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**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND ITS CONTENTS: A STUDY WITH REFERENCE TO GOAN IT COMPANIES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Psychological contracts consist of the beliefs employees hold regarding the terms and conditions of the exchange agreement between themselves and their organizations. It is worth taking seriously because of the possible detrimental effects of breach on organizational as well as employee outcomes. It is more pertinent for the IT sector (where labour turnover is relatively very high) to understand the above PC contents to formulate appropriate strategies for developing conducive and congenial working environment and thereby reducing the detrimental effects to the organization.*

**KEYWORDS**

psychological contract, contents of psychological contract, employee and employer contents.

**INTRODUCTION**

In management, economics and HR (human resources) the term 'Psychological Contract' commonly and somewhat loosely refers to the actual - but unwritten - expectations of an employee or workforce towards the employer. The Psychological Contract represents, in a basic sense, the obligations, rights, rewards, etc. that an employee believes he/she is 'owed' by his/her employer in return for the employee's work and loyalty.

Psychological Contract is defined as "The unwritten understandings and informal obligations between an employer and its employees regarding their mutual expectations of how each will perform their respective roles". Within a typical business, the psychological contract might include such things as the levels of employee commitment, job satisfaction and the quality of working conditions. Individuals enter an organization with a set of beliefs, values and needs with the expectation that these will be met, upheld and respected and their wellbeing ensured, preserved and protected.

How psychological work contracts form is answered simply by Anderson (1996) who suggested that a contract emerges when an employee perceives that the organization is obligated to reciprocate in some manner in response to contributions he or she has made. The process of psychological contract formation, appraisal and assessment is iterative and provides both the structure of the contract and its content. Within that structure and based on the content, the contract establishes the mechanisms (constructive, interpretive and corrective) through which individuals seek meaning from the work they pursue and from the organizational climate and environment within which that work is performed.

The psychological contract defines what the individual expects from the organization in order to achieve and maintain psychological wellbeing. Individuals are attracted to an organization because they believe the organization has the potential to contribute to their wellbeing. What that contribution will be and how it will be delivered is embedded in both the formal employment contract and the psychological work contract.

Within this discussion, a distinction is drawn between the content of psychological contracts and the processes through which the content of the contract is derived.

Anderson and Schalk (1998) contended that most employees are able to describe the content of their contract and every employee has one. They also argued that there is no real consensus about what the psychological contract is or what it actually encompasses. Cavanaugh and Noe (1999) supported Anderson and Schalk's viewpoint by agreeing that there is currently no consensus on what psychological contracts contain although they do suggest some agreement on relational components such as career development, organizational commitment and job security. Both Kotter (1973) and Sims (1994) proposed that the psychological contract may literally contain thousands of items and therefore making a complete list would be impracticable, if not impossible. It is from this list of 'thousands of items' that individuals draw specific and relevant items grouped into higher level and broader categories or classes to form the content of their own psychological contract. Freese and Schalk (1996) found that psychological contract contents are subdivided into five aspects such as job content, opportunities for personal development, social aspects, human resource management policy and rewards. De Vos, Buyens and Schalk (2005) also proposed five content areas being career development, job content, financial rewards, social atmosphere and respect for private life. Herriot, Manning and Kidd (1997) identified 12 organizational obligations which they labelled as training, fairness, needs, consult, discretion, humanity, recognition, environment, justice, pay, benefits and security. They also identified seven employee obligations which they labelled hours of work, honesty, loyalty, property, self-presentation and flexibility.

**METHODOLOGY**

One-to-one discussion was conducted with the help of questionnaire. Questions were asked as to what is expected by the employer from you as employee and what you as an employee expect from your employer. Further questions were asked on obligations, needs, commitments, promise, trust, etc. Total of 26 employees including team leaders and subordinates from Goan IT companies were contacted, out of which male employees were 22 and female employees were 4.

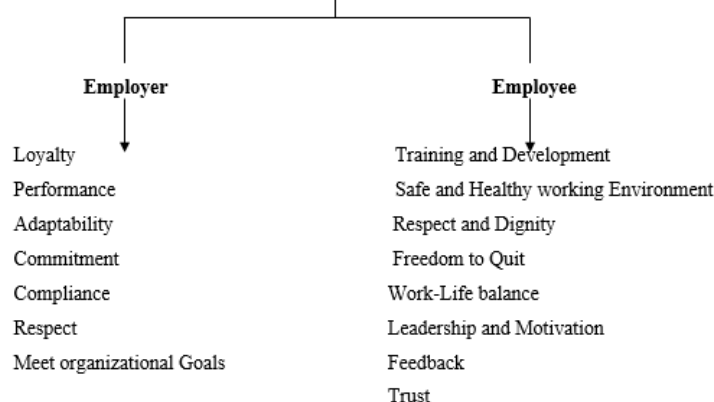
**CONTENTS OF PC**

Individual discussions (one to one) were conducted to identify the empirical indicators for the purpose of development of the construct. The discussion was a semi-structured, moderated by researcher with the purpose of collecting the data on the various parameters of the construct.

A total of twenty-six employees were made part of discussion. Four discussions were held with managerial participants representing employer perspective to PC. Twenty-two discussions were held with subordinates representing employee's perspective of PC. The responses of participants from discussions were analysed with the help of Atlas-ti Qualitative analytical package and churned out nine contents of employee psychological contract and seven contents of employer PC. These contents are:



**FIGURE NO. 1**  
**Contents of Psychological Contract**



### EMPLOYEE CONTENTS IN IT SECTOR

#### 1) Training and Development

The IT employees expect that the employer will provide support which involves sharpening of skills, change his/her attitude, gaining more knowledge and enhance competencies that will help in performing assigned task better. They also expect that such opportunities to enhance skills will provide better career avenues both within and outside organization.

#### 2) Safe and Healthy Working Environment

It is an expectation that the employer will provide safe and healthy working environment of people engaged in the work. It is an expectation where healthy, cooperative, friendly relationship and environment free from politics is provided rather than dominated by cut throat competition, power and politics.

#### 3) Respect and Dignity

It is an employee's expectation from employer that he/she will be treated with respect and dignity. Employer will not discriminate on the basis of cast, creed, religion, gender, etc.

#### 4) Freedom to Quit

Employees expect that the employer will allow the employee to quit the job whenever he/she wants rather than forced to stay on the basis of contract entered into.

#### 5) Work-Life Balance

An employee expects that the employer will provide him/her time for family commitment too. Freedom will be given to employee to engage in personal commitments.

#### 6) Recognition from Top Management

An employee expects that his/her employer must honour and acknowledge employee's contribution. Employee must be given monetary and non-monetary benefits.

#### 7) Leadership and Motivation

The employees expect that the employer will provide leadership opportunities to him/her. Recognition leads to motivation. Employee also expects compensation similar to those of other employees doing the same type of job. Employees also expect that compensation must be related to performance.

#### 8) Feedback

Employees expect from the employer that he/she must be given adequate feedback about his/her performance in order to improve rather than to punish.

#### 9) Trust

Employees expect that the employer would trust him/her and the employer would provide challenging, interesting and meaningful duties and responsibilities and also provide decision making authority to take decisions with trust on employees that they will not misuse such authority.

### EMPLOYER CONTENTS IN IT SECTOR

#### a) Loyalty

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will be loyal to the organization. The information about the organization will not be shared by the employee for personal gains. Confidentiality will be maintained.

#### b) Performance

It is an employer's expectation that the employees will perform their job to the best of their abilities in a focused manner and shall achieve given targets and goals of the organization with given resources.

#### c) Adaptability

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will quickly adapt to the changing business conditions, changing nature of the job and working environment. Employer's expectation that the employee will show a great deal of team spirit and maturity in handling different situations at the workplace.

#### d) Commitment

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will commit himself/herself to the given task utilizing his/her full potential to achieve given target and goals of the organization.

#### e) Compliance

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will follow the rules and regulations laid down by the organization. All employees are expected to adhere to the procedures laid down.

#### f) Respect

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will treat all colleagues and superiors with respect. Moreover, employer expects that employees will not discriminate each other on the basis of caste, creed, religion, gender, etc.

#### g) Meet organizational goals

It is an employer's expectation that the employee will commit himself/herself to the organizational goals with the given amount of resources. Further they expect that the employee will shoulder the given responsibilities and ensure stability in job performance.

### CONCLUSION

Psychological contracts consist of the beliefs employees hold regarding the terms and conditions of the exchange agreement between themselves and their organizations. The traditional employment relationship has been changed over a period of time. Recent researches on psychological contracts have generally focused

on two areas. First, the changing nature of the psychological contract and the general decline in mutual loyalty between employees and their organizations. Second, the negative consequences of psychological contract breach (or violation) on employee attitudes and behaviors. Thirdly, the psychological contract and its contents vary from industry to industry. It is worth taking seriously because of the possible detrimental effects of breach on organizational as well as employee outcomes. It is more pertinent for the IT sector (where labour turnover is relatively very high) to understand the above PC contents to formulate appropriate strategies for developing conducive and congenial working environment and thereby reducing the detrimental effects to the organization.

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