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Impact of Psychological Contract Violations: Stories from Educators

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Abstract

Psychological contracts have been researched for over 50 years and have been used as the basis for studies in business, industry, and education. In this study, the researchers aimed to share the impact of psychological contract violations (PCV) upon individuals in educational institutions. Psychological contract literature is focused primarily on the impact of the breach on employee morale, organizational commitment, and work product. This study adds to the literature by giving voice to educators, allowing them to share their stories and provides a foundation for a more extensive research project later.

Using a focus group methodology, the researcher allowed the participants to respond to questions pertaining to psychological contract breaches or violations in writing and then followed by an open-ended question session to give the participants the opportunity to provide additional detail. The educators who took part in the focus groups were asked if they had ever experienced a psychological contract breach related to teaching, service, or research. If they answered yes, they were asked to describe the situation.

Teachers enter the profession for many reasons; however, the teachers who leave the profession before retirement often cite workplace issues as a reason for leaving. Understanding the role of PCVs have on the attrition may lead to more teachers remaining in the field, saving institutions financial resources related to the loss of teachers from the field.

Keywords: psychological contract, psychological contract violation, equity issues related to faculty, ethical leadership in education

Introduction

Psychological contracts have been studied for many decades, dating back to the mid-1900s, and the body of literature is extensive. Argyris (1960) is one of the early pioneers of psychological contract studies. More recently, the work of Rousseau (1995) has been cited extensively. Within the literature of psychological contracts, one focus revolves around how a psychological contract breach (PCB) or

violation (PCV) impacts work-related outcomes and the consequences for a company; while another theme is how a psychological contract breach or violation impacts worker attitude and/or organizational commitment. Although both themes are extensively documented in psychological contract literature, the data provided through these studies is quantitative in nature. Limited information is provided about the impact of a psychological contract violation on individuals, specifically those in educational institutions. Designed to fill this gap in the literature, the current project gives voice to faculty members who experienced a psychological contract violation and have been silenced within their departments, and it provides a unique perspective on a widely studied topic.

Purpose of the Study

The researchers sought to extrapolate psychological contract research from the business and management field to study the responses of business teachers. An understanding of why people desire to become teachers is an important first-step to understanding why a PCV impacts teachers. According to Church, Bland, and Luo (2016), “Teachers flourish when they feel good about their work” (p. 3). Multiple reasons are provided in the literature for why teachers become teachers. The ability to make a difference and provide a positive impact on the world are the most common reasons that teachers enter the profession (Kangan Institute, 2020). Additionally, teaching provides job security, the ability to work almost anywhere in the world, and the ability to choose a specialization. Finally, in many geographical regions, teachers are also highly respected professionals. Educators are often drawn into the field because they want to make a difference (Campbell, 2017). For many teachers, the joy of teaching is enough; however, even though they are answering the call to be a teacher, some find that their expectations and the reality are vastly different. This study focuses on teachers who have experienced differences between expectations and reality by examining the perceived PCV of the supervisor as experienced by educators participating in an international focus group of business and language teachers. The purpose of the study was to give voice to faculty who have experienced a PCV in the academic setting by asking faculty to share their stories, in their own words.

The importance of providing a voice to educators who are members of a specialty discipline is related to the need for teachers in all disciplines. Partelow (2019) reported that enrollments in teacher preparation programs in the United States have dropped 33% between 2010 and 2016 (the most recent reporting period). “Even as teacher wages stagnate and state investment in education declines, teachers are being asked to do more than ever” (para. 3). In addition, the number of teacher preparation programs for business educators is declining in the United States (personal communication, Dr. Karla Saeger, President of the National Association of Business Teacher Educators, August 20, 2020). At the same time, the U.S. Department of Education (Cross, 2016) in its most recently available report, lists business as a shortage area in a majority of the states. Giving a voice to the business educators who are feeling the pressures of declining numbers of teachers in high shortage areas sheds light on the current problem of PCVs. Additionally, by utilizing an international group of educators provides insight into the issue on a global scale.

Significance of the Study

Psychological contract literature is focused primarily on the impact of the breach on employee morale, organizational commitment, and work product (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013; Conway, 1999; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Kraak, Lunardo, Herrbach, & Durrieu, 2017; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Turgut, Tokmak, & Gucl, 2012; & Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). This study adds to the literature by giving voice to academics, allowing them to share their stories. Psychological contracts are unwritten, subjective, and non-binding expectations that are created during the job interview, offer, and/or orientation process for new faculty members (Hillman, 2014). The need to understand psychological contracts within education may be important in that “employees with higher education respond more emotionally to their incidences of breach in terms of affective commitment and work engagement” (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013, p. 21) and “teachers with graduate degrees were found to have higher levels of psychological contract violation perceptions in general” (Argon & Ekinici, 2017, p. 52) perhaps due to greater expectations of the academic from the institution. This study provides a voice to business teachers from around the world who have experienced a psychological contract violation.

Literature Review

Multiple psychological contract studies of both business and academia have been completed since the first publication by Argis related to the topic in 1960. Hillman (2014) defines a psychological contract as “the perception of the business relationship between two parties” (para. 2). She continues by describing the psychological contract as imprecise, unverbilized, unstable, unwritten, and dynamic. By its nature, the psychological contract is based upon assumptions made about the working relationship. Robinson (1996) provided context of psychological contracts as “those expectations that emanate from perceived implicit or explicit promises by the employer” (p. 575). A “psychological contract is a construct relevant to employment and [is] likely to be distinct from the more general set of expectations” (Rousseau, 1990, p. 398). Although the literature includes multiple, differing definitions of a psychological contract, the conclusions provided within literature does agree that a psychological contract is subjective, informal, and non-binding in a legal sense (Dean, 2017). Furthermore, as said by Cullinane and Dundon (2006), the psychological contract is “a social exchange interaction” (p. 119). Argon and Ekinici (2017) state, “Schools are among the organizations where social interactions and affective aspects are abundant and experienced extensively” (p. 46). The literature also focuses on business practices, primarily in Western Civilization (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

The foundations of this paper are based upon the work of Rousseau (1990) where a psychological contract is defined by the employee’s perception of obligation, while acknowledging that the term contract may be inappropriately used in this context. A psychological contract is not a legal and binding contract in the strictest definition of a contract; however, “a framework like the psychological contract, reflecting the needs of the individual with implicit and unvoiced expectations about employment, can easily find favour as an appealing, ‘alternative’ paradigm for studying people at work” (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006, p. 114).

Writing about the influence of psychological contract breaches on work-related outcomes, Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, and Bravo (2007) conducted a meta-analysis where they discuss both the theoretical and

practical implications of psychological contract breaches in the workplace. The meta-analysis of 51 studies included dissertations, book chapters, conference papers, and working papers from international authors. Based upon the Zhao, et al. (2007) study, a psychological contract breach may lead to negative emotions, often resulting in a lower commitment to the organization and increased desire to leave the organization. Referencing Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) and LeDoux (1995), Zhao, et al. (2007) state, “. . . that after a negative workplace event, individuals will not develop rational appraisals of the situation immediately. . . . and the importance and relevance of the event to personal goals will determine the intensity of the negative affect” (p. 653). Negative effect can also be defined as stress which is a combination of the feeling of the psychological contract and the physical reaction to that perception (Psychology Today, 2020). Clercq, Azeem, and Haq (2020) discuss the consequences of perceived psychological contract violations which lead to negative outcomes for the victim of a violation.

One method to manage stress is to share the feelings with others who are also learning how to overcome the emotional effects of the issue. According to Gillihan (2019), sharing stories of negative events may provide multiple benefits such as providing emotional support, developing a different perspective on the event, diminishing the pain of the event, developing the courage to take control, and making the memory of the event less powerful through making sense of the event.

During an academic job interview, which often spans multiple days and includes several stakeholders from the institution who discuss individual experiences related to the future work environment, the interviewee forms expectations of the work environment from the interactions with these stakeholders. Peirce, Desselle, Draugalis, Spies, Davis, and Bolino (2012) stated, “it should not be surprising when an interviewee perceives breaches after beginning a new job” (p. 2). Based upon the volume of literature and specific studies, PCBs occur often (Conway, 1999; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Minor breaches, over time, may lead to reduced organization commitment and a belief of a psychological contract violation.

Today, academia is part of a contractual society with written contracts for employment which include terms of the academic appointment and extensive policies or procedures manuals detailing many aspects of an academic career. And yet, many academics, from elementary/primary school teachers to distinguished university professors, report feelings of betrayal, mistrust, or anger because their expectations of the position are different from the reality they experience in the profession (Argon & Ekinci, 2017; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). “Giving the teachers insufficient value and importance at schools may reflect negatively on their actions” (Argon & Ekinci, 2017, p. 45). It is important for employers to try to “meet teacher expectations reasonably” (Argon & Ekinci, 2017, p. 45) with the goal of letting teachers know they are valuable members of the educational process. In addition, university campuses and some secondary schools often seek a diverse faculty to supply an international and multi-cultural dimension to the educational experience. Adding the cultural element potentially increases the risk of a psychological contract breach due to diverse cultural expectations of behavior and professionalism.

Morrison and Robinson (1997) add a crucial point to the literature, by explaining the difference between a psychological contract breach (PCB) and a psychological contract violation (PCV). A PCB relates to how an employee can evaluate an action that is perceived to be a breach of an organization’s obligation,

while a PCV is the emotional aftermath of the breach. This paper focuses on PCVs as they are perceived by academics who teach at all educational levels, and it allows them to express the emotional and physical impact they have experienced upon their careers. The study fills a gap in the literature by providing a forum for the voices of academics who believe they have been the victim of a PCV by utilizing a unique perspective to discuss a widely researched topic.

Theoretical Perspective

The basis for this study uses a multi-dimensional approach, incorporating a systems perspective for reciprocal relationships within an academic setting and conflict perspective. The study is specifically related to the unequal power dynamic between faculty members and the administrators who supervise them by highlighting beliefs of equity, fairness, and justice. Using social exchange theory to frame this study and based upon the definition of social exchange theory described by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), the authors are using the voices of educators to understand behavior of impacted educators.

Discussions around psychological contract breaches and the resulting feelings of violation are often related to equity, fairness, and justice. Turgut, Tokmak, and Gucl (2012) indicate that organization justice “involves the encouragement of fair and ethical applications and operations within the organization” (p. 22). Therefore, a perceived breach in the psychological contract would decrease the perception of organization justice, leading to lower commitment to the institution and potentially lead to faculty turnover.

Methodology

To include a multi-national focus group in the study, the authors determined that a specific international business education conference would be an appropriate sample pool for the focus group. The researcher determined that the focus group sessions would supply the diversity of culture, age, and professional experience to provide a wide variety of voices for the study. The educators in attendance at the international conference during 2019 were invited to take part in focus groups about psychological contract breaches and violations. The researcher conducted two focus groups during the conference. Twenty-two educators, in total, participated in the study and included business, technology, and language teachers along with teacher educators from university business programs, including business teacher education. The participants represented secondary (2), upper-secondary (1), post-secondary (3), community college (3), and university educators (13), from Austria, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Malta, Puerto Rico, Sweden, and the United States. Twenty participants were female and two were male. Four of the teachers were retired. All participants discussed and offered perspectives on their experiences. The voices included in this paper represent all demographics of the focus group participants.

After supplying a brief explanation of PCB and review of related literature, three main questions were asked at the beginning of each session. The participants were given large index cards and asked to write their responses to each question on a separate card.

Question 1: Have you ever experienced a PCB related to teaching? If so, please describe the experience.

Question 2: Have you ever experienced a PCB related to professional or academic service at your institution? If so, please describe the experience.

Question 3: Have you ever experienced a PCB related to research at your institution? If so, please describe the experience.

The responses were collected. Following the collection of the responses, the researcher opened the floor to discussion, allowing the participants to speak freely. The opening question for discussion was to ask how any identified PCB had affected them on a personal level. Trust was inherent between the researcher and participants due to the long-standing participation of the researcher in the organization sponsoring the conference. Trust was also clear in that the participants were comfortable with sharing their experiences. The study was reviewed and received approval from the institutional review board of the researcher and the sponsoring organization of the conference.

The participants from secondary and post-secondary institutions primarily discussed teaching and service, while university professors were concerned with PCVs related to research and tenure along with the concerns related to teaching and service.

Summary of Written Responses

Most stories revolved around the academic triad of teaching, research, and service; however, they each involve fairness related to work expectations or changes that were implemented after the employment contract had been completed.

Teaching—Theme of Fairness

The most common theme related to teaching revolved around fairness, specifically the assignment of teaching load. Fairness as a theme in PCV is supported by Argon and Ekinici (2017). Teachers at all levels reported wide variations of teaching load including some teachers receiving a four-day teaching schedule while others at their secondary and upper-secondary institutions were required to teach five days per week. University professors from small programs housed within larger departments reported teaching more course preparations, as many as eight different course preparations in an academic year, while their counterparts teaching in other programs in the same department taught a maximum of three course preparations during an academic year. Secondary teachers reported being required to teach additional sections outside of the normal school day, either before or after school without additional compensation because they were not athletic coaches. One community college instructor was given her teaching schedule several months before the semester began, only to have a new schedule containing courses she had never taught before given to her the week before classes started. She also reported that no textbooks were available and that all course materials would need to be created. A university professor was hired to teach a foundational course in the English language at a university where Spanish was the predominant language. The goal was to help the students practice their English language skills.

In the middle of the semester, the professor was told that she would be required to teach the course in Spanish, a language in which she was not fluent. Another university professor reported that she was teaching in a small program, and she was needed to teach multiple courses each semester. She was asked to design a complete program curriculum (11 courses) and guide it through the university approval process, approximate timeline of 2 – 3 years for a new program. No additional compensation was provided, and she had to continue teaching multiple course preparations each academic year while serving on various committees with mandatory meeting attendance one afternoon each week. She learned that another professor in the dominate program of the same department was given a full semester sabbatical to develop a single course and a course release during the first semester the course was offered to tweak the curriculum.

During the discussion, the faculty members who taught in small programs indicated that teaching extra sections or multiple course preparations were not viewed as a psychological contract breach at the time; however, the continued practice without equal treatment within the department led to the perception of a psychological contract violation. The faculty member who was requested to create the new program curriculum was not upset about not receiving extra time or compensation until she was denied a sabbatical in the year after the program was approved. As part of the sabbatical proposal, this faculty member was requesting the sabbatical to recharge her research agenda because she had not had enough time to conduct research during the curriculum planning and approval process. Meanwhile, her colleague in the department was given a one-semester sabbatical and a course release following the sabbatical to create the curriculum for one course.

Service—Theme of Time

Service is often the least valued part of academic life at universities, yet often the most time-consuming. Service often falls under the category of “Other Duties as Assigned” for many faculty members. Again, the overarching theme clear in the responses was related to fairness and the amount of time required. Faculty reported that if they taught in a small program, their service requirements were much greater than their colleagues in larger programs. For example, one teacher educator was “asked” to lead the department’s assurance of learning committee which had been inactive since the earlier accreditation cycle five years previously. As a teacher educator, the department chair stated that she was an expert in assessment and the only one qualified to lead the committee; however, she would continue to be required to meet the full research requirements for promotion and tenure and teach a 133% (four classes instead of the required three classes) teaching load. Another professor shared that the department where she taught included 20 faculty members in one program and three faculty members in another program. The dominant program faculty were required to serve on *one* department, college, or university committee two out of every five years. The three faculty in the smaller program were required to serve on a minimum of two committees each year because the committee structure required representation from the program. No consideration was given for a reduced teaching or research load, and their service did not receive any additional credit when compared to their colleagues from the larger program.

Related to time and service, one university professor was told that community service was a requirement for promotion and tenure at the institution. At her three-year pre-tenure review, her

productivity was examined by the promotion committee and found lacking in service. Although she had volunteered with Habitat for Humanity and in the local food pantry, her service was disqualified because it was not related to her specific academic discipline, a piece of information not documented in the promotion criteria for service within the department documents, but an anecdotal requirement of the department.

Research Issues

The most impactful PCVs often revolve around research expectations. One pre-tenure faculty member, who was in her last year before applying for promotion and tenure was told that her body of research was not enough to meet the department's guidelines. The faculty member was from a business teacher education program embedded within an accounting/finance department in a school of business. The university mission housed all teacher education programs within the college of the discipline, often placing teacher educators within departments that were unfamiliar with research related to teacher education programs. This professor focused on scholarship of teaching and learning, publishing within discipline-specific teacher education journals. The department's promotion committee proposed, and the department accepted a journal list that did not include the discipline-specific teacher education journals because these journals were not listed on the Association of Business Schools list. One of the senior faculty members in the department told her to "just publish in one of the accounting journals."

Other issues related to research include promises of a research-release in the upcoming semester to finish a large data collection project, only to be told two weeks before the semester started that she would be required to teach an additional double-section (150% course load) because a professor left the university. Another professor was told during the interview that based upon tenure-track teaching at her earlier university, she could apply for promotion after three years. When the promotion packet was submitted, the promotion committee denied the request for promotion because university union policies required a minimum of five-years of residency at the institution before promotion.

Probably one of the most stressful stories told involved the professor's locus of tenure being moved from the College of Business, Business Teacher Education Program, to the College of Education, Curriculum and Instruction Department, resulting in a delay in promotion and tenure and a decrease in salary. This professor reported that her professional identity had been altered and her professional network severely damaged. Her research agenda in business was no longer appropriate for her new locus of tenure in the College of Education and her business professional association conference attendance was no longer valued.

Limitations of Study

The stories shared are just a few of the accounts from the group of teachers in the focus group. This study is limited in scope to the participants in the focus groups and not intended to be generalized to the academy or any specific institution or level of education. Instead, the purpose is to "tell the story" of PCV in the voices of those who perceive that they have been impacted by a PCV, and to set the foundation for a larger study of business educators related to psychological contract violations.

Discussion

The personal impact of PCV to the participants are varied. Only one retired secondary teacher reported that she never experienced a PCB or PCV. Her story was one of inspiration. She told of her love of teaching her students and that any irritants caused by unenlightened administrators were minor. She ignored them and did what she wanted in the classroom.

Another secondary teacher's story was one of silence. She has spent her entire 30+ year career at the same institution. At her school, she talked about favors being granted to those teachers who did not complain. To earn the favors, teachers would complete tasks and teach as many courses as asked in order to earn the favor of the administrator which would lead to future preferential treatment. Although the need to keep quiet angered her and the other teachers at the school, they learned quickly to stay silent to receive reduced teaching and service loads. Known as quiescent silence, this attitude is supported by the literature. One result of quiescent silence is that the educator will stay silent, even to protect themselves, in order to avoid a more negative consequence (Morsch, van Dijk, & Kodden, 2020). The result, according to Payne, Culbertson, Lopez, Boswell, and Barger (2014), "suggest that employees downwardly adjust their own obligations following a psychological contract breach" (p. 6). Argon and Ekinci also found (2017) that teachers will be reluctant to challenge the administration even when the administration has been unfair. For the teacher in the focus group, she had learned that to receive favor (reduced teaching and service loads) with the administrator, she needed to suppress her voice. In this case, the PCV is related to fear and is based upon psychological climate theory described by Edmondson (2002).

For others in the group, stories of moving to different schools, sometimes even leaving the state or country to teach in other locations were common. Unlike the findings discussed by Zhao, et al. (2007) "although employees respond to psychological contract breach with negative attitudes and intentions to quit, they may not necessarily withdraw from the organization" (p. 670), 15 of the participants indicated that they had changed positions due to the PCV. Two of the teachers gave examples of applying for administrative positions within the school to leave undesirable situations or supervisors because they wanted to protect themselves from a supervisor who was perceived to be unfair and/or a bully. In both cases, the applicants for the administrative position included their direct supervisor, and both faculty members reported that they received the administrative position over their supervisor.

One community college professor shared that her working environment was so toxic, her health was affected. To survive, she not only left the department and institution, she moved her entire family from one country to another.

Implications for Institutions

A common theme was revealed when analyzing the written comments and verbal discussions. Rooted in each story is the theme of ethical leadership, or the lack thereof, that often leads to anxiety or stress. According to Erkutlu and Chafra (2014), an ethical leader exemplifies values and encourages fair behavior while serving as a role model. Each of the stories described in this paper highlights the impact of an unethical leader who often acts as a bully, causing stress and anxiety. Institutional leadership

should be aware of issues or grievances within the departments and supply a safe forum for those who have been impacted by a PCV to share the information. Additionally, institutional leadership should provide professional development to departmental leaders with supervisory roles in an attempt to avoid psychological contract breaches or violations.

Institutional leadership also may want to consider how the feeling of a psychological contract breach impacts the emotional well-being of educators. In the study conducted by Clercq, Azeen, and Haq (2020), the authors concluded that it is important for supervisors who work in complex and evolving organizations to maintain collegial relationships to avoid breaches of the psychological contract. "Ultimately, this managerial support may boost employees' resilience" (p. 13). Understanding the relationship of a PCB or a PCV on the educators' well-being is important. As concluded by Morsch, van Dijk, and Kodden (2020), "most employees often decide to remain silent in order to keep their job. However, psychological contract breaches are interrelated to job commitment and turnover intention" (p. 47).

According to the most recently published study from the Learning Policy Institute on the issue, teacher attrition in the United States was approximately 8% annually in 2012 and two-thirds of the teachers were leaving the profession before retirement. Factors that affect teachers' decisions to enter or leave the profession include compensation, preparation for teaching, mentoring and induction, and teaching conditions. When referencing teaching conditions, the teachers cited unhappiness with administrative practices (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016) which meet the definition of a PCB or a PCV.

Each of the teachers who took part in the focus groups reported PCV as they related to the dynamics of the employer/employee relationship. The conversations centered around the theme of dedication and service to their students. All the participants were willing to overlook the occasional extra duty, extra course, or extra service that is often needed of teachers. They perceived the violations after repeated or egregious instances where they felt that an administrator was treating them unfairly when compared to their colleagues. "The interpretation or sensemaking process that employees go through following breach determines if and how strongly they will perceive psychological contract violation" (Kraak, Lunardo, Herrbach, & Durrieu, 2017, p. 109). For administrators at these institutions, had the supervisor appeared to treat each teacher in an equitable manner, the teachers from the focus group would not have felt that they had been a victim of a psychological contract violation.

The educators who took part in the focus groups were deeply impacted by their perceptions of the events, and in several cases led to the faculty member leaving the institution or department. The implication related to education is one of communication and expectations. Employees expect to be treated fairly in the workplace. Kraak, Lunardo, Herrbach, and Durrieu (2017) stated that "Organizational policies include the conditions regulating interactions and provide fair treatment between the different parties in an organization. They are therefore likely to be important to every employee" (p. 115). In order to minimize a psychological contract violation, institutional leaders may consider providing professional development to supervisors when psychological contract violations are known to have happened. Unfortunately, most victims do not report the violation as has been documented across the literature (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Morsch, van Dijk, & Kodden, 2020). A more effective

recommendation for institutions is to offer professional development programs that include psychological contracts and ethical leadership. “Simply put, managers should stay on top of their promises towards their employees and be aware when promises are not fulfilled. Open and forthright communication is essential to grasp the understanding of a relational psychological contract and to recognize a breach” (Morsch, van Dijk, & Kodden, 2020, p. 48).

Future Research

Zhao, et al. (2007) suggested one avenue of future research that included voice and loyalty as they related to PCB. Specifically, voice was defined as employee engagement by “complaining both internally (e.g., to management or the union) and externally (e.g., to the media) in hope that the organization will pay attention to and correct the problem” (p. 673). This study is one small step in giving voice to academics who have experienced a PCV, and the research can continue by examining the employment outcomes of academics who both stay within departments where they have experienced a breach of a psychological contact and those who have left positions, specifically tenure-track positions, during the pre-tenure term. The researchers plan to interview tenured and tenure-track faculty regarding their experiences of PCV and describing what, if any, impact the PCV has had upon the personal health and well-being and professional actions because of the PCV experienced. This study provides the basis for creating the survey to be used in the next phase of the research.

Conclusions

Although the literature provides one solution to avoid a breach or violation in a psychological contract by creating a written record of expectations at the beginning of employment and revisiting these expectations during regular performance reviews (Hillman, 2014), it is not a practical solution because expectations evolve over time and often the expectations are not acknowledged until they have not been met; as a result, creating a written document would be virtually impossible. A psychological contract breach may occur without the employer ever knowing that the psychological contract existed in the mind of the educator.

Based upon the stories of the participants in this study, educators are resilient and willing to overlook minor psychological contract breaches; however, when faced with repeated behaviors that the faculty member perceives as either unfair or unethical, a psychological contract violation occurs. The reactions to perceived PCVs of faculty members are uniquely individualized and situation-dependent, ranging from staying silent with the hope of receiving preferential treatment up to leaving the country to find a more suitable working environment. Each of the participants in the focus group were adamant that they loved teaching and working with students; however, when faced with a supervisor who repeatedly violated the psychological contract, the faculty member sought relief in a variety of ways. It is interesting to note that two participants reported applying for administrative positions, competing against the supervisor who was responsible for the PCV. Both newly appointed administrators reported that they were seeking a way to balance the power dynamic between faculty and administration.

To avoid potential psychological contract violations, supervisors should receive professional development in the areas of ethical leadership, psychological contracts, and professional

communication strategies. Additionally, an empathetic supervisor can defuse many situations involving minor psychological contract breaches before the educators reach the point of experiencing a psychological contract violation.

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