the service relationship (Mullins 2002).

Furthermore, regardless of the explanation, it turns out as the duty of the worker's manager (who acts as a representative on behalf of the company) to ensure that the psychological contract is properly executed. For the achievement of this objective, researchers have called for a closer measurement of the organization's approach of the psychological contracts. Despite of this recognition for study of the employer's viewpoint, it is very unclear how managerial representatives (administrators or top level managers) see the psychological contracts. This appears to be an essential error since study in other areas proposes that how companies move toward the service relationship is likely to have a joint impact on outlook of job duties and work performance.

The changes in employee demographics presents an increased women participation, showing that more families are managing both family and work roles (Zoharah and Aminah, 2010). Consequently, workers' expectations about their companies also represent a need for help in managing job and home stress (Conway and Briner, 2005). Workers may have an increasing concern about a company's commitment based on what has been assured by the company about work-family settlement. Conway and Briner (2005) point that earlier research on psychological contract largely ignored work-family issues. Psychological contract is a helpful instrument in realizing a worker's hope of acquiring a balance between work and home responsibilities (Smithson et al. 2004). Certainly, it has been established that workers come up with a constructive emotional contract if the company appears helpful in understanding the delicate balance between work and home. On the other hand, work-family settlement is hardly ever included in the psychological contract study and therefore demands much more importance than is granted to this critical issue (Smithson et al 2004; Ahmad and Omar, 2010).

Rousseau (1995) conceptualized psychological contracts as a person's faith about the rules and regulations of a mutual contract between the central individual and one more party. Unlike the traditional work-family strategy or agreement that positions out unambiguous conditions and circumstances, the work-family psychological contract is 'cognitive-perceptual' in nature. In other words, work-family psychological contract is unspoken and mirrors the individual's opinion about the company's requirement and worker's anticipation based on what has been guaranteed by the company about work-family settlement.

Workers who are not able to overcome job and family related stress suffer a decrease in productivity because of judgments linked to inadequate control over the nature of these things. They tend to have lesser loyalty to their organizations. Therefore, a company must offer work-

family compensation as well as the voluntary option given to worker to plan work and choose how it should be carried out, as a sign that the business give importance to work-family combination (Zoharah and Aminah, 2010).

From the above discussion it is clear that the phenomenon of psychological contract and any real or perceived breach of any clause of said contract carries many implications for both the employers and the employees. It is therefore important to understand what a breach actually is.

A breach occurs when one of the two parties in an association assumes that the other has shown neglect in fulfilling what was agreed or guaranteed (Rousseau, 1995). For instance, workers may suppose that the company is responsible for professional growth prospects. If the company does not offer professional development chances, it results in an agreement violation. The basis of breach is explained the theory of Social Exchange. It states that when one party offers a bit to another, it expects that the other party to reciprocate a similar form i.e. through some form of consideration or assistance.

However, not all breaches are considered to be harmful to the employee-employer relationship. If an organization evaluates that the employee is not up to the mark, the HR could recommend that the promised perks and privileges should be withheld for the period in which the employee either develops the skills required or improves the performance to the acceptable level. This might appear as a breach in the eyes of the employee but in legal and theoretical sense does not constitute as one. It is merely a matter of adjusting the internal equity of the employee.

The main purpose of the evaluating the merits and demerits of a breach in psychological contract is to achieve an improved understanding of the similarity and dissimilarity in the top level management's perceptions of the psychological contracts. The recent studies examine the model of harmony/difference that continues between managers and their subordinates with an aim to understand the fulfillment of the worker's psychological contracts (Fang, Lee and Koh 2005). By spotting areas of the psychological contracts where the difference is most prominent, companies can achieve a better understanding of where workers' opinions stand in contrast to the difference in opinions of their administrators. This information should give companies helpful knowledge concerning those areas where they want to do a thorough job of modifying the psychological contract in the favor of the workforce.

The relationship between the psychological contract violation and the loyalty of both executives and line staff is very strong. More importantly, the behavioral effects and workers' performance are adversely impacted at both staff and managerial levels. This analysis offers two important outcomes (Azim 2012). First, the attitudes toward any violations in psychological contract are apparent immediately. Secondly, the top management can decide what steps should be taken to address the dissatisfaction of the work force. This approach offers the best results if applied simultaneously with an increase in either monetary compensations or a raise on the career ladder.

Most researchers have observed the cost of violation of psychological contract is the manifestation of an extensive variety of worker behaviors and feelings (e.g., dedication, pleasure, and turnover). These studies state that workers are likely to restrain from inflexible behaviors and show unconstructive outlook as a way of reaction to contract violation. A further line of study has examined situational dynamics which propose that the influence the

correlation between violation and worker outcome is staggering in proportion (Bellou, 2007). For instance, interaction impartiality diminishes the unconstructive impact of violation of psychological contract on worker behaviors. Lastly, a promising line of study illustrates the new areas of the psychological contract and the various ways of minimizing the breaches of the contract. As the arrangement and preservation of psychological contract appear from a particular trust and results in a cognitive evaluation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997), dispositional uniqueness are possible to be a vital factor in the contract-assembly dynamics.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Psychological contracts are important instruments to gauge and evaluate behavior and 'mood' of workers. Workers may construct an opinion concerning a company's commitment about certain unspelled considerations by the company, such as or measures for work-family balance.

Difference in culture also varies the nature of psychological relationship between employer and employee. Different responses can be observed after the breach of the psychological contract and it is observed that a variety of work behaviors and feelings result as soon as a breach is perceived to have occurred (Barling, Cooper & Clegg, 2008). If the breach has occurred on a technical ground, less harmful effects are usually observed in employer employee relationship.

Psychological contract is universal in nature. Almost every employer-employee relationship carries an element of psychological contract regardless of social, economical and cultural backdrops. Most of the prior study in violation of psychological contract has been conducted in western countries where cultures are characteristically free spirit and low in authority space (Thomas & Ravlin, 2003).

There is a lack of data on the mechanics of the psychological contract structure in civilizations with a higher-power distance. That is, little is known about how progress affects the meaning and understanding credited to psychological contract and how employers and employees from diverse society assess the degree to which the psychological contract has been honored or dishonored (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000).

While quite a few Asian civilizations are collectivist, these societies display other fundamental characteristics in the place of work. In circumstance marked by a family centric society, workers see the business as a symbolic demonstration of a family unit and wait for nurturance, faithfulness and compassion from the organization. Therefore, a supervisor-subordinate relation will be seen as a comparison of a parent-child relationship (Restubog and Bordia, 2007).

To conclude, psychological contract is vital in attracting and retaining quality human resource. It is also a key component in the advancement of the knowledge of the organization from one generation to another. Today's organizations have a very different view on the subject. As a result, it is critical to identify the elements that uphold a constructive employment relationship between employer and employees.

It is important to realize that not all instances of violations of psychological contracts are understood as a breach. In some cases, employers try to adjust the clauses of the psychological contract to the evaluated efficiency of the employee. These instances are not uncommon in almost every industry. Employees may see these as a breach but in reality these are administrative efforts to reconcile the costs and benefits of employing a certain individual.

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