



সমাজ বিজ্ঞান বিষয়ক পত্রিকা

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- বিদ্যাসাগরের ভাবনায় উনিশ শতকের প্রতিমাণ বিদ্যালয় (মডেল স্কুল) ও তার প্রাসঙ্গিকতা
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- সুন্দরবনের আদিবাসী সমাজ ও হিন্দু জাতীয়তাবাদী রাজনীতি : একটি এথনোগ্রাফিক অনুসন্ধান
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বিদ্যাসাগর সমাজ বিজ্ঞান কেন্দ্র, মেদিনীপুর

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Maintaining Psychological Contract of Employees in Digital Era: An HRM Perspective

Priyanka M. Jha
Kalpesh P. Prajapati

It was accurately said in 1991 by Bill Gates that the use of the internet is increasing at an exponential rate. It will touch almost every industry, and those who cannot learn to ride its waves will die. It appears that this claim is more accurate now that web 2.0 technology is here. HRM or Human Resource Management is the way by which organization can manage the workforce at the workplace to achieve the goal of the organization. HR department is consisted of many sub divisions which take care of different tasks at the same time. The topmost priority of HR is to see that they can bring out the best from the employees. HRM has also changed a lot over the years, especially in terms of technological usage. The Human Resource Management (HRM) industry is changing in a number of ways. Web 2.0 features including cloud computing, information sharing in virtual worlds, wikis, and podcasting are a few instances of how they have improved communication between businesses. Organizational human resource management has advanced significantly in the past 10 years, both in terms of speed and intelligence. The main reason for this is that E-Technology solutions are being used in HR operations. It deals with the safe conversion, storing, processing, transmission, and retrieval of data through the use of computer hardware, software, and electronic computers. Productivity in HRM has increased dramatically with the usage of E-tools. In light of these changes, the empirical researches show that there are also impacts on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as different consequences of dissatisfaction and non-commitment. This paper tries to give insight into how HR can assist management in clarifying and upholding work commitment of employees during these digital changes.

INTRODUCTION

E-management is becoming more and more common in businesses as a result of the increased usage of technology in many fields. Therefore, when changes arise, the human resources department and other departments must also handle them. Numerous industries have conducted studies centred on this kind of change management. These modifications will persist since technology is constantly evolving. (Coultrup, Sherri and "Pat" 2012, 1)¹ Work of human supervisors has become easier, thanks to electronic monitoring. Computers are useful for assigning tasks to staff members as well as for assessing their work. (Kosegei, Wanyembi and Bii July, 2019, 2)² Programs are available to keep a watch on the online activity of employees including e-mails.

The connection between employers and employees is also impacted by the advancement of technology, in addition to individual behaviour. Employers' needs and expectations have an impact, but their behaviours and duties also do. As a result, new positions using technology, such as monitoring and surveillance, have entered the business sector. (Vandelannoitte, 2009, 2)³ Employers now view websites, record keystrokes, listen in on phone conversations, use video surveillance, and other activities as a result of these jobs. Another company Teramind claims that its software can capture, "All information to comprehensive logs that can be used to formulate a base of user-based behavior analytics." (Blackman, 2020)⁴

Employers and other groups derive benefits from digital technology and employee activity monitoring. Their justifications for doing so might likewise seem reasonable. When workers learn that their company is watching them all the time, they might begin to fear that the data they have provided could be used against them. This might, therefore, put pressure on the psychological agreement between employers and workers. Occasionally, the process of obtaining information is supported by inadequate justifications. (Sharpe n.d., 2)⁵ There is a power imbalance as a result of this employee sentiment. The productivity, motivation, and trust of employees may all be hampered by this unequal authority.

The psychological contract is commonly known as a mental

model, or schema, that individuals utilise to interpret their surroundings and generate socially acceptable actions. In other words, schemas are built via experience and provide the framework for the interpretation of facts, occurrences, and actions. They might be seen as an individual's set of beliefs about what is expected of them by the company and what is expected of them in the job. In a stable work environment, employees may foresee and assess their employment relationship and organisational environment using schemes or mental models. (McParland and Connolly 2019, 3)⁶ Academics also believe that an implicit reciprocal agreement exists between an employer and an employee about the psychological contract, according to which one is obligated to provide something in return for receiving something. (McParland and Connolly 2019, 4)⁷

Schein (1965) defined psychological contract as 'the unwritten contract, the whole of the shared expectations between the employer and employee'. Despite the fact that social scientists have been interested in the concept's theoretical underpinnings for nearly 50 years, studies have been conducted until recently, despite the fact that these early writings emphasised the concept's significance. Organisational behaviour has lately been interested in this topic of study. Subsequently, scholarly articles, references in management guides, and practitioner discussions have all increased dramatically. (Moussa 2015, 3)⁸

It is not surprising that there has been an increase in interest in the concept among academics and practitioners over the past several years, given the findings suggesting how an employee sees the psychological contract influences their behaviour and attitudes. A significant amount of this renewed interest coincided with demand on organisations to adapt due to certain significant advances in the fields of politics, economy and society. One of the primary drivers of psychological contract research, according to Anderson and Schalk, has been shifts in the relative importance of the reciprocal agreement between employers and workers (due to pervasive change). (Moussa 2015, 4)⁹ Therefore, employers should find a middle ground between the requirement for productivity and the rights of workers to safety, security, and privacy.

Achievements, not time spent at work, should be each

employer's main concern. One may argue that monitoring a staff is pointless since nobody can work for eight hours straight without a break without inciting distrust and disloyalty. Workers need to be aware that whatever they enter, look up or read on their computers might be key logged by a number of software applications. Some scholars contend that well-established, thriving companies do not need a concept of moral behaviour; rather, they need direction on how to use technology sensibly. (Ball and S. 2014, 2)¹⁰ Both ethical and immoral uses of technology are possible. They believe that the usage of technology has greatly increased stress and strain among people in businesses after evaluating a significant number of research on employee perceptions of technology. (Moussa 2015, 3)¹¹

The Breach of the Psychological Contract

According to a theoretical model, work discontent may arise from an employee's perception of a lack of reciprocity in the promises made by the organisation and the individual leading to higher absenteeism and turnover rates. If they continue to work, disgruntled employees may participate in unproductive activities such stealing, spreading false information, providing poor service and sabotaging equipment. The cost of turnover, absenteeism and unproductive behaviour to the organisation is higher replacement costs and lost output. It has been demonstrated that unsatisfied employees also exhibit physical symptoms including anxiety, irregular sleep patterns, weariness, melancholy and so on. (Abela and Debono January-March, 2019, 3)¹²

Ideal Policies for Digitized Work Places

Few policies commonly followed by companies nowadays are as follows:

(1) At the very least, the company's electronic communication capabilities are its property and should only be used for business purposes, according to the digital data usage policy. (2) Every employee's email and online behaviour is monitored by companies. It should contain information on who may access the data, how it can be used, and whether or not it can be saved on another machine. (3) Companies keep copies of email and Internet passwords. (Abril and Levin 2012, 2)¹³ Sending any communications or material that is derogatory, prejudiced, or unprofessional is strictly prohibited. (5)

Accessing any website on the Internet that contains offensive or discriminatory content is prohibited. (6) Using the company's Internet connection to post personal thoughts online is strictly prohibited. (Yerby 2013, 3)¹⁴

Nevertheless, it would also be prudent for the company to schedule a training session to go over exactly what the policy allows and prohibits. Staff members should voice concerns during a training session on what constitutes proper computer use, rather than penalising them for a transgression. (DiLuzio 2000, 3)¹⁵ Different tasks would necessitate different sorts (and intensities) of observation. There is not a single solution that works for every business that wants to investigate personnel monitoring.

The Indian market of video surveillance is also growing at a very fast rate. For safety and security purposes more and more companies are opting for it. Indian companies are using e-surveillance to improve productivity, security, and record data of employees. Some of the top surveillance companies of India are as follows:

Gruda Aerospace, idea Forge Technology Pvt. Ltd., Optimized Electrotech. NETRA Global, XvidiaTechnologies. Edgeverse India Pvt. Ltd. and many more. The increasing use of electronic monitoring has seen a large jump in the start-ups which are related to surveillance. Most of the Indian Companies are using CCTV cameras, Email and Internet Monitoring, Access Control Systems, GPS Trackers etc. Some legal considerations are also there like privacy laws, employee consent, purpose limitation etc. Challenges are also there like, privacy concerns, legal compliance, employee morale etc.

Recommendations for Human Resource Management Department

Organisational human resource management has advanced significantly in the past ten years, both in terms of speed and intelligence. The main reason for this is that E-Technology solutions are being used in HR operations. E-technology is the study of computer-based information systems, particularly computer hardware and software. It also covers the administration, support,

installation, development, and design of such systems. It deals with the safe conversion, storing, processing, transmission, and retrieval of data through the use of computer hardware, software, and electronic computers. (Knights and Kennedy 2005, 3)¹⁶ Productivity in HRM has increased dramatically with the usage of E-tools.

Recruitment with Orientation

HRM staff members should be transparent and honest in their discussion of the duties and expectations of both the organisation and the employee during recruiting interviews. Throughout the hiring process, it is imperative that the organisation refrain from "over-selling" the position because doing so might create irrational expectations that, if not fulfilled, could result in dissatisfaction and a reduction in commitment. It is essential that a new hire understands their rights and duties when they join the organisation. Incongruity is a major contributing factor to breaches of the psychological contract. (Sheriff and Ravishankar February, 2011, 4)¹⁷ Policy documents and human resource manuals that include ambiguous wording run the danger of encouraging a broader interpretation of rights and obligations, which might lead to misunderstandings and apparent violations.

Performance Reviews

The business must guarantee that performance reviews take place often. Performance reviews are essential because they provide workers the chance to get frank feedback on their performance and can help clear up any confusion regarding who is responsible for what under the psychological contract. According to Knights and Kennedy (2005), the performance review serves as an opportunity for both the employer and the employee to deliberate and reach a decision on the individual's prospective involvement in change management, as well as future opportunities for challenge and responsibility. (Blackman 2020, 4)¹⁸

Training When Needed

Employers need to guarantee that employees have access to chances for continuous training and development. An organisation may demonstrate to its staff that it appreciates and supports them by providing training and development opportunities. Any unfulfilled

promises in this area will damage management's reputation and workers' faith in the business. As a result, the employee will be more aware of how well the company has fulfilled its promises and fulfilled obligations in other areas, which will raise the possibility that they would perceive future unfulfilled promises as infractions. (Blackman 2020, 3)¹⁹

Communication

The company must guarantee the effectiveness of its communication channels. One of the most crucial elements in the formation of healthy psychological contracts is open communication. If mutual commitments are communicated honestly and clearly, it will be simpler to understand expectations, company culture, employee development, compensation, and benefits. If an organisation can adequately justify and explain any breaches of promise, then its workforce will be more trusting and confident in it. In the case of a true or perceived breach, this will lessen the likelihood that the employee would perceive an unfulfilled promise in the first place and increase their ability to preserve credibility and confidence. (Chinyere and Chiemela 2014, 3)²⁰

Organisational Culture Preparation

According to researchers, organizational culture is "the deep structure of organizations, entrenched in the values, beliefs and assumptions held by employees." Because individuals bring their own working styles, tastes, and wants based on the cultures of the firms that have served as their points of reference to the workplace, organizational cultural mismatch is a significant barrier to successful M&As. Even under ideal conditions, it may take some time for employees to acclimatise to a single culture. (Gichuhi, Ngari and Senaji June, 2016, 2)²¹ Organisational leaders should closely monitor communication, planning, employee engagement, HR's involvement in the process, organisational culture preparation, change management procedures, and leadership during the M&A-related change process, according to the factors found. (Gichuhi, Ngari and Senaji June, 2016, 3)²²

Importance of Maintaining Psychological Contract

According to studies, if the psychological contract is "broken",

employee's intentions to quit the company may increase and loyalty to the company may decrease. Therefore, it is inferred that in order to maximise organizational success, the psychological condition of the employee is an element that should be carefully studied and handled. (Botha and Moalusi 2010, 3)²³ Appropriate behaviors and reactions on the work will arise from the measurement of employee psychological conditions as well as from the organization's managers' consideration and control of such circumstances through intelligent organizational rules. According to Anderson and Schalk, the legitimacy of these psychological contracts with both employers and workers determines how strong they are. However, rather than serving as a helpful analytical construct, there is a risk that the phrase may just become meaningless rhetoric. (Botha and Moalusi 2010, 4)²⁴

Additionally, constructive criticism focuses on the issue of how much a psychological contract violation affects workers' attitudes and behaviors, raising the prospect of a change in the organization's performance in the end. Said another way, psychological contracts motivate employees to carry out their employer's promises when they have confidence that these promises will be consistently honoured. What employers want from their employees and what they are willing to offer are defined by strategies, structures, and organizational processes, which also have an impact on how contract negotiations are conducted and the type of contracts that are managed collectively. (Botha and Moalusi 2010, 3)²⁵

The range of purported contract violations illustrates the agency dilemma, according to a researcher. According to Botha and Moalusi (2010), the term "agent" refers to the several agents who work on behalf of the organisation and may offer contradictory contracts. For example, poor employee discipline is not necessarily the product of the activities of the organisation. The contract violations that the study's participants reported make clear that the organization's contracting agents are the participants' co-workers and superiors. Other implicit or covert actors include those in charge of low pay, a lack of career advancement chances, a toxic work environment, and favouritism. (Manxhari 2015, 3)²⁶

There was a general consensus among the participants

regarding the values that applied in cases of violation as well as the violations they had personally experienced. Distinct cultures identified distinct breaches even if they showed a high degree of value consensus. This would imply that the episodes were brought on by the individuals' common underlying causes for experiencing occurrences as breaches. The values that were found provided an explanation for why the participants thought certain situations violated the values. There was no investigation conducted into the behaviours resulting from value frustration. (Manxhari 2015, 4)²⁷

Violation of psychological contracts resulting from communication breakdown or dissonance between the parties can be reduced by routinely examining and renegotiating these aspects of the agreement. When an organization undergoes a change, such as when restructuring or strategic reorientations are announced, or when employee benefits are being revised, it is crucial that the organization provides a sufficient justification for broken promises. In the event of genuine transgressions, employees will thus be more likely to maintain their reputation and confidence. (Knights and Kennedy 2005, 3)²⁸

Gig Economy which is concerned with labour market working for short term or on contract, has also led to increase in E monitoring. This type of economy gives flexibility to its employees, it is technology driven and includes diverse work force. Again, it has both advantages as well as disadvantages. It comes with job insecurity, lack of benefits, as well as less of regulations. Also, there is too much reliance on technology. It leads to economic growth and innovations. For future, much regulations are needed to protect employees, moreover discussions are also required for its impact in long term.

Suggestions For Maintaining Psychological Contracts

Reducing uncertainty, building trust, and using effective communication strategies can all help minimising PCB. Some studies propose internal marketing to reduce Psychological Contract Breach (PCB). Scholars have identified many crucial elements that are necessary for internal marketing. Education and training can help employees comprehend the organisation, their roles within it, their affiliations, and the relationships between co-workers. In order to increase their commitment to and attitudes about corporate

sustainability, employees should become familiar with the company culture. (Stoner and Gallagher 2010, 5)²⁹ Because psychological contract violations are perceived as a loss of trust and promise, they might occasionally elicit feelings of betrayal. These feelings are more than just disillusionment. Lester employed the social exchange theory to provide an explanation for undesirable results. This hypothesis states that there is a perceived imbalance in the exchange connection that results from one party believing there has been a violation. (Goswami and Ha-Brookshire January, 2017, 4)³⁰

Thus, in order to be sustainable and reduce your employees' PCB, you must cultivate an atmosphere of communication, dialogue, and discourse between employers and employees. Establishing a strong people management system would support and fulfil psychological contracts with employees, provide opportunities for professional development, and motivate workers towards sustainability. Connecting employees with external marketing is the last step in closing any gaps that may exist between a company's internal and external claims. Establishing corporate sustainability is critical since it shows employees that companies are serious about sustainability and are not just doing it for show or as an external marketing gimmick. However, not much research has been done on these connections. (Stoner and Gallagher 2010, 3)³¹

The organisation should focus on reducing employee attrition because it cannot afford to lose more experienced and competent personnel. Due to the significant costs associated with hiring and training new hires, this may be extremely costly. However, it may also compromise the competitiveness and efficiency that are necessary to win the internal competition against other plants of the same company. A study suggests that human resource managers should move from money-based contracts to relational contracts because the former are more focused on the welfare of individuals. (Abela and Debono, January-March, 2019, 4)³²

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