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Technological Employees' Experiences of Psychological Contract Breach: A Phenomenological Study

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Uganda Knapps

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Walden University

2022

Abstract

Technological Employees' Experiences of Psychological Contract Breach: A
Phenomenological Study

by

Uganda Knapps

MPhil, Walden University, 2021

MA, Ashford University, 2017

Master Mason's Degree, Prince Hall Grand Lodge, State of California, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Walden University

May 2022

Abstract

The aim of this study was to understand the importance of employee relations, ethics, and values; how psychological contracts form through the lenses of ethics, values, organizational justice, and perceptions; and how a psychological contract breach (PCB) may occur in certain situations. The psychological contract is imperative for positive employee relations. The foundation on how psychological contracts form and how psychological contracts may be breached and, in extreme circumstances, violated is based in theory by Argyris and in Rousseau's theory to differentiate between psychological contract breaches and violations. An interpretive phenomenological analysis approach was used in this study to understand how technological employees form psychological contracts and how PCBs occur. Data were collected through interviews with 12 technological employees who work in North America and have experienced a PCB. Data on the lived experiences of technological employees were analyzed, and the findings were that technological workers experience a variety of PCBs. PCBs were triggered by a lack of recognition and respect and a lack of support. PCBs experienced by the participants reflected organizational failure to uphold obligations to a moral contract. The findings of this study have potential implications for positive social change as organizational and industry changes are needed to prevent behaviors that result in PCBs. Preventing PCBs can improve prosocial behavior within organizations.

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this dissertation first to Allah, and his last messenger, the prophet Muhammed. Peace be upon him (PBUH) for giving me the strength and the light. In this world and the hereafter. I would like to thank my mother, Sylvia Gans, my brother, Zolton Knapps, Sr., my uncle M.T. Gans, my uncle Joseph Barr, Timothy Barr, Bessy Gans, and Renee Barr, who are no longer here, the father who raised me, Tanimu Dasin, Sr., and my biological father, Robert Knapps, Sr., for their ongoing support throughout my life my academic career. Thank you to the Gans family, the Dasin family, the Knapps family, the McGrue family, the Barr family, the Ramsey family, and the many friends who have supported me during this journey. I want to thank my wonderful friend from Zamboanga City, Philippines, Sabrina Dalkis Biel, my Egyptian friend Dr. Mahmoud Elzouka, and my Indonesian, Nigerian, Malaysian, and Filipino friends – if I have left anyone out, I am sorry. I also want to thank Dr. Anthony L. Casas from Walden University and my assistants Kathryn Bouchard and Leighann Kimble. A special thanks to the Department of Rehabilitation of Oakland, California, for their support of my work. I want to say that my dedication to Allah and the teachings of Al-Islam have given me Nur and the strength and the discipline to get to this momentous occasion. I am humbly grateful. Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest). Lastly, I want to thank the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge F&AM of California and the Good Hope Lodge No. 29, Oakland, California, my old mother lodge.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The aim of this study was to understand the importance of employee relations, ethics, and values; how psychological contracts (PCs) form through the lenses of ethics, values, organizational justice, and perceptions; and how a psychological contract breach (PCB) may occur in certain situations. Researchers have found that employees may perceive unethical organizational behavior, which dilutes the established PC resulting in PCBs and violations (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Background on how PCs form and how PCs may be breached, and in extreme circumstances violated, is provided in this study. The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of technological employees to provide essential data and information to technological organizations on how PCBs transpire for different technological employees from diverse job classifications and various cultural backgrounds.

Then, a review of the recent literature surrounding PCs, PCBs, and the various antecedents and outcomes related to PCBs is provided. Beginning with Argyris's (1960) psychological work contract theory, which was later built upon by Rousseau (1989), an examination of the recent literature is provided to identify the gap to be filled. In this qualitative study, I investigated technological workers' lived experiences of a PCB. I sought to understand how technological employees form PCs and how breaches occur in the industry. Through a qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), the findings of this study included some answers to address the gaps in the literature.

Background

Employees in the technology sector are increasingly faced with changing responsibilities, ambiguous expectations, and conflicting values or beliefs (Moquin, 2019). When an employee enters a professional relationship with an employer in the technology sector, they enter explicit and implicit contracts. The explicit contract is the written, signed contract of employment that is legally binding for both parties (Rousseau, 2011). Nonetheless, an individual employees' perceptions and beliefs about an established contract between themselves and an employer may go deeper than the written agreement that the employee and employer signed. The employee also enters a PC (Rousseau, 1989). For example, when a department chair is arranging faculty schedules and gives a friend a more favorable teaching slot because they secretly requested it, other faculty may perceive a PCB (Lefkowitz, 2012). At the same time, the department chair may perceive a PCB due to their friend asking for a favor in a professional setting. Fairness should be conceptualized as a balanced PC, but in this example, due to the obligation to be ethical and fair, giving a favorable time slot to a favored colleague is an unethical action both on the part of the department chair and the friend who requested the favor due to the harm done to other colleagues' schedules (Lefkowitz, 2012).

Psychological contract theory (PCT) is commonly used to understand the mutual obligations between an employer and an employee, and for this study, PCT was used to explore perceptions of employees in the technology sector (Du, 2020; Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019; Rousseau, 1989). The perception that an organization has not met one or more promises or obligations within an individual's PC in a way equal to the

individual's contributions is considered a breach of the PC, commonly referred to as a PCB (Morrison & Robinson, 1996). A PCB occurs when employees perceive that their organization failed to provide resources or rewards or meet other obligations related to perceived mutual promises (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003). A perceived PCB can affect employee motivation, performance, job attitudes, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention (Laverone, 2017; Tufan, 2020). When employees perceive that their organization does not recognize their work, a PCB can result and reduce their organizational commitment and job performance (Laverone, 2017; Tufan, 2020).

According to the literature (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Laverone, 2017), employees may use a completely personal PC. The contract may be based on organizational justice, organizational citizenship behavior, or organizational ethical behavior (Greenbaum et al., 2011). For example, as Laverone (2017) pointed out, law enforcement officers in San Jose, California, had powerful PCs associated with organizational citizenship behavior that could be reduced when obligations were not fulfilled. In the case of law enforcement officers, the PC was strongly correlated with community engagement and organizational citizenship behavior, which could be affected by the *Ferguson effect*. The Ferguson effect is based on the idea that law enforcement officers are more self-conscious due to the knowledge that their actions may be recorded and shared with the public (Laverone, 2017). Therefore, law enforcement officers may choose not to engage in situations where they feel they may be accused of racial profiling or excessive force. When police force management fails to uphold its part of the PC, the

negative responses result in reduced organizational commitment and negative organizational behaviors. Law enforcement officers experience decreased job satisfaction, which can lead to organizational cynicism and employee turnover (Laverone, 2017; Handy et al., 2020).

Technology workers' perceived PCB in conjunction with experienced PCs and PC violations were explored in this study. Few studies in the literature have been conducted with a purely qualitative analysis of how technological employees experience a PCB. The findings of this research can fill that gap. Chambel and Oliveira-Cruz (2010) called for future research to analyze the effects of PCB perceptions in a military context, specifically peacekeeping, and noted that studies following a similar model in different occupations would be useful. For example, Chambel and Oliveira-Cruz (2010) showed that military peacekeepers were experiencing PCBs due to an imbalance in reciprocity, resulting in emotional exhaustion, diminished health, and increased stress levels, which ultimately affected their well-being, increased turnover intention, and reduced engagement.

Laverone (2017) showed similar patterns within the San Jose police department. In the case study, Laverone (2017) investigated the high rates of early turnover in a specific police department and found that changes to working conditions involving recognition and work–life balance can trigger a PCB and subsequently result in negative organizational outcomes, such as high turnover and diminished job satisfaction.

Bunderson (2001), Painter (2017), and Collins and Beauregard (2020) illustrated how doctors and nurses might hold similar PCs and, therefore, experience similar PCBs.

Bunderson (2001) looked specifically at the differences between professional and administrative PCs within the medical field. Bunderson included the differences in managerial and professional staff PCs, which fall along the transactional–relational spectrum I describe in Chapter 2. Bunderson (2001) also highlighted the subjective nature of the PC within a single professional field and showed how PCs exist in the field itself.

Painter (2017) looked more specifically into PCs and the hierarchy within the medical field. For example, through the lens of social identity theory (SIT), Painter found that social identity played a large role in the formation and continuance of nurses' PCs, predominantly formed by the organization's ability to promote nurses in management. When nurses formed their PC around reciprocation that is not involved with a promotion, yet they are offered a promotion, a PCB may occur because they prefer the status quo. Similarly, when doctors felt that their organization did not fulfill their PCs, their well-being and job satisfaction were compromised, leading to a subsequent PCB (Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Painter, 2017).

Another example is from a study in which researchers looked at doctors' experiences in Ireland and found that nonconsultant doctors' PCs form primarily based on training opportunities, career development, and advancement (Collins & Beauregard, 2020). The researchers found that discrepancies in training opportunities and overall organizational support did result in a PC breach (Collins & Beauregard, 2020). The above examples provide a snapshot into how PC formation and a subsequent PCB may be subjective even within the same profession.

Problem Statement

The social problem pertaining to this research is the issue of PCBs as expressed by technological employees. PCBs can lead to a variety of negative outcomes such as employee turnover (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019), counterproductive workplace behavior (Ma et al., 2019), increased levels of stress and mistrust (Duran et al., 2018), and diminished organizational citizenship behavior (Sharma et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Technology workers come from a variety of socioeconomic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and may experience a PCB in different ways (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

While ample research has been conducted about PCs (Rousseau, 1989, 2011), most studies reviewed are quantitative analyses of the phenomenon. While some researchers have examined various aspects of the PC (van Hootegem & De Witte, 2019), there has been little research that provides a qualitative analysis of PCB in the technology sector. Studies have been done on these subjects in some industries—for example, banking (van Gilst et al., 2020)—but there is little research on these phenomena in the technology industry. Given the increase in technology industry employees—e.g., software engineers, ethical hackers, and information technology (IT) employees, to name a few—it is important to understand the lived experiences of technological employees in the context of a PCB. This study was conducted to capture descriptions of technological employees' perceived experiences of a PCB at a certain point in time through an IPA lens.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. This research provides essential data and information to technological organizations on how PCBs transpire for different technological employees from diverse job classifications and various cultural backgrounds. For example, employees from certain religious backgrounds (i.e., Orthodox Jewish or Salafi Muslim) may perceive a PCB because they feel their dignity is not being respected if certain food items are served in the organization's cafeteria (Lefkowitz, 2012).

Another example of a PCB would be technology companies introducing gender-non-conforming policies such as a unisex restroom that may make certain employees feel uncomfortable due to their PC based on genderism for restrooms for separate sexes (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020; Lefkowitz, 2012). As Conway and Briner (2005) explained, employees may enter a PC with certain understandings, such as halal options in the cafeteria or allotted time and space for Jumu'ah Friday prayers, and they may experience a PCB when those expectations are not upheld. An employee enters into a PC implicitly, regardless of any explicit contracts; therefore, a PCB may occur irrespective of the social or cultural circumstances (Rousseau, 2015).

Through this study, I interpreted the meaning of the PCBs for the employees themselves, the context of the PCBs, and the perceived experiences of said PCBs. The results of this research include essential data and information for technological organizations to help them understand how an employee's PC, PCB, and in extreme

situations a PC violation, may affect their organization (Anderson, 2016; Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Research Questions

RQ1: What is the lived experiences of technological workers in the context of a PCB?

RQ2: How do technological workers understand a perceived PCB?

Specific Objective

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that any research study must explain the study's intent clearly and concisely. This study engages in an IPA of the lived experiences of technological workers who have reported a PCB. PCB is defined as the perception that an organization has not met one or more obligations within an individual's PC in a way equal to the individual's contributions (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Morrison & Robinson, 1996). Using a preliminary screening questionnaire to determine self-reported PCBs and subsequent open-ended interviews with those who self-reported a PCB, I sought to derive conclusions as to the nature of PCBs in the technology sector.

The study's participants were technological workers in North America. Participants were recruited online through social media networks, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and my personal contacts. All questionnaires and interviews were conducted online. Questionnaires were administered online, and interviews were conducted via Zoom.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theories or concepts that ground this study include Argyris's (1960) psychological work contract theory, which was later built upon by Rousseau (1989), who modified the phrase to become PCT. Argyris and Rousseau's PCT is defined as an individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between a focal person and another party. Argyris and Rousseau's PCT provides a solid foundation for understanding how technological employees describe and perceive PCBs and their effects.

Jayaweera et al. (2021) explained that cultural differences are critical to building the PC because perceptions have a deep basis in cultural norms and tradition. National culture can affect PC formation and perceived PCB based on an employee's values (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Jayaweera et al., 2021). Du and Vantilborgh (2020) illustrated the phenomenon in their work and showed that transactional PCs may be more important to Belgian employees, whereas relational PCs may be more important to Chinese employees. Similarly, Englehart (2017) noted that active-duty military may experience a PC based on cultural and family values. For example, those with strong religious connections may experience a PCB when deployed overseas during the holiday season (Englehart, 2017).

Argyris (1960) developed the groundwork for understanding human beings' strategies to organize themselves in society to achieve their goals. Traditionally, the organizational structure is in the form of a pyramid, which relates to formal organizational structures (Argyris, 1960). Argyris sought to create generalizations to

develop a theory that applies to all types of organizations: government, military, or professional. Argyris (1960) used the traditional scientific method of testing hypotheses to derive conclusions, as in the field of biology, to the field of psychology and organizational relationships. Argyris (1960) introduced the concept of semistructured research interviews with lower-level employees to gauge employee reactions to organizational change over time.

Argyris (1960) introduced the psychological work contract, defined as an implicit agreement between an employee and an organization. This agreement implies that employees will act productively, assuming they will be treated with respect and granted autonomy. Managers will ensure that employees' cultural norms are upheld (i.e., transactional contracts, respectable wages, and long-term job security; Argyris, 1960). Organizational change stresses the implicit agreements involved in the psychological work contract, which was considered primarily transactional when conceived of. For example, the contracts were based mainly on wages, hours, and benefits. However, later iterations of the theory included relational PCs as well (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011). Conway and Briner (2015) explained the cultural aspects of a PC and PCB and contended that when employers respect employees' cultures, the employees are more likely to perform better.

Rousseau (1989) built on Argyris's (1960) theory by investigating how employee needs and subsequent psychological work contracts evolve over time. Employees are not ignorant of how the free-market system works and are therefore aware of competition, changes in labor demand, and changes in wages and that organizational change is an

inevitable part of the psychological work contract (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 1989).

PCT has evolved over time, as have workplace values and expectations. Managers may still subscribe to the traditional, transactional psychological work contract Argyris (1960) originally posited. Still, as Greenbaum et al. (2011) and Rousseau (1989) show, the theory continues to evolve. In this study, IPA data on the current lived experiences of technological workers were collected to develop insight into the phenomenon's evolution.

Rousseau (1989) enhanced the development of Argyris's (1960) psychological work contract in "Psychological and Implied Contracts in Organizations." Rousseau built on the theory by suggesting that the unwritten PC has dual forms that develop from the relationship between employees and their organization. For example, a PC may form due to an individual employee's understanding of existing obligations and expectations regarding the principle of implied reciprocity from their employer or organization (Rousseau, 1989).

Rousseau's (1989) work confirms that the parties involved in a PC are the individual employee and the organization and explains that the PC is more than just a subjective relationship between the employee and the organization. The PC requires a joint obligation and an intercultural relationship on a dyadic level (Niels et al., 2012). For example, the implied contract consists of multiple patterns of previously fulfilled obligations based on employees' interactions with the organization that evolved into a sociocultural dyadic relationship. The PC is contingent on an individual's relationship

with leadership, management, coworkers, and the overall organization (Niels et al., 2012).

Rousseau (1989) further detailed those mutual obligations as being defined as a subjective understanding that an employee's role in the implicit contract is that they are expected to work hard in the expressed interest of the organization. On the other hand, employers retain productive employees (Rousseau, 1989). A PC derives from the perceived promises that individual employees believe will be upheld concerning the mutual obligations established between themselves and the organization (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Nonetheless, a PC can be based on other components, including the individual's relationship with their organization and relationships with other employees, managers, and high-level leaders within the overall organization (Niels et al., 2012).

Rousseau (1989) posited that intrinsic factors promote a PC. Employees try to establish the existence of a PC by confirming overt promises or obligations in the form of an explicit commitment to training, working conditions, compensation, etc. The obligations or promises are clearly established and can be solidified through the participation of witnesses or a written agreement that concretizes the implied contract (Rousseau, 1989).

Rousseau (1989) argued that the conceptualization of the PC should be focused on the employee's experience. Rousseau (1989) stated that individual employees can enter a PC with an organization, but the organization cannot have a PC with their employees. However, managers can enter PCs, as explained by the dyadic nature of the theory (Rousseau, 1989). Rousseau's work establishes the importance of personal relationships

across levels of management, the effects on the PC, and helps to separate those relationships from the employees' identification with their organization. Various organizational relationships and how they affect perceived PCBs and subsequent effects were explored in this study.

According to Greenberg (2011), organizational justice theory, which encompasses Adams' equity theory, confirms Argyris's (1960) psychological work contract. As Greenberg (2011) and Niels et al. (2012) stated, employees engage in social comparison and the social relation model, which encompasses communication dynamics and self-disclosure. For example, employees compare themselves with colleagues, managers, and even their CEOs based on two distinct factors. Specifically, they compare their own inputs and the subsequent outcomes to others' inputs and outcomes, which may be perceived as unequal or unfair, affecting the PC. This can ultimately result in the PC being breached, resulting in negative outcomes for the employee and the organization (Greenberg, 2011).

Nature of the Study

This qualitative IPA study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of technological workers in the context of a PCB and how they perceive a PCB. The key concept observed in this study was a PCB and its effects on technological employees. The study consisted of a series of interviews, beginning with a screening questionnaire, to reach saturation, expected to occur with 12 participants (Creswell & Creswell., 2018). Once saturation was achieved, I performed a series of open-ended semistructured interviews with participants via Zoom call. The interviews were audio and video recorded

so I could review the interviews and interpret participants' facial cues and body language to understand their past and present experiences and perceptions, the meanings of their answers, and the specific words they used (Anderson, 2016). I served as a research instrument by interpreting the interviews and subsequently coding to identify themes and patterns (Anderson, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fisher et al., 2012).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study and are defined as follows:

High-power incentives: Incentives given based on clear metrics that correlate exactly with outcomes or performance (Organ et al., 2011).

Low-power incentives: Reward structures or incentives based on ambiguous, discretionary forms of compensation that may or may not come to fruition and are based on levels of trust (Organ et al., 2011).

Middle-power incentives: A combination of high-power and low-power incentives based on trust and tangible metrics.

Perception: The interaction between a presented stimulus, internal hypotheses, knowledge, motivational factors, emotional factors, and expectations (Eysenck & Keane, 2000).

Psychological contract (PC): An employee's subjective beliefs regarding a promise-based exchange agreement with their organization premised on perceived obligations, both explicit and implicit (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2001).

Psychological contract breach (PCB): The perception that an organization has not met one or more obligations within an individual's PC in a way that is equal to the individual's contributions (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Morrison & Robinson, 1996).

Psychological contract violation: An emotional response to the perceived failure of a party involved in the PC to uphold their commitments or obligations (Rousseau, 2011).

Technological employees: Employees who work for organizations predominantly devoted to producing IT, computing systems, information engineering, software engineering, programming, project management, and program development. Technological employees work for companies dedicated to applying the scientific method for practical purposes in multiple industries.

Assumptions

A research assumption was that the technological workers who participated in the study represented all technological workers in similar settings. I assumed that the screening questionnaire would identify technological workers who have experienced a PCB. I also assumed that technological workers would candidly relate their real-life experiences honestly during the interview process.

Scope and Delimitations

The aim of this study was to understand the experiences of PCB for technological workers. This focus was chosen because there is not sufficient understanding surrounding PCB for technological employees. This study specifically involved technological employees in North America who had self-identified using a screening questionnaire as

having experienced a PCB. This study, in line with many others considered in the literature review (Anderson, 2016; Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Duran et al., 2019; Organ et al., 2011), is focused on a specific sector of the labor market, but findings may prove useful for other sectors.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study was that most of the participants came from the same social networks. Another limitation was that there might be more IT workers than software engineers, limiting the application of the findings to the entire technological sector. All interviews were conducted online due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, limiting my ability to read body language and other nonverbal cues.

Significance

This study is significant as the findings can be used to address the social problem of PCBs expressed by technological employees. PCBs can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, such as employee turnover (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019), counterproductive workplace behavior (Ma et al., 2019), increased levels of stress and mistrust (Duran et al., 2018), and diminished organizational citizenship behavior (Sharma et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Technology workers in North America come from a variety of socioeconomic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and may experience a PCB in different ways. This research provides a deeper understanding of how PCBs affect technological employees. In turn, the findings provide useful data to employers to avoid negative outcomes associated with PCBs.

Significance to Practice

A deeper understanding of how technological employees perceive and experience PCBs will allow employers and employees to mitigate the negative outcomes of breach by implementing improved employee training and employee relations. For example, this study's data could be used to help human relations departments identify when a PCB has occurred and implement programs that prescribe prosocial responses to unethical behavior within the organization (Mayer, 2011).

Significance to Theory

This study builds on recent research investigating the effects of a PCB in the workplace. This study continues the work of Argyris (1960), Rousseau (1989, 2011), Robinson (1996), and Greenbaum et al. (2011) to understand what is perceived as a PCB and the subsequent outcomes associated with a perceived breach or, in extreme cases, a violation.

Significance to Social Change

Social justice may be defined in various ways, including empowering individuals to advocate for themselves in the face of oppression or transforming organizations to support the common good (Vasquez, 2012). This study impacts social change by highlighting where perceived injustice affects technological workers' PCs and contributes to improved employee relations between technological employees and their organizations (Vasquez, 2012). Encouraging prosocial behavior in the workplace can empower employees and can even lead to broader social change in the industry (Mayer, 2011).

Summary

PCBs are based on the perceptions of the relationships that employees have with their organization. While PCBs are not necessarily problematic, the true effect of the PCB depends on how an employee perceives that PCB (Rousseau, 2011). An employee's relationship with their organization can determine whether a PCB triggers a PC violation, ultimately leading to negative organizational outcomes. The goal of this research was to understand how technological employees form PCs and how PCBs occur in the industry. I sought to examine what triggers a PCB for technological employees, and if a PCB did occur, how was it perceived. I explored whether organizations were upholding their promises or obligations and the severity of the PCBs experienced. These focus areas provoked this investigation of the phenomenon of PCB in the technological sector. An IPA approach was used to understand the shared lived experiences of employees within the technology industry from diverse backgrounds in real-time. This IPA study was conducted to develop an understanding of the phenomenon and shed light on how technological employees perceive PCs within the technology industry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The aim of this qualitative IPA study was to understand how technological employees in North America from various socioeconomic, religious, and cultural backgrounds experience a perceived PCB. These employees are highly skilled and educated and may experience that the organizations they work for fail to uphold certain promises, obligations, and moral expectations within the organizational setting, resulting in a PCB (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2011).

The social problem that prompted this research was the issue of PCBs as expressed by technological employees. PCBs can lead to a variety of negative outcomes such as employee turnover (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019), counterproductive workplace behavior (Ma et al., 2019), increased levels of stress and mistrust (Duran et al., 2018), and diminished organizational citizenship behavior (Sharma et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Technology workers in the San Francisco Bay area come from a variety of socioeconomic, religious, and cultural backgrounds and may experience a PCB in different ways (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

While ample research has been conducted about the PC (Rousseau, 1989, 2011), most studies are quantitative analyses of the phenomenon. While there are some studies in which researchers examine various aspects of the PC (van Hootegem & De Witte, 2019), there is little research that provides a qualitative analysis of PCB in the technology sector. Studies have been done on these subjects in some industries—for example, banking (van Gilst et al., 2020)—but there is little research on these phenomena in the

technology industry. Given the growth of the technology industry, e.g., software engineering, ethical hackers, and IT employees, etc., it is important to understand the lived experiences of technological employees in the context of a PCB. The goal of conducting this study was to capture the descriptions of the technological employees' experiences of a PCB at a certain point in time through an IPA lens.

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived and shared experiences of perceived PCBs. This research could provide essential data and information to technological organizations on how PCBs transpire for different technological employees from diverse job classifications and various cultural backgrounds. For example, employees from certain religious backgrounds (i.e., Orthodox Jewish or Salafi Muslim) may perceive a PCB because they feel their dignity is not being respected if certain food items are served in the organization's cafeteria (Lefkowitz, 2012).

Another example would be technology companies introducing gender-non-conforming policies, such as a unisex restroom, that may make certain employees feel uncomfortable due to their PC based on genderism for restrooms for individual sexes (APA, 2020; Lefkowitz, 2012). As Conway and Briner (2005) explained, employees may enter into a PC with certain expectations, such as availability of halal options in the cafeteria or allotted time and space for Jumu'ah Friday prayers. Employees may experience a PCB when those expectations are not upheld. An employee enters a PC implicitly, regardless of any explicit contracts; therefore, a PCB may occur irrespective of the social or cultural circumstances (Rousseau, 2015).

This study provided insight regarding the meaning of the PCB for the employees themselves, the context of the PCB, and the perceived experiences of said PCB. The results of this research included essential data and information for technological organizations to help them develop an understanding of how an employee's PC, PCB, and in extreme situations, PC violation may affect their organization (Anderson, 2016; Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

Upon an initial review of the literature, I found that a PCB can lead to negative perceptions, such as lack of recognition, lack of communication, broken promises, and unfairness (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). These perceptions as a product of the PCB can result in negative outcomes like high turnover intention rates, poor organizational perceptions, lack of communication, mistrust (Conway & Briner, 2005; Duran et al., 2018), and diminished organizational citizenship behavior (Sharma et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2020), among other problems.

There is limited literature on PCBs in the technology sector. While there is a large body of literature focused on various aspects of PCs and PCBs (Achnak et al., 2021; Conway & Briner, 2005; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), and multiple recent studies on PCBs in specific sectors or professions like banking (van Gilst et al., 2020), hospitality (Xiaolin et al., 2019), law enforcement (Duran et al., 2021) firefighting (Duran et al., 2018), adjunct professors (Anderson, 2016), medical workers (Collins & Beauregard, 2020), the National Guard (Englehardt, 2016) and manufacturing (Krause & Moore, 2017), there has been little work focused explicitly on PCBs among technological workers. This chapter includes a review of the existing literature. Based on this review, I

present a gap in the literature from the technological employee perspective in understanding their experiences of a PCB.

This chapter begins with the search strategy used, including key search terms. Then I present the content organized by major themes in the literature regarding PCB research: PC, PCB, PCBs in the workplace, antecedents to a PCB, negative outcomes of a PCB, and employees' experiences with PCBs. A summary of the key points from the relevant literature is presented to conclude this chapter. The conclusion includes a summary of key findings and the gap established from this literature review related to this project.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature contained in this review was retrieved from Walden University's Library databases, including EBSCO Host, ProQuest, and Thoreau. Sources also came from the Society for Industrial–Organizational Psychology. The following are terms used both individually and in combination to identify relevant sources: PCB, PC violations, PCs quantitative, PC breaches qualitative, PC violations qualitative, PC breaches quantitative, PC reactions, cultural differences in PC, PC breach technological employees, PC breach technology, and employee's citizenship behavior qualitative. Other major search terms included promises, obligations, outcomes, perceptions, turnover, job performance, attitudes, and commitment.

All articles included in the literature review were peer-reviewed. To ensure the relevance of the sources included in this literature review, 85% were published between 2017 and 2021. All references have been reviewed thoroughly for quality, relevance, and

overall importance to establishing a meaningful gap. In the section to follow, I present a review of the relevant literature.

Conceptual Framework

The theories or concepts that grounded this study included Argyris's (1960) psychological work contract theory, which was later built upon by Rousseau (1989), who modified the phrase to become PCT. Argyris's (1960) and Rousseau's (1989) PCT is defined as an individual's belief regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between a focal person and another party. Argyris and Rousseau's PCT provides a solid foundation for understanding how technological employees describe and perceive PCBs and their effects.

Argyris (1960) sought to create generalizations so that a theory could develop that applies to all types of organizations: government, military, or professional. Argyris (1960) applied the traditional scientific method of testing hypotheses to derive conclusions to the field of psychology and organizational relationships. To do so, Argyris (1960) introduced the concept of semistructured research interviews with lower-level employees to gauge employee reactions to organizational change over time.

Argyris (1960) then introduced the idea of the psychological work contract, which is understood to be an implicit agreement between an individual employee and an organization. The definition includes the assumption that employees will be productive when they believe they will be treated with respect and granted autonomy. The psychological work contract also assumes that managers ensure that employees' cultural norms are upheld, i.e., transactional contracts, respectable wages, long-term job security

(Argyris, 1960). Organizational change stresses the implicit agreements involved in the psychological work contract, considered primarily transactional when conceived. For example, the contracts were based mainly on wages, hours, benefits, etc. However, later iterations of the theory include relational PCs as well (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Rousseau (1989) built on Argyris' (1960) theory by investigating how employee needs and the psychological work contract evolve over time. Employees are not ignorant of how the free-market system works and are therefore aware of the competition, changes in labor demand, and changes in wages; they are cognizant that organizational change is inevitable and a part of the psychological work contract (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 1989).

PCT has evolved over time, as have workplace values and expectations. Some managers may still prescribe the traditional, transactional psychological work contract Argyris (1960) originally posited. However, Greenbaum et al. (2011) and Rousseau (1989) confirmed that PCT evolves in terms of values, morals, volunteering behavior through organizational citizenship behavior, and high or low incentives (Greenberg, 2011; Organ et al., 2011), meaning that the concept evolves.

This study will provide an IPA of data on the current lived experiences of technological workers to continue insight into the phenomenon's evolution. PC theory is appropriate for this study as it expands on the moral and obligational processes that affect employees, including ethical considerations and employees' overall well-being (Greenbaum et al., 2011). The conceptualization of the PC and its balance, breach, or

violation is an appropriate paradigm to understand the lived experiences of technological employees and how they perceive organizational fairness (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Literature Review

Psychological Contract

There is ample literature investigating the concept of PCs. A PC is used to understand cognitive employment relationships in the workplace. A PC serves as a framework for investigating employer–employee workplace relationships (Handy et al., 2020). PCs are the implicit contracts employees have with their employer (Conway & Briner, 2005). This contract can begin at the earliest stages of recruitment, including job applications and preliminary interviews (Abela & Debono, 2019). The perceptions of obligations and promises that employees conceptualize that an organization will fulfill greatly affect the PC (Rousseau, 2011).

Rousseau (2011) pointed out several key factors of PC research. Rousseau described the history of individual and organizational exchange relationships between employees and organizations. According to Rousseau, the PC is the heart of a reciprocal exchange relationship between employees and their organizations. Rousseau found that a PC is based on individual implicit and explicit commitments of a perceived exchange agreement between the employee and the organization (2011). PCs are formed by formal and informal cognitions, social values, and organizational cultural psychology that help formulate the PC structure based upon past and present experiences within an organization (Rousseau, 2011). Another factor influencing the PC is the social relation

model, defined as a methodological approach to understanding interdependence among individuals between themselves and within group dynamics (Niels et al., 2012).

Rousseau (2011) argued that employees' PCs are formulated and interpreted on two basic levels: a higher-level PC and a lower-level PC. A higher-level PC is based on a belief, a schema or a basic script, a common theme, or a routine. A lower-level PC is built upon a process that consists of a new organizational experience (e.g., organizational change management). According to Costa and Neves (2017), this can be a precipitating factor leading to a PCB.

Rousseau (2011) outlined that a PCB is subsequently formulated through the process of a combination of both higher-level and lower-level perceptions of a perceived obligation or promise not being kept by an employee's organization. Rousseau provided a synopsis of how promises and obligations are reached and explained how higher-level and lower-level PCs are historically breached. Rousseau's (2011) work is pertinent to this study because the scholar provided other researchers with a framework regarding the development of PCs and their subsequent breaches.

Upholding Perceived Promises or Expectations

Moquin and Riemenschneider (2019) defined an obligation as a formal contract or promise that requires a specific course of action, and its fulfillment comes to be when a product or service is successfully provided to the customer. Upholding perceived promises and expectations includes organizational support in the form of autonomy, trust, job satisfaction, and the close relationship between a protégé and their mentor (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). When forming the PC, employees naturally seek out favorable

dynamics for them culturally, personally, and professionally (Anderson, 2016; Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019).

Technological employees may base the success of a project on whether they have perceived the experience of a PCB (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). For example, technological employees working at the Enron Corporation experienced PCBs due to the organization's unethical behavior, leaving them feeling betrayed and bitter (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). Failures concerning reciprocity ultimately decrease job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behavior and diminish what Moquin and Riemenschneider (2019) described as give-and-take relationships.

One of the sectors investigated was academia, specifically adjunct university faculty at the University of the Rockies in Colorado (Anderson, 2016). This article is of interest for the study given the nature of the highly skilled workforce, the transience of the work itself, and the high occurrence of PCB. Anderson defined the PC as an individual's beliefs shaped by the organization for which they work. The PCB is the organization's failure to meet individuals' expectations based on their perceived PC. He builds on the definitions presented in Greenbaum et al. (2011), including employees feeling misled or betrayed by their organization management. The study focuses on adjunct faculty members in higher education, which Anderson (2016) described as growing compared to tenured faculty.

Anderson (2016) examined the lived experiences, reactions, and meanings associated with those experiences to provide insight into the PC and PCB. Adjunct professors experienced internal psychological conflicts, which were perceived as PCBs.

Adjunct professors tend to be more aware that PCBs can occur and tend to be on the lookout for PCBs because they have a sense of entitlement, and it is hard for them to obtain long-term job security (Anderson, 2016; van Hootegem & Hans De Witte, 2019). When hired, adjunct professors felt that there was little communication and support.

Adjunct professors seek out PCBs even if they may not have occurred, based upon their perception of unfulfilled idle promises by senior tenured university faculty (Anderson, 2016; Rousseau, 1995). Like hospitality industry workers, Adjunct professors try to establish reciprocity in the form of a PC based on feedback, recognition, or job security (Anderson, 2016; Shi & Gordon, 2019). Anderson (2016) pointed out that negative employee behaviors might increase when a PCB is perceived to have occurred. Employees felt they were unable to get to know their colleagues, that higher education is just a business, and that they were not included in decision making. They did not feel valued as adjunct professors by their tenured peers.

Anderson (2016) illustrated how a PCB is experienced when an adjunct professor starts the job and realizes it is not what they expected. He further explains the difference between a PCB, which is the recognition of an unfulfilled promise, for example, unethical organizational behavior, in this case, reduced pay, and a PC violation which refers to the behaviors exhibited based on a perceived PCB (Anderson, 2016). When a violation occurs, adjunct professors may react through striking, organized protests, or negative attitudes towards leadership (Greenbaum et al., 2011). For example, PCBs affect employees' technical performance, communication, initiative, persistence, effort, and counterproductive work behavior (Campbell, 2013). Campbell (2013) illustrated that

technical performance might suffer due to difficulty focusing on the tasks at hand, communication can diminish, initiative may go down when it comes to taking on extra hours or tasks, and employees may engage in more counterproductive work behavior that goes against an organization's goals.

Professors had negative reactions to the perceived PCB, leaving them feeling powerless and disconnected. They perceived that promises that were made during the hiring process were not upheld. One theme that came up was that of status, both internal and external. Another theme was the purpose and desire to help others, even after a PCB, which propelled adjunct professors to continue their work despite having experienced a PCB (Anderson, 2016).

Anderson (2016) showed how a phenomenological approach to the PCB provides insight into the experience, reactions, and meanings associated with them in the case of adjunct professors' perceived PCBs. He explained how this methodology truly allows the researcher to get into the mindset of the subject, in this case, adjunct professors, and understand their mindset from a deeper, internal perspective (Anderson, 2016). Anderson (2016) explained what the academic community could do to help adjunct professors that are excited and eager to teach and help others even in the face of adversity. Keeping promises and communicating when follow-through is not feasible can avoid a perceived PCB. Rapid, personalized communication and appreciation contribute to the maintenance of the PC (Anderson, 2016). This study is an excellent example of a phenomenological qualitative methodology that digs deeply into the lived experiences of professionals that experience a PCB.

Laverone (2017) found in their case study on law enforcement that police officers experienced PCBs based on recruitment. Officers were told that they would receive pay raises or, conversely, that by taking a pay cut, their colleagues could keep their jobs, which was not true. At that time, the officers perceived that they had organizational support. When they did not receive that perceived support, they experienced PCB (Laverone, 2017, Shi & Gordon, 2019).

Similarly, Leigh (2018) proposed that a lack of perception of upheld promises or expectations can diminish employee job attitudes, particularly job satisfaction. A lack of effective, timely feedback and fulfillment of obligations from managers can contribute to the perception of a PCB (Leigh, 2018; De Jong et al., 2020). Managers across sectors, for example, in the medical field, such as doctors who have high job satisfaction and teamwork, engage in transactional PCs that remain upheld. On the other hand, when doctors' roles are changing, for example, they are required to take on more administrative tasks than originally expected, a PCB may occur. Still, job satisfaction does not necessarily diminish (Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Dalal & Crede, 2013; Shi & Gordon, 2019).

Psychological Contract Breach

Robinson (1996) defined the PC as an individual's beliefs about an exchange agreement between themselves and an organization and further explained that PCs are a subjective process for the individual employee based on how they interpret perceived PCs versus an explicit contract with their organization. In other words, the PC is an exclusively implicit contract between the employee and their organization that the

organization might not be aware of. By definition, an organization cannot hold a PC with an individual employee, although members of the organization can (Robinson, 1996).

Robinson (1996) explained that a PCB is based on an employee's implicit beliefs and perceptions that promises or obligations have not been fulfilled, which ultimately affects the individual employee's behavior and attitudes regardless of whether a legitimate PCB took place (van Gilst, 2020). A PCB is also defined as "unmet expectations" (Conway & Briner, 2005, p. 70). When expectations are not met, job satisfaction and performance have been seen to experience negative consequences, resulting in decreased trust and performance outcomes overall (Conway & Briner, 2005). Conway & Briner (2005) explained that there is a difference between a PCB and a PC violation. A PCB consists of a cognitive comparison of what has been promised and delivered, while a violation is an emotional reaction to the PCB itself (Conway & Briner, 2005.)

PCBs are highly correlated with negative employee and organizational outcomes based on past employment experiences (van Gilst et al., 2020). For example, employees with previous PCBs or violations struggle to establish new PCs (van Gilst et al., 2020). Additional negative effects include negative employee attitudes, reduced job performance, increased turnover intention, and reduced well-being (Schleicher et al., 2010). Van Gilst et al. (2020) elaborated on the subject by highlighting that PCBs negatively affect how employees establish new PCs within their current or future organizations.

Anderson (2016) said that employees develop PCs and that PC development is based upon past experiences of PCBs and violations and the present work culture and environment (van Gilst et al., 2020; Roehl, 2019). When an employee is at an organization where they have never experienced a PCB or violation, the first PCB may not affect their job attitudes or organizational trust. However, when PCBs continue over time, they may accumulate and result in a lowered interest in the organization's values and goals and lead to a psychological contract violation (Conway & Briner, 2005; Robinson, 1996; van Gilst et al., 2020).

Researchers agree that the experience of a PCB can have consequences, both positive and negative (although primarily negative, as the literature surveyed will show) (Conway & Briner, 2005). However, there is still a significant gap in frequency and the overall effects of PCB (Conway & Briner, 2005). Additionally, employee and manager perceptions may differ when considering whether a PCB has or has not occurred. Subordinate employees typically perceive promises to have been broken, and managers tend to have the opposite experience (Conway & Briner, 2005). In the following section, recent studies report the effects of an experienced PCB in the workplace with more detailed outcomes. When a PCB occurs, employees tend to assume the best and attribute the PCB to a one-off mistake. Still, as PCBs continue to occur, employees rapidly lose trust in their organization (van Gilst et al., 2020). When PCBs persist, the relationship erodes, with trust in the organization ultimately becoming diminished, and the PC dissolves (van Gilst et al., 2020).

PCBs affect employee career aspirations needed to become a manager (i.e., leadership factors) (Painter, 2017). PCs are dissolved when PCBs and violations occur because organizations do not uphold their PCs with employees. Violations also occurred when PCs were broken, such as when career promotions did not occur, employee development and training were lacking, and compensation remained stagnant (Painter, 2017).

Robinson (1996) and van Gilst (2020) both highlighted the negative effects of a PCB on perceived past experiences and current situations when the PCB results in increased employee turnover intention and reduced organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB is a positive antecedent for organizational trust. It is correlated with positive perceptions of organizational justice depending on the nature of the PC (i.e., whether it is transactional, relational, or balanced) (Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Based on the literature reviewed until this point, it is evident that PCBs are common in the workplace. Employees who have experienced a PCB tend to scan for and identify PCBs to ensure the organization upholds the PC between themselves and the organization (Anderson, 2016; Robinson, 1996).

Team Psychological Contracts

Cruz et al. (2020) approached the PC from a group perspective. They argued that the aggregate perceptions of team task and relationship conflict positively correlate with individuals' team PCB perceptions. In their review of the literature, they noted that members of teams that report high levels of intrateam conflict or disagreement perceived higher levels of PCB by their teams. They focused on task conflict and relationship

conflict, the former concerning work-related problems and the latter concerning personal issues (Cruz et al., 2020).

Using a cross-sectional design study, Cruz et al. (2020) measured individual-level perceived team PCB, perceived team support, and team identification as well as team level intrateam task conflict, intrateam relationship conflict, and team size. They found that higher levels of the perceived group task and relationship conflict cause individuals to perceive PCB more frequently in the team context. They further found that task conflict has a greater effect than relationship conflict, and perceptions of team support can mitigate perceptions of relationship conflict and subsequent PCB (Cruz et al., 2020). The article provides insight into the study at hand, as interview participants may have experienced a PCB due to a lack of team support or perceived team conflict.

Job Satisfaction

Schleicher et al. (2010) defined job satisfaction from two different approaches. First, they define job satisfaction as a positive emotional feeling regarding one's place of employment and an employee's perception of their values within their organization. Subsequently, Schleicher et al. (2010) redefined job satisfaction as an employee's emotional well-being based on perceived equity and distributive outcomes. Ultimately, Schleicher et al. (2010) suggested that job satisfaction is an emotional state of mind that equates to a positive emotional reaction.

Schleicher et al. (2010) noted that job satisfaction does not necessarily strongly correlate with work outcomes. However, in more recent research, Leigh (2018) suggested that a stronger precursor that predicts work outcomes that affect job satisfaction and

performance would be a PCB. Leigh (2018) elaborated on the concept of the PCB by explaining the link between job satisfaction that hinges upon a balanced PC. Furthermore, the equity in a balanced PC consists of the organization upholding ethical values, explicit contracts, employee recognition, and feedback. Subsequently, job satisfaction and performance diminish when an employee perceives that one of these mechanisms has been breached (Leigh, 2018).

In her article, Leigh (2018) connected union membership with job satisfaction and found a positive correlation between PCB and job satisfaction levels, namely that they diminished following a PCB. However, (Leigh 2018) found that union membership did not mitigate the relationship between a perceived PCB and affective commitment, nor did a perceived PCB affect job satisfaction differently between the union and non-union members.

Abdelmoteleb (2019) conducted a study on work-home interference (WHI), job satisfaction (JS), and PCB. He defined WHI as how work and family obligations conflict due to varied demands. However, he noted that the literature shows interference from work is greater than that from home. Work-home balance contributes to individuals' physical and psychological resources, contributing to their employer's attitudes and feelings of value (Abdelmoteleb, 2019).

Abdelmoteleb (2019) used a cross-lagged panel method to analyze the experiences of full-time employees of three national medium-sized organizations in the city of Tanta, Egypt. This methodology allows for a longitudinal approach to the

research, which is required to gain insight into the PC itself. Abdelmoteleb (2019) administered questionnaires to the employees for self-reporting.

Abdelmoteleb (2019) developed a model to measure the interactions among WHI, JS, and PCB. He found that PCB magnified the negative impacts of WHI on JS over time. He also found that JS has a positive effect on WHI and home life in general. Employees that experience a PCB tend to experience a crossover effect in their home life. Abdelmoteleb's (2019) work is relevant to the study at hand as it calls for increased investigation into cultural values and cues in the context of PCB and, subsequently, JS. PCs are closely related to a person's values, which will be investigated through the semi-structured interviews used for this qualitative study.

In closing, job satisfaction is a major facet of employees' experience in the context of PCB (Anderson, 2016; Leigh, 2018; Schleicher et al., 2010). Using an IPA approach will build on previous research on the relationship between job satisfaction and PCB by presenting the various levels of consciousness when employees experience a PCB and job satisfaction is lessened (Anderson, 2016; Giorgi, 2009; Leigh, 2018; Schleicher et al., 2010). As was the case with law enforcement officers affected by poor recruitment strategies (Laverone, 2017), the PCB reduced job satisfaction. It is, therefore, safe to hypothesize that technological employees may experience diminished job satisfaction following a perceived PCB based on previous qualitative PC research.

Antecedents to PCB

A qualitative methodology and IPA study design were used in this study to organize data through perceived lived experiences that may have subjective

interpretations of the occurrences contributing to a PCB. Antecedents to a PCB depend on an individual's personal experiences leading up to the perceived breach (Giorgi, 2009; Leigh, 2018; Moustakas, 1994).

Peng et al. (2016) investigated procedural justice climate (PJC) and servant leadership as antecedents to a perceived PCB. They further looked at how PCB can mediate servant leadership relationships and deviant employee behavior. They sought to explain how leadership can better understand PCB to suppress deviant employee behavior within the organization (Peng et al., 2016).

They identify a variety of antecedents to a perceived PCB that may include adjustment strategies such as organizational downsizing or outsourcing to lower-cost jurisdictions due to the competitive nature of the business environment (Peng et al., 2016). They confirmed what the previous literature posits, stating that PCB may lead to negative perspectives and negative emotional reactions, including job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and anger (Peng et al., 2016). Peng et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative analysis of 347 questionnaires given to workers sampled from 94 restaurant chain stores in Taiwan. Senior employees assessed the deviant workplace behavior of their coworkers, and coworkers completed information related to PCB, supervisor-servant leadership, procedural justice climate, and causality attribution to understand the antecedents to a perceived PCB better.

The researchers found that supervisor servant behavior and PJC can suppress deviant behavior in a PCB. They suggested that most PCB is due to perceived intentionally broken obligations or promises, but they also indicate that their results show

employee locus of causality, for example, a clear understanding of why organizational change is taking place, the relationship between PCB and employee deviant behavior can be moderated (Peng et al., 2016).

Magano and Thomas (2017) and Peng et al. (2019) pointed out that during periods of organizational change, PCB is likely and that barriers to communication such as misunderstandings, perceptions of PC breach, and lack of communication may arise. Understanding the defined and identified factors that contribute to a PC breach will serve to screen the candidates for participation in the study at hand.

In a diverse work environment, such as the technological industry, there are many precursors to a PCB, which Schleicher et al. (2010) define as an antecedent to negative work outcomes. Negative work outcomes include high employee turnover, high turnover intention, withdrawal behaviors, and reduced job performance (Schleicher et al., 2010). Moreover, one of the indicators of a PCB, as it pertains to an antecedent, is the failure of an organization to uphold its ethical values, obligations, trust, and promises. When these phenomena occur, they can damage employees' PCs resulting in a PCB (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Tufan et al., 2017).

One indicator that a PCB will occur as it pertains to this research in the technological sphere is that employees may feel that they have been betrayed (Treybou et al., 2016). For example, Treybou et al. (2016) found that when a PCB in nursing was experienced, nurses' attitudes affected their sense of betrayal. Subsequently, a PCB and, in some cases, a PC violation would occur (Schleicher et al., 2010).

Antecedents vary greatly in the context of a PCB (Schleicher et al., 2010). Lack of trust, poor organizational citizenship behavior, poor organizational climate and culture, high levels of role conflict, and ambiguity in expectations are all factors that can result in poor work outcomes (Schleicher et al., 2010). Tufan and Wendt (2020) defined a PC as an antecedent. When a PC is balanced, there will be more positive outcomes because it is closely correlated with high job satisfaction, transactional contracts (i.e., pay), or union commitment. However, when the PC becomes unbalanced, a PCB can occur, negatively affecting organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and family-work conflict (Schleicher et al., 2010).

According to Tufan and Wendt (2020), an antecedent to a PCB occurs when there is a perception that social exchange in the form of reciprocity has been damaged, for example, when a transactional PC such as an annual pay raise is unfulfilled or a relational PC, for example when the organization's ethics are not in line with those of the employee (Greenbaum et al., 2011), a PCB takes place resulting in negative job outcomes.

Du and Vantilborgh (2020) explained that the antecedent for a PCB may be triggered when an employee's cultural values are infringed upon. Different employees have different cultural values, including ethnicity, race, work-culture values, religion, etc. For example, Du and Vantilborgh (2020) found that Chinese employees had different PCs than their Belgian counterparts, which meant that a perceived PCB was based highly on subjective cultural values.

Belgian employees perceived an antecedent for a PCB if they experienced role ambiguity. In contrast, Chinese employees placed more value on job security and stability

and perceived organizational support, the loss of which may result in a PCB (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Schleicher et al., 2010). For example, the hukou system can contribute to Chinese employees not having perceived organizational support, an antecedent that can elicit a PCB (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Schleicher et al., 2010).

Cultural differences can signify a positive PC, but varied expectations due to different cultural values may serve as an antecedent to a PCB occurring (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020). Poor cultural relations between an employee and the PC they have with their organization is a strong antecedent to a PCB, as illustrated by the comparison of Belgian and Chinese employees in Du and Vantilborgh (2020).

Bullying

Malik et al. (2018) argued that social exchange theory (SET) shows that when employees have negative interactions involving disrespect, lack of autonomy, and negative reciprocal exchanges, they may perceive they are being bullied in the workplace. Second, Malik et al. (2018) explained how workplace bullying leads to a PCB. PCB derives from perceived promises and obligations not being met (Malik et al., 2018).

Employees' negative effects of perceived workplace bullying, which manifests as a PCB, can affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment. More importantly, PCBs due to perceived workplace bullying can lead to the employees' desire to leave the organization (Malik et al., 2018). For example, perceptions of workplace bullying lead to feelings of betrayal due to the perception that promises and obligations are not being kept (Malik et al., 2018).

Malik et al. (2018) used a sample of businessmen in lower Punjab, India, to conduct a quantitative analysis of the results of a web-based survey and questionnaire. They used SPSS version 17 to perform bivariate correlation analysis, regression analysis, and mediation analysis. They found that when jobs are scarce, employees are more willing to accept bullying behavior. They also found that workers, especially female workers, do not feel empowered to report incidents of bullying or harassment (Malik et al., 2018). The focus on leadership and mediating effects of a PC breach will serve as a part of the basis for this study.

Another study focused on workplace bullying defines it as when an employee constantly feels like they are experiencing negative behaviors from others in their organization (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Workplace bullying, in turn, leads to negative workplace behaviors, and when the organization does not address bullying patterns, PCBs can occur (Rai & Agarwal, 2018). Rai and Agarwal (2018) found that a perceived PCB in the form of workplace bullying resulted in employee silence, which involves employees intentionally withholding ideas, information, concerns, or opinions about their organization. They further stated that withholding this information is detrimental to the organization overall (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rai & Agarwal, 2018).

Workplace bullying is closely related to job stressors that can lead to PCBs and violations. Workplace bullying is associated with managers' negative decision-making in shuffling employees' work assignments or increasing expectations (Vermunt & Steemsma, 2005). The bullying process may be perceived as coming from various management levels, leading to PCBs and violations (De Ruiter et al., 2016). For example,

a manager's poor response to a damaged PC may be a trigger agent for an employee's PCB because it may not be in line with the organization's stated goals and values (Roehl, 2019; De Ruiter et al., 2016). Furthermore, when managers fail to uphold the PC with their employees, they affect organizational commitment and organizational justice perceptions. When employees perceive that their work situation is not improving, they become triggered and perceive that they are being bullied (De Ruiter et al., 2016).

Cultural Values

Du and Vantilborgh (2020) conducted a qualitative study to explore the differences between PCBs and violations for different types of employees from Belgium and China. The research method consisted of researchers interviewing 20 Chinese employees and 19 Belgian employees. They found that if something impedes an employees' values, it can affect a perceived PC breach. They also noted that the employee's culture affected the PCBs (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020). Du and Vantilborgh (2020) explained that organizational culture plays a pivotal role in employees' perceptions of PCBs and violations.

Du and Vantilborgh (2020) is important for the present study because it helps to explain the differences in cultural values between Chinese employees' PCs and Belgian employees' PCs. Du and Vantilborgh (2020) explained how different cultural backgrounds could affect how an employee perceives the PC and subsequently a PCB. The findings of the study were used to help the researcher to understand that culture influences PC and PCB perception (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

The PC is different from the formal work contract and is completely subjective and implicit (Rousseau, 1989). It is based on perceptions and beliefs regarding what an employee or employer understands as promises and obligations. The PC is not written on any legal contract (Abela & Debono, 2019). Ultimately, employees tend to assume that work organizations have a moral responsibility based on obligations and promises to their employees (Handy et al., 2020).

PCs may be conceptualized in a variety of ways. PCs can be conceived as relational, transactional, or hybrid. Transactional contracts are direct and explicit and refer to specific tasks, payments, and other factors agreed upon by all involved parties. Relational contracts are more ambiguous and employ more vested emotion. Hybrid contracts contain elements of both types of PC (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019).

PCBs have cultural implications (Jayaweera et al., 2021). Given the diversity of technological employees' cultural backgrounds, and the contractual nature of their roles within organizations, their PCs tend to be more transactional than emotional (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). National cultural values directly affect individual work outcomes, including job performance and employee turnover (Jayaweera et al., 2021). PCBs may also disproportionately affect certain groups of employees, for example, women or minorities in high-status, high-paying occupations, resulting in subsequently increased rates of turnover (Hom, 2011). Furthermore, national culture may influence PC development through the lenses of job satisfaction, organizational justice, trust, and subsequently perceived PCB (Jayaweera et al., 2021).

Trust, defined as the belief that one can dependably rely on another person or an organization (Lewicki et al., 2005), is critical when forming the PC (Lewicki et al., 2005). Therefore, cultural similarities and understanding based on trust can influence the development of the PC and perceptions of a PCB (Jayaweera et al., 2021; Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). Trust is critical when upholding cultural values and norms (Jayaweera et al., 2021; Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019).

The society that an individual comes from also greatly influences their tolerance or perception of a PCB (Jayaweera et al., 2021). Suppose an individual comes from a low-collective society. In that case, they are more likely to react negatively to a PCB through reduced organizational commitment, lower productivity, higher turnover intention, reduced job satisfaction, diminished trust, and reduced job performance (Jayaweera et al., 2021). Conversely, an individual from a collective society may have a higher tolerance for reaction to a perceived PCB (Jayasweera et al., 2021). Giorgi (2009) explained that culture is an important indicator when it comes to identifying a PCB. If an employee considers culture to be highly present in their consciousness and in line with their organization's culture, then it is more likely to affect their perceptions of the PC and whether a PCB has or has not occurred (Giorgi, 2009; Roehl, 2019).

Organizational Unethical Behavior

There are various ways that individuals within organizations may exhibit unethical behavior, including corruption, incivility or rudeness, organizational misbehavior, or organizational deviance. These unethical behaviors or unethical decision-making mechanisms may facilitate a PCB because an employee may experience feelings

of betrayal (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Perceived unethical leadership can trigger PCBs and contribute to higher turnover rates as employees who experience a PCB or violation leave the organization (Laverone, 2017; Moquin et al., 2019). There has been little research on the combination of social, political, and organizational unethical behavior and their contributions to a perceived PCB (Laverone, 2017). In this study, these aspects were incorporated into the interviews to address the existing gap in the literature.

As seen in both Laverone (2017) and Duran et al. (2021), law enforcement officers have perceived unethical organizational behavior. Law enforcement officers expressed a lack of support or resources that led to officers experiencing both PCBs and violations, which led to increased levels of employee turnover and consequently diminished police force strength and effectiveness (Duran et al., 2019). The high turnover resulting from perceived PCBs and violations is costly both for the organization and the community at large. For example, Laverone (2017) highlighted one case within the San Jose police department in which the cost of recruitment and training for a new officer could be as much as \$200,000. This could contribute to a snowball effect, whereas other officers experience PCBs or violations due to the perceived organizational injustice (Laverone, 2017).

Ni and Li (2017) pointed out that organizational cultural climate is associated with unethical employee behavior due to a perceived PCB. They described how employees' perceptions of management and corporate values affect their engagement and PCs (Ni & Li, 2017). Second, they explained that employee moral disengagement could be used as a mechanism to justify unethical behavior (Ni & Li, 2017). For example,

organizational dissatisfaction was the only necessary occurrence for a PCB to result in unethical employee behavior. Ni and Li (2017) concluded with suggestions to further investigate what factors can lead to unethical employee behavior, whether a PCB necessitates unethical behavior, how employees' organizational disidentification affects their behavior, and finally, how organizational disidentification is affected by interactions with other employees. They confirmed a positive correlation between PCBs and employee unethical behavior (Ni & Li, 2017).

The behavioral ethics attitude within an organization can affect its employees' behavior. For example, when leadership cuts corners or is dishonest with clients or employees, it may not result in explicit harm to any involved party. However, employees may perceive the behavior as unethical and internalize it, resulting in negative reactions due to a PCB (Greenbaum et al., 2011). If employees perceive that individuals, such as leaders, within their organization are acting unethically, overall negative organizational outcomes will result from a PCB (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

As will be presented in this section, researchers have found several negative outcomes associated with PCBs. In the subsections to follow, the literature on counterproductive work behavior, workplace deviance and job stress, job dissatisfaction, reduced performance, reduced organizational commitment, decreased trust, and goal frustration as associated with PCBs is presented.

Counterproductive Work Behavior

Ma et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative analysis on the relationship between employees' work stress and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB). Ma et al.

investigated the workplace stress phenomenon, which is established as playing a role in perceived PCBs. They include the mitigating factors of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance (Ma et al., 2019). They found that the positive relationship between work stress and anti-production behavior was supported, meaning that pressure at work can lead to negative emotions and subsequent inappropriate behaviors (Ma et al., 2019). While the current study did not examine the relationship related to PCBs, stress is still associated with PCBs (Achnak et al., 2021). Therefore, it stands that counterproductive work behavior could stem from a perceived PCB due to increased stress levels. As reflected in the section, PCB can be problematic, and there are gaps in the literature that should be addressed through additional research.

Understanding how a PCB transpires can be attributed to employee values and how they interact with the PCB. For example, a contributing factor to CWB is the perception of unfair treatment and that an individual employee is not receiving feedback or recognition (Taylor-Mukendi, 2019). Moreover, employees' perceptions are defined as the result of organizational culture and cultural influences that stimulate cognitive schemas that influence employee expectations, behaviors, knowledge, and job satisfaction (Taylor-Mukendi, 2019). These elements help to influence an employee's perception of a PCB (Taylor-Mukendi, 2019).

In previous studies on law enforcement and adjunct professors, researchers found that perceptions of a lack of organizational support, inadequate feedback, lack of respect, or lack of recognition led to a PCB resulting in CWB (Anderson, 2016; Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Laverone, 2017; Costa & Neves, 2017). In a single case study

conducted in the San Jose police department, Laverone (2017) found that a lack of organizational leadership, counterproductive work behavior, lack of supervisor PC support, and phenomenon such as the “Ferguson Effect” led to PCBs and negatively impacted recruitment (Laverone, 2017, p. 37). On the other hand, Anderson (2016) described how employees’ perceptions of a PCB transpire for adjunct professors. Adjunct professors had symptoms of a PCB which included CWB, betrayal, negative cognitions, and they also described PC violations resulting in CWB, such as acting out (Anderson, 2016). Lack of communication also contributed to perceived PCB (Anderson, 2016; Organ et al., 2011). Building off the work of Anderson (2016) and Laverone (2017) work, it was safe to assume that similar outcomes would be the case for technological employees.

Employees from various sectors, including law enforcement, higher education, technological employees, and healthcare, that have contractual obligations with an organization are susceptible to a PCB when considering contract stability and duration (Moquin, 2015). The most recent literature concerning technological workers’ experience of a PCB due to the transactional nature of their contracts is from Moquin (2015). The present research built on the work of Moquin (2015) to develop more recent perceptions of technological workers’ PC and perceived PCB based on their lived experiences working in the technology sector.

Workplace Deviant Behavior

PCs and PCBs or violations can go beyond an organization’s hierarchy (Barclay & Aquino, 2011; Rousseau, 2015). Similarly, workplace deviant behavior (WDB),

defined as negative behavior that has a derogatory impact on an organization or its members (Robinson, 1996), varies along a spectrum. Barclay and Aquino (2011) redefined workplace deviant behavior in two distinct parts (trivial versus grievous) and further explained four main types of deviance. The four types include workplace production deviance, for example, employees coming to work late, leaving early, or taking too many breaks; organizational property deviance, for example, damaging workplace property or engaging in theft; political deviance, for example, gossiping, stereotyping, or profanity towards colleagues; and finally personal aggression which includes sexual harassment or bullying (Barclay & Aquino, 2011).

The definition is based on two major components. The act of negative behavior must be 'conscious and not accidental,' and it should have an adverse outcome for the organization directly or indirectly. Direct ways of adversely affecting the organization could be sabotaging or slowing the growth process, and indirect ways could lead to negative attitudes towards the organization, job, or others within the organization. WDB thus is an essential indicator of the venting of PCB through the increase of harmful actions (Sharma et al., 2019).

In a similar vein, PCs, PCBs, and violations may trigger deviant workplace behavior depending on how the breach or violation is interpreted (Rousseau, 2011). Workplace deviant behavior tends to manifest when a PC violation, meaning a strong emotional response to a perceived PCB, occurs (Rousseau, 2011). Sharma et al. (2019) explored the connection between the PCB and voluntary behavioral outcomes of Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) and Workplace Deviant Behavior (WDB).

Sharma et al. (2019) reviewed PC, PCBs, WDB, and OCB. They proposed a moderated mediation model to understand how the variables interact through common method variance and found that short-term transactional PCs seem to be more negatively affected when there is a PCB. At the same time, alternatively, a strong relational contract can withstand a perceived PCB (Sharma et al., 2019). Sharma et al. (2019) is relevant for the current study as the researchers explained how the nature of the technology industry, specifically the ample number of jobs and wide pool of talent, leads to a lesser development of strong relational PCs. Sharma et al. (2019) concluded their research by pointing out that it applies only to the Indian society and may be expanded upon in other cultures or sectors. In sum, Sharma et al. (2019) addressed the nexus between PCB, OCB, and WDB.

McGrath (2015) explained that employees have different kinds of PCs that rest on a continuum from relational to transactional. Each type of PC results in different outcomes when the employee experiences a PCB or violation. For example, some employees might try to get a manager, or a coworker fired depending on their PC with their superiors or coworkers. Other employees may try to leave the organization depending on the PC they have with their coworkers, managers, and the organization itself. The way an employee reacts to a PCB or violation is highly subjective (McGrath, 2015). The behavior is deviant given the retaliatory nature of the employee's actions, which may include seeking a coworker's termination, stealing, or knowledge hiding (McGrath, 2015; Reich & Hershcovis, 2011; Taylor-Mukendi, 2019).

Job Insecurity and Stress

Job insecurity and stress are parallel variables closely related to workplace bullying, cultural values, and unethical organizational behavior, interrelating with PCs and PCBs (Vander Elst et al., 2016). By using an IPA approach to how these factors interact, we can gain a deeper understanding of some of the keywords and themes related to a PC, a PCB, and a PC violation (Moustakas, 1994).

Rousseau (1995) stated that a balanced PC is a healthy PC that equates to positive organizational outcomes. On the other hand, job insecurity and job stress are outcomes associated with antecedents to a PCB and violation, as described above (Moquin, 2015). Moquin (2015) suggested that lack of autonomy and job insecurity resulted in increased stress levels. Similarly, Reoch and Herschovis (2011) suggested that reduced autonomy can damage positive relationships resulting in increased negative outcomes. The aim of this research was to explore whether highly skilled technological employees face a lack of autonomy and whether previous studies' findings based on the literature are still valid. This research will build on previous studies investigating job insecurity and stress (Moustakas, 1994).

Achnak et al. (2021) focused on the physiological effects of a perceived PCB. They described workplace stress, workplace well-being, and the ultimate impact on how a PCB can be mediated through social accounts. When employees perceive extensive denial, lack of accountability, or lack of recognition, it can trigger a PCB (Achnak et al., 2021). The researchers in this article highlighted the importance of employees who

recover from a perceived PCB and employees who subsequently experience stress from a perceived PCB (Achnak et al., 2021).

For example, Achnak et al. (2021) showed that stress reactions unfold following a PCB but can be mitigated by social factors such as denial, exonerating justification, blaming justification, apology, or lack of social account. Additionally, they show that perceived PCB and self-reported stress levels do not necessarily go hand in hand, as negative emotions and stress are prone to be suppressed to protect one's self-image (Achnak et al., 2021). The focus on the physiological manifestation of stress following a perceived PCB further justifies the negative outcomes of a perceived PCB (Achnak et al., 2021).

Achnak et al. (2021) suggested that training may be provided to employees to manage stress due to repeated exposure to a PCB effectively. This is important to the study as it has been incorporated in the discussion of the findings based on the analyzed interviews. Stress-reduction training may be a tool to investigate further in the context of the PCB (Achnak et al., 2021).

Shin (2019) looked at the relationship between PCB, job insecurity, and stress in the restaurant industry. They developed a questionnaire that measured respondents' job insecurity, job stress, and perceived PCB. The questionnaire contained 45 questions and was administered to 537 participants, of which 433 responded. Three hundred eighty-four responses were considered valid. Shin (2019) found that job insecurity had a significant positive effect on PCB. Shin (2019) also found that job insecurity had a significant

positive impact on job stress and that PCB mediated the interaction between job insecurity and stress.

Shin (2019) is of interest as it included the factors that will be examined in the current study. The results of Shin (2019) were used to help understand how technological employers can compensate for the job insecurity that we know is present in the industry. Shin (2019) concluded by confirming that employees suffer from psychological and physiological stress when there is a perceived PCB.

When organizations make radical promises that they know they cannot keep, it can negatively affect the PC (Rousseau, 1995). Organizations make promises in line with their organizational relation with their employees (Kennedy, 2020). When organizations make radical promises that cannot be kept, the result could increase stress and job insecurity among employees (Achnak et al., 2021). Job satisfaction, correlated with job security and levels of stress on the job, tends to be affected more when the nature of a PCB is relational as opposed to transactional (Laulié, 2017).

Using an IPA interview methodology, the goal of this research was to understand the lived experiences of technological employees. One of the benefits of qualitative interviews is that they can help reconstruct experiences, phenomena, cultural experiences, and events (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). For example, Shi et al. (2019) found through their scenario-based experiment that there were direct correlations between organizational support, supervisor support, and employees' experiences of PCB. Conclusions about technological workers' PCB in the context of stressful events and job insecurity may be made using an IPA approach (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Reduced Performance

Rousseau (2011) pointed out that there is no clear indication from the literature regarding how a PCB affects job performance. For example, in one study (Collins & Beauregard, 2020), doctors' PCs were related to their well-being. When PCBs occurred, they may have been considered trivial, for example, when the workload was adjusted. However, when doctors did not receive sufficient training, they were found to experience PC violations leading to reduced work performance levels (Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Rousseau, 2011). In contrast, a PC violation, which is not as trivial as a PCB, leads to adverse outcomes (i.e., workplace deviance behavior, turnover intention, etc.).

One factor that correlates with reduced job satisfaction and subsequent reduced performance is job training. For example, organizational citizenship behavior is higher in organizations where employee training programs are diversity inclusive (Tufan, 2020). Alternatively, a lack of inclusive training can reduce workplace performance and job satisfaction (Schleicher et al., 2010; Tufan, 2020).

Job performance can be affected by perceived organizational justice, as described by Ambrose and Arnaud (2005). The essences of organizational justice are procedural justice which can be defined as the perception of a fair procedural process; interactional justice, which refers to individuals' reactions to corporate or organizational decisions and practices during recruitment (Bies, 2005); and finally, distributive justice, which encompasses how outputs are distributed evenly regardless of whether the distributive justice perception is based upon an individual employees' needs, contributions or fair outcomes (Ambrose & Arnaud, 2005).

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) and Rousseau (2011) build upon organizational interactional, procedural, and distributive justice outcome theories by incorporating new employee characteristics, behaviors, recruitment processes, etc. According to Bauer and Erdogan (2011), new employees are information seekers, looking for feedback from coworkers and management when they are unclear regarding their position within the organization. When new employees lack organizational culture knowledge and confidence to complete their assigned tasks, their performance will diminish (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). According to Rousseau (2011), reduced work performance is highly correlated with PCBs and violations as new employees may ascribe PCB or violations to the organization for failure to introduce them to the organizational culture and norms appropriately or uphold promises made during the recruitment process.

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) elaborated, explaining that employees new to an organization with less experience seek to form a strong PC through outstanding performance by upholding organizational standards and working to the best of their ability. On the other hand, a more experienced employee who may have a history of PCs and transactional contracts with organizations may have reduced performance when they perceive a PCB given their knowledge of role-parity and organizational acceptance due to their experience. This can also lead to poor job satisfaction (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

This contrasts with the findings presented in Du and Vantilborgh (2020), which focused on cultural values within an organization rather than organizational justice or employee expectations. Du and Vantilborgh (2020) found that a PCB could be triggered by a difference in employee and organizational values. In contrast, Phuong et al. (2020)

provided another perspective by presenting the causation of a PCB due to differences in expectations and perceived organizational procedural and distributive injustice.

Bauer and Erdogan (2011) illustrated how new employee characteristics, behaviors, and efforts interact with organizational adjustments and the respective outcomes. New employees may experience a PCB for various reasons, including ambiguity regarding roles within the team environment, which can ultimately reduce their job performance. A PCB can occur for new employees if they do not acclimate to the organizational culture and perceive disappointment with their new job satisfaction (Schleicher et al., 2010).

Organizational Justice Theory

Greenberg (2011) posited that organizational justice theory (OJT) might be defined as the perceptions of fair transactions closely correlated to behavioral, cognitive schemas, and emotional reactions to achieve the desired outcome. Furthermore, Greenberg (2011) highlighted that organizational justice theory reinforces the PC theory based upon a term that Greenberg (2011, pp. 271-328) coined as “relative deprivation”. According to relative deprivation theory, employees constantly base their PCs on comparing inputs and outcomes (Greenberg, 2011). Greenberg (2011) suggested that inputs are comprised of employees’ overall contributions to their job, e.g., balanced PC, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational commitment, while outcomes encompass what employees derive from their employment, e.g., bonuses, employee recognition, managerial feedback, employee training, and vacation.

According to Greenberg (2011), organizational justice theory encompasses Adams' equity theory, which can be explained through the inputs of two workers. For example, Jane and John are perceived to contribute the same inputs with varied outputs. The varied outputs may cause a PCB for both Jane and John. Jane, receiving less pay for the same input, may experience anger when she learns that her compensation is not equal. On the other hand, John may experience guilt when he learns that his colleague is not being compensated equally. Overall, the existing literature shows that PCs are then compromised when organizational justice perceptions are compromised. When employee inputs and outputs are affected by unethical organizational behavior, negative outcomes may be experienced.

Greenbaum et al. (2011) stated that when employees perceive that an organization is engaging in unethical behavior, it may cause a PCB in non-directly affected individuals solely based on perception. When employees feel mistreated through lack of recognition or lack of opportunities for promotion, they may experience a PCB, resulting in negative workplace outcomes, as discussed above. Furthermore, researchers have found that organizations that fail to uphold organizational justice implications and balanced PCs may experience negative outcomes (Painter, 2017). For example, when nurses do not receive adequate training or perceive the possibility of upward mobility, their levels of job satisfaction diminish due to the theory of relative deprivation, which may result in higher turnover intention (Anderson, 2016; Greenberg, 2011).

Additionally, organizations do not necessarily balance the PC (Painter, 2017), organizational justice fairness perceptions, procedural justice, interactional justice, or

distributive justice (Ambrose & Arnaud, 2005). If organizations did balance those PCs, then organizational commitment and organizational justice fairness would lead to employees feeling supported with possibilities for upward mobility, increased pay, and opportunities for training. This would lead to more positive perceptions of PCs, and the organization's promises and obligations would be perceived as being fulfilled (Painter, 2017).

Greenberg (2011) asserted that emotional reactions to organizational justice perceptions, and negative distributive justice perceptions, can be explained or equated to what he describes as a short-term emotional feeling. Previous researchers have described similar experiences as a PC violation due to an employee's perception of being betrayed, mistreated, or forgotten about (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2011). This perception can cause a negative emotion that is considered a PC violation (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2011). To further expand on the PCB literature, Greenberg (2011) suggested that a PCB can be associated with an employee's mood, given that the mood is an internal cognitive process that perceives a PCB as trivial because the employee has a sense of organizational fairness and no obligations, promises, or sense of organizational betrayal (Greenberg, 2011; Rousseau, 2011). These processes ultimately contribute to diminished organizational citizenship behavior because of perceived diminished organizational justice.

Rousseau (2011), Greenberg (2011), and Bauer and Erdogan (2011) described antecedents of the PCB, negative socialization outcomes, and organizational injustice implications when management agents do not uphold balanced PCs. For example,

managers may not interact with employees, ignore them, and let employees struggle to understand an organization's culture without intervening to help. Tufan and Wendt (2020) found that a PCB is directly affected by employee organizational citizenship behavior and that organizational justice is interwoven with balanced PCs and positive OCB perceptions and workplace outcomes.

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

OCB is defined as the way an individual employee's behavior and discretionary attitude contributes to the organization itself regardless of explicit agreements or contractual obligations. Positive OCB contributes to the effective stability of companies (Organ et al., 2011). For example, Organ et al. (2011) pointed out that according to the early history of OCB research, the idea was to make coworkers' and managers' jobs easy and to contribute to a "cooperative" organizational system. Organ et al. (2011) explained that employees that are more satisfied are more likely to encourage and assist their coworkers and supervisors, and they do not mind cooperating or contributing to their respective organizations in the form of OCB.

According to the literature, OCB is closely correlated with employees that are highly motivated and satisfied with their well-being and their organization (Organ et al., 2011). OCB is also closely correlated with low-powered reward structures that are based on ambiguous, discretionary forms of compensation that may or may not come to fruition (Organ et al., 2011). When an organization fails to meet implicit low-powered reward schemes for high OCB individuals, a PCB is highly probable (Organ et al., 2011).

Evidence shows that between low-powered incentives and high-powered incentives, low-powered incentives can be more easily affected by a PCB given their foundation in trust, which is difficult to measure and may be based on previous experience (or lack thereof) (Aranda et al., 2018; Organ et al., 2011). On the other hand, employees with high-power incentives may experience a PCB when they fail to receive inducements that they thought they deserved (Aranda et al., 2018). For example, age can be an indicator of OCB incentives, with older employees having more low-powered incentives (for example, friendships or camaraderie) and younger employees having more high-powered incentives (financial inducements, future opportunities). However, both groups may experience a PCB (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Aranda et al., 2018; Organ et al., 2011). Another example would be the difference between volunteer workers and paid employees (Aranda et al., 2018). Paid employees with high power incentives are more likely to express a PCB, while volunteer employees with lower power incentives may experience a breach, but due to the nature of the incentives, it is difficult to show or measure outwardly (Aranda et al., 2018).

Employees may also have PCBs when they feel discriminated against (Organ et al., 2011; Tufan & Wendt, 2020). Racial minorities or different genders may have diverse experiences when it comes to PCB. For example, women, considered minority employees, may be expected to uphold high levels of OCB in non-traditional roles (Tufan, 2020).

An employee with high OCB and low-powered incentives will experience the damage of a balanced PC when they are stereotyped based on their gender, race, or

religion (Tufan & Wendt, 2020). For example, African Americans, women, Muslims, or sexual and gender minorities may be discriminated against when volunteering with a particular organization. To illustrate, a Muslim with very high OCB volunteering at a Catholic church in their community may experience a severe PCB when society judges their motivation even when they are very dedicated to the work (Organ et al., 2011; Tufan & Wendt, 2020).

The use of interviews helped to better understand how a perceived PCB affects OCB in the present study. Given that each of the participants of this study reported experiencing a PCB, the IPA methodology allowed for a better understanding of the interaction of a PCB and organizational behavior and ethical behavior, which in turn will serve technological organizations to serve their employees better and increase overall productivity (Moustakas, 1994). This approach is crucial because the interviewer stays “neutral” when seeking to understand an employee’s feelings surrounding stereotypes or discrimination (Giorgi, 2009). Organ et al. (2011) stated that OCB is dependent on gender, racial and religious, and age stereotypes; therefore, an IPA investigation is appropriate and necessary. Overall, based on the research, people’s perception of a PCB is contingent on many factors and may affect their OCB in various ways based on different variables, including age, race, religion, sexual orientation, time with the organization, or past experiences, to name a few.

Summary

This chapter concludes with a restatement of the definitions of terms and the findings that exist in the literature surrounding the main themes related to PCB, which

will be outlined. The PC may be defined as the implicit relationship between an employee and their organization, a definition that has evolved since its introduction by Argyris (1960). Building on that concept, Rousseau (1989) introduced the PCB, which has also evolved over time given its multi-dimensional nature. Researchers suggest that the PC is contingent on employees' volunteering attitudes, better known as organizational citizenship behavior, which is based on trust, job satisfaction, organizational justice, and perceptions of fairness, among other factors (Rousseau, 2011).

The literature surrounding the perceived promises or expectations surrounding the PC and resulting PCBs when expectations are not met is investigated (Anderson, 2016; Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019). For example, Anderson (2016) found that employees lacking job security or finding themselves in minority groups may experience PCBs based on their perceived PCs. Specifically, younger employees might be more invested in transactional contracts than a more seasoned employee who is seeking higher levels of job satisfaction (Anderson, 2016; Organ et al., 2011).

The current body of research shows that employees with low-powered incentives tend to have higher job satisfaction and may be older (Organ et al., 2011). Overall, employees have different PCs (Rousseau, 2011). Some employees have moral contracts and third-party contracts. When these contracts are perceived as not being fulfilled, a PCB can occur (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Greenbaum et al. (2011) pointed out that based upon the PC that an employee has with their organization, which may be based on morals

or ethics, an employee may experience a PCB or violation if they perceive that their organization has done something unethical, for example, engaging in embezzlement.

A variety of facets of the PC and PCB were explored in this chapter. For example, in the case of team PCs, when employees have strong PCs within their teams, communication barriers are non-existent, employees receive feedback, perceived organizational support, all of which are precursors for positive PCs (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2015, Cruz et al., 2020; Painter, 2017). To reiterate, the problem explored in this qualitative IPA study is the experience of a perceived PCB among technological employees from various socio-economic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. As shown in this review of the literature, PCB is persistent throughout many professions. For example, in medicine, when doctors are given more administrative tasks as hospitals or medical facilities change, they may experience a PCB given their lack of training or expertise (Collins & Beauregard, 2020). Similarly, for nurses in the medical community, their PC was based upon a balanced contract with hospital management that was reneged on, leading to the experience of a PCB (e.g., disappointment, stress, and lack of training) (Painter, 2017).

Du and Vantilborgh (2020) showed how employees' cultural values are integral to the PC and a perceived PCB. Based on cultural norms, employees seek to establish balanced PCs that align with their cultural goals when beginning a new job (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020). For example, Chinese employees tend to value relational contracts as compared to transactional contracts. Du and Vantilborgh (2020) found that Chinese employees' PCs tended to be based upon their ability to improve their family status and

establish permanent residence. When those desires were not met, they would experience a PCB.

On the other hand, Belgian employees' PCs were based upon improving personal and professional development opportunities (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020). For example, many Belgian employees were seeking long-term employment and job security to achieve self-development. Still, when those expectations did not come to fruition, they experienced stress and feelings of a lack of job security resulting in a PCB (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020).

Greenbaum et al. (2011) pointed out that a moral contract may not be destructive in terms of stress or financial demise. However, the perception on the part of the employee may be that their organization is engaging in unethical practices. For example, not recognizing an employee's hard work could be perceived as a PCB of the established moral contract. In these instances, the organization may overlook that managers' ignorance of the perceived unethical behavior could adversely affect employees' morals or PCs (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Suppose an employee feels that managers within the organization should be held responsible for that kind of moral or cultural dysfunction. In that case, PCB can evolve into a PC violation resulting in an employee ultimately leaving the organization (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

The most compelling literature shows the effect of a PCB on organizational citizenship behavior. Organ et al. (2011) showed how some employees are highly motivated and have high job satisfaction, which mitigates the effects of a perceived PCB.

Organizational citizenship behavior hinges on organizational justice and perceptions of organizational fairness, leading to higher OCB levels.

What is clear from the literature is that there is no clarity regarding PC or PCB for minorities such as African Americans, older workers, female workers, etc. There is also a gap when it comes to employees that may fall within this spectrum, for example, older white men, or younger minority females, that may have varying degrees of low-powered or high-powered incentives. Middle-power incentive employees have yet to be investigated. For example, given the voluntary nature of police officers and their high OCB (Laverone, 2017), officers have a strong desire to contribute positively to their communities which means they may provide an example of a population that falls in the middle-ground power incentive spectrum. However, no recent literature explicitly investigates employees who base their PCs on middle-ground power incentives.

This leads to the claim that there is no established perspective when it comes to the lived experience of a PCB for certain groups in the technological sector. These groups enter a PC based on low-power incentives or high-power incentives, as shown through the work of Organ et al. (2011). As they established, there is not enough empirical research that investigates these groups' organizational citizenship behavior or how that behavior correlates with the PC or perceived PCB. Using IPA, this research was conducted to expand on the existing body of literature to understand how technological employees experience PC.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. Essential data and information on how PCBs transpire for different technological employees from diverse job classifications and various cultural backgrounds were yielded from this study. For example, employees from certain religious backgrounds (i.e., Orthodox Jewish or Salafi Muslim) may perceive a PCB because they may feel that their dignity is not being respected if certain food items are served in the organization's cafeteria (Lefkowitz, 2012). Another example would be technology companies introducing LGBTQ-friendly policies such as a unisex restroom that may make certain employees feel uncomfortable due to their PC based on traditional gender roles for bathrooms (APA, 2020; Lefkowitz, 2012). The research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, and the methodology are described in detail in this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions that guided this study were:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of technological workers in the context of a PCB?

RQ2: How do technological workers understand a perceived PCB?

A phenomenological research tradition was used, comprised of open-ended interview questions to collect data to understand participants' perceived lived experiences of a PCB. This tradition was used to develop deep insight into technological workers'

perceived experiences and to allow participants to speak freely and candidly about their perceptions and experiences. Phenomenology seeks to understand the subject's inner experience as they understand and perceive stimuli. In phenomenology, qualitative interviews are usually used as the main source of data collection (Barker & Pistrang, 2021).

The specific phenomenological approach used in this study was IPA. In IPA research, the goal is to explore the lived experiences of individual study participants to understand a phenomenon in-depth (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Open-ended semistructured interviews are used to provide flexibility in the data collection process to explore the accounts of study participants' experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Through semistructured interviews, I explored the lived experiences of the study participants based on their expressed accounts. In this study, I used semistructured interviews to explore the lived experiences of technological workers regarding the PCB as a phenomenon.

While there are a variety of qualitative approaches to research, including content analysis, framework analysis, grounded theory, generic thematic analysis, narrative analysis, life history research, conversation analysis, process analysis, and ethnography, they did not meet my criteria for understanding the lived experiences of a technological worker who has experienced a PCB (Barker & Pistrang, 2021). For example, the grounded theory is not used purely to describe and classify the data. In contrast, ethnography is used to encompass the experiences of a wide cultural group requiring

substantial field notes to explain research questions about a wide cultural or social system (Barker & Pistrang, 2021).

Role of the Researcher

Given that interviews do not occur in a vacuum but rather involve communication between interviewer and interviewee, the interviewer must remain neutral in their body language and responses to an interviewee's answers. For this study, I served solely as an observer and avoided leading participants in their responses in any way. I had no existing relationships with any of the study participants. I abided by APA Code 3.01, which states, "psychologists do not engage in unfair discrimination based on age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or any basis proscribed by law" (APA, 2017, p. 8). I did not have any additional ethical issues that could affect participants or the study results. Additionally, per APA Code 4.1 and Code 6.1, I maintained responsibility for obtaining informed consent from all participants before engaging in the recorded interview and ensured adequate protection of all data records in their possession (APA, 2017). Finally, in accordance with APA Code 8.1, I did not proceed with any interviews until after institutional review board approval (APA, 2017).

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

Data were collected in this study through a series of interviews. Potential participants first had to answer 20 screening questions that allowed me to determine when I had enough qualified participants for study saturation. While quantitative research

uses power calculations to determine the sample size necessary to show the effects of an intervention, there are no similar standards for assessing an appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Discretion is left to a researcher (Creswell & Creswell., 2018; Malterud et al., 2021). However, in recent APA publications, researchers have suggested that eight–10 participants is the optimal number for doctoral study saturation (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). In this case, I used purposive criterion sampling to seek participants who work in the technology sector to provide insight into homogeneous group members' individual experiences with a PCB (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The focus of this study was on a group comprised of technological sector workers who self-identified as having experienced a PCB.

As a part of developing the screener survey, I gathered information from three IT professionals, including a Ph.D. mechanical engineer, an IT professional, and an IT security systems engineer. I conducted a Zoom call with the industry professionals to describe the study, share the preliminary screener survey, and ask them to provide feedback. I adjusted the survey description and screener questions based on the feedback received from the technology professionals.

In the initial screening process, I provided participants with a link to a questionnaire (Appendix A) that included an informed consent form. Sampling began through various social media sites, including Facebook and LinkedIn, and groups of technological workers on those sites, where I sought to obtain 25 participants to engage in a screener questionnaire. I also contacted personal contacts in the technology sector. If 25 participants had not been attained within 2 weeks, I planned to engage in snowball

sampling to achieve the desired numbers to reach saturation. Snowball sampling is a manner of purposive sampling common in phenomenological studies that involves asking identified participants to invite their peers that fall under the same homogeneous categories to join the study (Crawford, 2016). In this case, technological employees were asked to participate and reach out to their peers to join the study (Crawford, 2016). Ultimately I determined when there were enough participants to obtain rich data through interviews (Malterud et al., 2021).

As described, the sample comprised enough participants to deeply investigate the phenomenon of a PCB experience for technology workers, which I estimated to be around 12 participants (Malterud et al., 2021; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Participants were recruited online with a message stating who I am and that I was seeking individuals to participate in an initial screen for a research study on technological employees who have experienced a PCB. I sent an invitation asking potential participants to call or send an email to me. Once 25 people responded, I sent a screener questionnaire (Appendix A) to all potential participants via online messaging, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, personal email, etc.

The screener questionnaire was used to identify technological employees (i.e., those who work in IT, software engineering, software development, information security, ethical hacking, or programming). I informed those individuals interested in participating in the study that they had 10 days to complete the screener questionnaire. If potential participants did not meet the participation criteria, they were informed as such. If they met the requirements to participate in the study, they were asked to schedule an

interview. In the interest of facilitating the interview process, I used Zoom to collect rich data. Zoom meetings allowed me to easily transcribe and analyze the data with the first review, as noted by Potter (2021). The objective was to obtain detailed descriptions of the participants' experiences through video microanalysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, Griffiths, 2021).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews using Zoom technologies were safer and more convenient for all involved. Ravitch and Carl (2021) noted that technology-mediated interviews also allow for a researcher to schedule multiple back-to-back interviews, given the lack of travel and immediate connection without the need to travel. The online interview process also facilitates interview transcriptions and coding to prepare the data for analysis. The ability to observe recorded conversations allows a researcher to observe otherwise obscured behaviors like eye movements, attention focus, facial expressions, and overall body language (Griffiths, 2021).

Instrumentation

This study consisted of a preliminary screening questionnaire (Appendix A) to help me identify technological employees who self-identify as having experienced a PCB. Then, participants completed online semistructured interviews to provide data to help understand their experiences with PCBs. As Patton (2015) noted, the quality of the interview findings is only as good as the interviewer. I abided by the established characteristics and values of qualitative interviews (Ravitch & Carl, 2021); interviews were relational, contextual, nonevaluative, person-centered, and subjective. Following the interviews, I used NVivo to code the transcripts, and I identified relevant themes and

subthemes from the data outputs. I interpreted the results of the interviews; the data retrieved was specific to participants' individual experiences at that point in time (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited participants via personal and online social networks, including Facebook and LinkedIn. Once I determined that saturation was achieved, I engaged with the participants through a series of open-ended semistructured interview questions conducted via a Zoom call. The calls were audio and video recorded so I could review the interviews and attempt to interpret participants' facial cues and body language to understand their experiences both past and present, their perceptions, the meanings of their answers, and the specific words they used (Anderson, 2016). I served as the research instrument by interpreting the interviews and subsequent coding to identify themes and patterns that manifested (Anderson, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fisher et al., 2012).

The data gathering process involved interviews conducted via Zoom call between each participant and me as the researcher. Each participant was assigned a code to maintain anonymity. Interviews were transcribed and labeled with each participant's code, date of the interview, and timestamp. I took notes during the calls and engaged a transcription service to provide transcripts for the NVivo software to analyze. I tagged notes with the four labels as described by Groenewald (2004): observational notes, which consider what happened; theoretical notes, which attempt to derive meaning;

methodological notes, which are reminders for future reference; and analytical memos, which summarize the interview session.

Smit and Scherman (2021) explained that semistructured, in-depth one-on-one interviews allow a researcher and participant to discuss the participant's experiences in real time, which may lead to the emergence of sensitive issues regarding PCs, PCBs, and PC violations. Semistructured, in-depth, one-on-one interviews should last from 30 minutes to 1 hour (Smit & Scherman, 2021). According to Fisher et al. (2012), this may serve as a cue for a researcher to remind a participant that their information is completely confidential. A researcher should continue to refer to the participant's informed consent (Fisher et al., 2012).

The semistructured interview questions were prepared in advance to ensure that I remained focused on the participant's experiences with PCB. By preparing an interview schedule, as Smit and Scherman (2021) suggested, I could anticipate difficulties and ensure that participants were comfortable while at the same time sharing their experiences freely. The order of the semistructured interview questions considered question order effects, which involved participants being influenced when responding to a question based on a previous question (Rasinski et al., 2012). Being aware of this phenomenon, I aspired to ensure that the interview questions were not leading and did not build on each other.

Rubin and Rubin (2012), Maxwell (1996), Giorgi (1985), and Madill (2012) described how a phenomenological interview can be used to understand interviewees' lived experiences regardless of how they express those experiences. Therefore, this study

involved a single, open-ended preliminary question in line with Maxwell (1996).

Maxwell (1996) gave the example of a single phenomenological question that sought to understand students' perceptions of teachers by asking: What does the teacher do that helps you learn? In this study, the primary interview question was: Could you please tell me about an experience when you felt that your organization was not upholding its obligations to you? Then, as the interview progressed, I used follow-up questions to prompt deeper inquiry into what the interviewee was describing. This was in line with the phenomenological interview protocol (Giorgi, 1985).

Semistructured interviews place the researcher and the research participant on the same level, allowing the conversation to flow (Madill, 2012). The informality of the conversation gives the researcher intimate access to the phenomenon being studied, in this case, the experienced PCB. The informed consent process protected participants' identities, job classification, etc., and provided them with detailed information regarding electronic forms of communication such as Zoom, phone calls, emails, and data storage. All aspects of the data collection were secured, and all participants were informed of their rights and the nature of the study, and all steps taken to avoid any harm being done to the participants (APA, 2017, 3.04). Finally, confidentiality was maintained at all costs to protect research participants and all others involved, specifically the researcher.

Data Analysis Plan

This study was conducted to understand the lived experiences of technological workers that have experienced a PCB. Specifically, what is the lived experience of a technological worker in the context of a PCB? And how do technological workers

understand a perceived PCB? The preliminary screening questions were used to establish whether a technological worker was eligible for the interview stage. Then, the interview questions, modeled after those of van Gilst et al. (2020), were used to prompt interviewees to share their lived experiences of a PCB.

During the interviews, I took detailed notes. Following the interviews, audio files were sent to a service for transcription. Once the files were transcribed, I fed the data through NVivo software for coding. Following coding, I identified key themes and subthemes for in-depth analysis. In this IPA study, data saturation in theme identification was based on participants' expressed experiences (Saunders et al., 2018). The experiences were considered recurrent among participants, as expressed in the interviews to develop these experiences into themes (Saunders et al., 2018). In IPA studies, the aim is to develop consensus across participant experiences (Saunders et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2002). Consensus based on the recurrence of expressed experiences was considered theme saturation.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The study was credible based on the number of participants. Twelve participants were sufficient to reach saturation for a qualitative IPA study. A series of common themes or patterns reinforcing each other's experiences were confirmed to reach data saturation (Crawford, 2016).

Transferability

The focus of this study was on PCBs in the technology sector. Similar studies exist that instead focus on banking (van Gilst et al., 2020), nursing (Trybou et al., 2016), law enforcement (Duran et al., 2019), and hospitality (Shi & Gordon, 2019). Therefore, the findings of this study can be used to provide insight regarding PCBs in an under-researched industry and to give technological organizations practical indications to reduce technological employee PCBs.

Dependability

The study's dependability was established through NVivo's coding of the interview transcripts. I reviewed the codes and identified common themes and subthemes derived from the software analysis.

Confirmability

Thick description involves including interview participants' quotations to communicate their lived experiences (Crawford, 2016). I used thick descriptions to convey how technological workers described their lived experiences of PCBs.

Ethical Procedures

Given the sensitive nature of interview data, confidentiality is imperative. In accordance with the APA code 3.10, all participants received informed consent forms letting them know their rights and the nature of the study (APA, 2017). According to APA code 4.0, the researcher's responsibility is to protect participants' identities and interview responses (APA, 2017). APA guidelines regarding participant privacy were strictly adhered to. Documents, including participants' names or identifying information,

were not disclosed. All participants, once identified, were given numerical identifiers to ensure their complete anonymity. Any information that a participant provides that could allude to their identity, i.e., their current organization or a past organization, was not disclosed. Transcripts were closely examined so that no personal identifying information was included (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

I hold two master's degrees, one of which is in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. With this background, I adhered strictly to the APA Code of Ethics. I was also aware of the sensitivity of the sample being included in the research itself and held the utmost respect for those that agreed to participate in this study. Given the sometimes-sensitive nature of a person's employment relationship and the perception of a PCB, I provided all participants with an informed consent form, a confidentiality form, and an overview of the procedure of the study. Finally, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before conducting any interviews.

When the data collection process began, individuals that agreed to engage in interviews were informed, according to the APA Code of Ethics Standard 8.03, that interviews were electronically recorded (most likely via Zoom technology), but their identities will remain anonymous. Individuals participated in the study only voluntarily, based on their own free will and accord (Fried, 2012). This research did not include any forms of deception. The nature of such research could hinder the participant's ability to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the study or not (Fried, 2012). Informed consent allows participants to make a free choice to participate in the study (Fried, 2012).

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. The study consisted of a series of interviews with technological employees who self-reported experiencing a PCB. I began with a screening questionnaire to identify potential interviewees. Then, I engaged in semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 12 participants to contribute to the literature concerning PCB in an under researched sector. This study contributes to the academic community in terms of a deeper understanding of PCB and contributes to technology companies by investigating their employees' experiences.

Chapter 4: Analysis

Introduction

In this qualitative IPA study, the aim was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Essential data and information on how PCBs transpire for different technological employees from diverse job classifications and various cultural backgrounds were collected and analyzed. The aim of this study was to understand the importance of employee relations, ethics, and values; how psychological contracts form through the lenses of ethics, values, organizational justice; and perceptions and how a PCB may occur in certain situations. The research questions used to address the purpose of the study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of technological workers in the context of a PCB?

RQ2: How do technological workers understand a perceived PCB?

In this chapter, I illustrate the results of a thematic data analysis approach that was conducted to answer these research questions. Next, the study setting, evidence of data trustworthiness, and descriptive data for study participants are described. The following section provides a description of the study findings and a summary.

Setting

The focus of this study was on individuals in the technology sector who self-identified as having experienced a PCB. Prior to identifying the study participants, a pilot study of the interview questions was conducted. In the pilot study, participants included a mechanical engineer, an IT professional, and an IT security systems engineer. Beyond the

pilot study, the participants in this study were all employees within the IT sector. I recruited study participants from social media sites, including Facebook and LinkedIn, and groups of technology workers on these sites. The goal was to have at least 25 potential participants complete the screening questionnaire for use in participant identification and recruitment. The screening questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to identify a homogeneous sample that met the screening criteria (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The screening criteria were based on identifying individuals who were technology professionals who had experienced a PCB.

Pilot Study

Before conducting interviews with 12 study participants, I conducted a pilot study with three participants who were identified using the preliminary screening questionnaire. The three participants were IT professionals, including a mechanical engineer, an IT professional, and an IT security systems engineer. The three participants were asked to complete and provide feedback on the screening questionnaires and interviews. All three participants completed and provided feedback on the screening questionnaire. Two of three participants completed the pilot interview and provided feedback. One participant abstained from participating in the pilot interview. The feedback obtained regarding the questionnaire and interview was incorporated within the screening questionnaire and interview questions before collecting further data. Data from the three participants who were used in the pilot study were not used for analysis. These participants were excluded from participating in the final study.

Participant Recruitment

In addition to the three participants who were identified for participation in the pilot study, 29 individuals completed the screening questionnaire. I recruited study participants from social media sites, including Facebook LinkedIn, and groups of technology workers on these sites. I located the groups by using keyword searches of technological worker groups on each social media site. To increase potential participant eligibility, individuals with experience in project management and who worked within the technology industry were included. As reflected in the findings, some individuals expressed experiences outside their experiences in the technological industry.

The goal of obtaining 25 participants to engage with the screening questionnaire within 2 weeks was met. Of the 29 individuals who completed the questionnaire, six were determined ineligible for an interview due to not meeting the screening criteria of experiencing a PCB. Of the 23 remaining participants, I contacted and began to schedule interviews using online messaging. To determine the point at which data saturation was met, I analyzed the completed interviews after transcription to determine when no new themes were identified from the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Patton, 2015). After analysis of interview data from 12 of the 23 eligible participants, data saturation was met for the overall sample size.

Demographics

Purposive sampling was used to select 12 individuals from the technology sector to participate in open-ended interviews. The sample size was guided by Smith and Fieldsend's (2021) requirements of data saturation that recommend eight to 12

participants. In this study, data saturation was met at 12 participants based on the guidance provided by Smith and Fieldsend (2021). Three participants (25%) were female, and nine (75%) were male. Table 1 indicates the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1*Summary Participant Demographic Data*

Demographic	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	9	75%
Female	3	25%
Age		
18–35	4	33.3%
36–45	1	8.3%
46–55	4	33.3%
56+	3	25%
Education		
Less than bachelor's degree	1	8.3%
Bachelor's degree	4	33.3%
Master's degree	3	25%
PhD student	1	8.3%
Doctoral degree	2	16.7%
Missing	1	8.3%
Religion		
Christian	4	33.3%
Muslim/Islam	4	33.3%
Atheist	1	8.3%
Other	3	25%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	9	75%
Missing	3	25%
Race/ethnicity		
African American/Black	9	75%
Other/missing	3	25%

Work experience (as a technology worker)		
Less than 5 years	1	8.3%
5–10 years	1	8.3%
11–20 years	3	25%
21–30 years	1	8.3%
More than 30 years	3	25%
Missing	3	25%

Data Collection

The 29 participants who completed the screening questionnaire were each considered for participation in the study based on their experience with a PCB. Although not all individuals were in IT, based on the questionnaire, all individuals worked in and had professional experience as technological employees, as defined in Chapter 1. From the individuals who completed the questionnaire, I determined that 23 individuals experienced a PCB. These 23 individuals were considered eligible for interview scheduling. Of these 23 potential participants, I found that some were not willing to participate in a recorded interview or were not available to complete the interview within the intended timeframe of data collection for this study. For this reason, the 12 participants who were selected for the interview were those who were available to complete a recorded interview with me within a 2-week period.

I conducted one interview with each of the 12 participants identified. In total, 12 interviews were conducted and recorded via Zoom. All participants were located in North America (the United States and Canada) and participated virtually due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Each interview took 30 to 45 minutes, which was less than the anticipated 60 minutes set as a maximum time for the interview. The interview protocol, which was developed and revised from the feedback provided in the pilot study, was used to guide each of the interviews.

As noted in the data collection plan in Chapter 3, the semistructured interviews were based on open-ended interview questions (Appendix B). However, the specific questions asked of the participants differed due to feedback provided from the pilot study

as well as the use of an open-dialogue approach in conducting the interviews. During the interviews, I noted and interpreted the facial cues and body language of the participants to understand their experiences (Anderson, 2016; Smith & Townsend, 2021). The goal was to understand both the past and present experiences of study participants, as well as the meaning of the responses and the meaning of the specific words used (Anderson, 2016; Smith & Townsend, 2021).

I also used the audiovisual recording to revisit both the verbal and nonverbal responses provided by study participants. During the interviews, I noted that some participants changed the tone and pitch of their voice, expressing certain emotions (i.e., anger, frustration) when describing their experiences. Emotions were noted based on changes in the voice of the participant, as well as facial expressions such as wrinkling of the participant's eyebrows and use of hand gestures, corresponding with their verbal expressions and change in verbal tone (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Changes in the tone of participants were also noted during the interviews to better understand the experiences. The nonverbal and tone changes were coded within the initial coding process in the data analysis to acknowledge the potential meaning of these experiences as expressed both verbally and nonverbally by study participants.

Interviews began with the researcher outlining the definition of a PCB and modifying questions to ensure the interview participant clearly understood what a PCB is and why they were chosen for the study. I then began a semistructured interview discussion with the study participants, with a focus on the participants' lived experiences of PCB. Within the interview discussions, as will be further discussed in the findings, the

lived experiences of perceived consequences of PCB emerged within the data collection process.

As all interviews were recorded via Zoom, the interview recordings were used for transcription. Participant codes were assigned to each participant to maintain participant privacy. Interview files were saved to my laptop and stored on the cloud as backup. The interview files were transcribed and labeled with each participant's code, the date of the interview, and a timestamp. The data on the cloud storage and laptop were password-protected to guarantee confidentiality. I used a professional service for verbatim transcription on Microsoft Word in which the professional service listened to the recording to develop the transcripts to type the audio data word by word, as further described in the next section.

Data Analysis

Each transcript was evaluated for its comprehensiveness, exactness, simplicity, and reliability continuously during the data collection process. To complete the data analysis, verbatim transcripts were developed by a researcher in a professional service in Microsoft Word. The verbatim transcripts were created by listening to the interview recordings and typing the audio data word by word. In the process, the researcher from the professional service paused, rewound, and relistened to the audio recordings to become familiar with the interviews. The verbatim transcription of the interviews completed by the professional service was conducted through the listening and relistening of the audio recordings to complete the transcription in Microsoft Word. After

completing the transcript, I relistened to the interview recordings and read each transcript to ensure the accuracy of the transcript.

After assessing the transcript data for completeness and accuracy by relistening to the interview recordings and reading the transcript, I carried out thematic analysis using NVivo 12 qualitative analysis software. To ensure comprehensiveness, exactness, simplicity, and reliability of the transcript data, an individual served as a reviewer and relistened to the interview recordings and associated transcripts. Similarly, a reviewer was involved in the data analysis process to validate the codes and themes developed from the data. The decisions made in the process of revising and validating the codes and themes between a reviewer and me are further described below.

To begin the process of data analysis, I took note of initial codes related to a PCB and reread the interview transcripts to become familiar with the data and to note the codes within the data that reflected a PCB. These initial codes were used in further steps of the thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach was guided by the work of Braun and Clarke (2006). In summary, thematic analysis is a systematic analytical strategy that streamlines data into commonalities and patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The specific steps followed are discussed in the following subsection.

Step 1: Data Familiarization

This phase of the thematic analysis entails reading the participants' responses to the semistructured interviews. This step aimed to gain an overview of the entire dataset in preparation for the data coding. I took notes while reading the data to my initial interpretations of the experiences expressed by participants regarding their PCBs in the

text of the interview transcripts. I therefore became an instrument in the data analysis process as an interpreter of the experiences expressed by study participants. Specifically, following the principles of IPA, I made initial notes regarding what appeared to be important to the participants based on the words of the participants (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021; Smith et al., 2009). These initial notes, as interpreted from the expressions of the participants, were used to begin the coding process.

Step 2: Coding

This step entailed analyzing the transcripts and assigning codes to represent the most elemental essence of different portions of the text. The coding process was completed for all transcripts. At the end of this stage, several codes represent the sample's different issues, perceptions, and experiences as a group. A detailed list of Codes and their definitions are included in Appendix C.

Step 3: Determination of Themes

I grouped all similar codes into several thematic categories in this phase. The goal of this phase was to cluster the experiential statements expressed in participants' quotations, based on interview transcripts, into personal experiential themes (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). The personal experiential themes were developed for each individual based on patterns found in each transcript. Additionally, in developing the themes, patterns of personal experiences were identified across individuals to group shared experiences among participants. Shared experiences between participants were identified based on recurring patterns that could be grouped into a theme through convergence (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

A few codes were excluded based on their lack of relevance or similarities with any grouped codes. In other words, instances of divergence and lack of recurrence were excluded as not being reflective of the larger dataset (i.e., shared experiences between participants) (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). After the data categories were formed and the corresponding codes identified, themes were determined based on the frequency of codes.

Step 4: Validation of Themes

In this step, I evaluated themes to ensure they could be supported by the participants' responses within each code. The validation process was fluid, which meant that the results could lead to modification of themes, revising aspects of the theme, or even deletion if evaluated was not supported by the raw data. The development of themes was based on reaching data saturation for each theme. As this was an IPA study, data saturation is based on strands of participants' expressed experiences (Saunders et al., 2018). To develop these strands of experiences into themes, the experiences were considered recurrent among participants, as expressed in the interviews (Saunders et al., 2018). In IPA studies, the aim is to develop consensus across participant experiences (Saunders et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2002). According to Saunders et al. (2018), "saturation is not normally an aim in interpretive phenomenological analysis" due to the focus on the individual lived experiences of study participants (p. 1898). In this study, which used an inductive coding approach (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018), data saturation was met at 12 study participants and when codes had supporting data from at least six of the 12 participants (50%). The support of 12 participants for data saturation

and six participants to meet saturation is supported in the existing literature on meeting data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2002).

To support the validation of the codes and associated themes, in addition to the researcher, another individual was involved as a reviewer to validate the themes that were identified. The reviewer and researcher conducted the review of themes together to discuss the codes and themes and their appropriateness for the data (Hayashi et al., 2019). In alignment with IPA, a goal in ensuring the appropriateness of the themes was to determine whether the themes were reflective of homogenous experiences across participants, in alignment with IPA (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). Homogenous experiences across participants were determined by clustering the quotes from the transcript data as experiential statements based on similarities and patterns between participant experiences (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021).

Through peer review of the codes and themes developed in NVivo, the researcher and reviewer worked together to discuss the identified codes and themes, their supporting quotes, and the overall appropriateness of the data. In this iterative process, once agreement was made, the codes and themes were finalized. Secondary analysis of qualitative data is conducted to (a) improve the rigor of the data, (b) overcome ethical and methodological challenges, and (c) ensure the validity of the interpretation of the data (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Hayashi et al., 2019; Morse et al., 2002). The review process and discussion of the codes and themes in the analysis process also helped to reduce bias in the evaluation, interpretation, and analysis of the participant responses.

In reviewing the themes, the researcher and reviewer found that some themes had a lack of saturation, with only one or two participant responses represented within the theme or subtheme. Such subthemes were grouped into similar themes to better reflect the data and improve saturation. A process memo was used to document the grouping of subthemes from the originally developed subthemes.

As participants discussed previous experiences and experiences of other individuals beyond their personal experiences, the researcher and reviewer discussed the need to revise themes that included the quotations and codes that were associated with experiences that were not that of the technological employee. Similarly, participants described experiences they had in the past, outside of the technological sector. These described experiences – those of other individuals or previous experiences outside of the technological sector – were determined to not be relevant to this study. Based on a review of the data to eliminate quotations that were based on experiences beyond the participant's individual experience as a technological employee, the themes were revised to better reflect the experiences of PCB that participants experienced as a technological employee.

Step 5: Defining the Themes

As reflected in Appendix C, in Step 5, in defining the themes, I developed a phrase that was reflective of each theme. Corresponding with each theme name, a description was provided to define the theme. A few sentences were used to describe what made the themes relevant to the study. Relevance was determined based on how the theme reflected the lived experiences, including the perceived consequences of

experiencing a PCB among technology workers. More specifically, the description of the themes was grounded on their relevance to answering the study's research questions. This exercise helped highlight how themes differed from each other.

Step 6: Composite Description of Themes

The final step of thematic analysis was the generation of a summary that captured all the themes discussed within the context of the study's research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each theme was discussed, supported by exemplars from responses that best captured its essence. In addition to the themes, discrepant findings were also included in the composite description to highlight critical alternative perspectives. The combined description served as the research findings of the study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

Tracy (2019) defined credibility as the ability of a researcher to confirm that the results of the study are an accurate interpretation and representation of the data. I incorporated consistency checks into the development of the qualitative study. A comprehensive literature review found the relevant aspects to address the research question. The research collected data until saturation was met, and therefore common themes or patterns reinforcing each other's experiences (Crawford, 2016).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability to interpret and apply the findings of this study to populations beyond the study's sample (Tracy, 2019). This study focuses on PCBs in the technology sector. Similar studies have been conducted with a focus on banking (van

Gilst et al., 2020), nursing (Trybou et al., 2016), law enforcement (Duran et al., 2019), and hospitality (Shi & Gordon, 2019). Therefore, this study will provide insight regarding PCBs in the technology sector as an under-researched industry and will give technological organizations practical indications to reduce technological employee PCBs. To guarantee transferability, I incorporated a description of the study participants' experiences and their context to illustrate the sample for which this study may be relevant. I also included a detailed account of the phenomenon of focus to ascertain clarity for the readers.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the level at which other researchers can implement the same methodological plan and obtain similar findings to this research project (Tracy, 2019). I utilized triangulation to achieve dependability by including a diverse group of informants and ensuring that individual experiences could be confirmed together with those of others. The research process has been recorded towards the construction of a rich picture of perceptions and experiences of study participants that other researchers can replicate.

Confirmability

Tracy (2019) defined confirmability as ensuring the neutrality of a study's findings. Limitations innate to the study's methodology are used to measure the neutrality of findings, for example, researcher biases and procedural barriers at the analysis stage. Neutrality was achieved by adhering to thematic analysis guidance by Braun and Clarke (2006). Details of the analysis procedures are included in Chapters 3 and 4 to enable a

reader to understand the data collection process and constructs that emerged from the analysis procedure in this IPA study. In alignment with Smith and Fieldsend (2021), the analysis approach used focused on understandings participants' experiences of PCB based on their voiced representations. Through the IPA approach, I sought to understand participants lived experiences of PCB as technological employees.

Results

In this section, the study findings are provided in response to the two research questions. Three primary themes were identified in the data to address the research questions. Table 2 below presents the themes per research question. In the next section, each theme is described and illustrated.

Table 2*Research Questions and Data Themes*

Research question	Data themes	Data subthemes	Number of participants (n)	Number of references
RQ1: What is the lived experience of a technological worker in the context of a PCB?	Theme 1: Technological workers perceived that they had experienced various forms of PCB (n = 12)	Subtheme 1a: lack of recognition and respect	10	26
		Subtheme 1b: lack of support	7	20
	Theme 2: Technological workers perceived that they had experienced negative effects due to a PCB (n = 12)	Subtheme 2a: low job retention	9	15
		Subtheme 2b: reduced productivity	7	14
		Subtheme 2c: lack of motivation	7	7
		Subtheme 2d: lack of trust in the organization	7	8
	RQ2: How do technological workers understand a perceived PCB?	Theme 3: Technological workers perceived that employees' PCB experiences would persist into the future (n = 6)	Subtheme 3a: marginalization and discrimination based on race and gender	4
Subtheme 3b: Prioritizing business profit over integrity and employees			6	8

Research Question 1

The first research question explored participants' experiences in the context of a psychological contract breach (PCB). The study defined a PCB as an event that occurs when the perceived commitment or obligation between them and their organization changes over time and negatively affects job outcomes. Two themes were found to address this research question. In the section below, illustrative quotes are used for each theme. Subthemes were also identified within each theme and are noted below

Theme 1: Technological Workers Perceived That They Had Experienced Various Forms of PCB (n = 12)

Technological workers in this study all expressed that they had experienced PCB. The forms of PCB identified within this theme were (a) lack of recognition and respect (n=10) and (b) lack of support (n=7). This theme described the various forms of PCB that participants reported having experienced across the identified subthemes.

Subtheme 1a: Lack of Recognition and Respect (n = 10). The first issue was the lack of recognition for participants' (n=10) contributions to the organization and lack of respect. As will be expressed in the examples provided from participant responses, the lack of recognition was experienced as a PCB in several different forms within the individual experiences. For example, Participant 2, in the quote below, indicated that their supervisor got all the credit for their work:

So, the fact that I felt that I would not get recognition for things at my job. The things that I do far and beyond are just considered well as your job or okay, but yet my director and my manager got the glory for it, but I am behind the scenes

doing all the hard work. So, imagine the way that made me feel; it made me feel so bad that the next day, I did not even really work.

A second example was provided by Participant 3, who indicated that they worked as a programmer in a specific company in their early career. They put in much time and hard work to develop a placement management system software. However, their supervisors took all the credit for the software and failed to acknowledge Participant 3's contribution. Participant 3 indicated how they found out that their supervisors were taking credit for their work:

So, after one year, I found out that no one knows that [supervisor] built that software. Everyone was taking credit. And another department's head came to me, and he told me, "You know what? You made it." But over there in my department from information technology, there were other colleagues of mine who were my teachers once, and they were trying to take ownership of those projects.

The second issue pertaining to lack of respect was being denied a competitive salary that was deserved and, in some instances, promised. The first example was from Participant 3, who reported that they often faced discrimination at the workplace based on their race (Indian), specifically in Canada, where they had been working. Participant 3 indicated that their employer argued that they did not deserve equal pay with others because Indians could do the work at a lower remuneration rate:

They asked me this question, "Why do we need to pay an Indian in Canada in Canadian dollars while we can pay an Indian in India in Indian rupees?" And the

currency difference is that one Canadian dollar is 60 Indian rupees. So, this is the question... I mean, literally, people ask us that, “You know what? This project and the remuneration you are asking for this is...” Let’s say \$2,000. “We can get it from India in \$200.” So that is one of the biggest challenges I face, especially in Canada.

Another example of a lack of a competitive salary was that the difference in remuneration was also based on their race. Participant 1 was African American, and they narrated that while working as a consultant in a particular company, they introduced another IT coach to the organization (school) who was white. Their remuneration exceeded Participant 3 even though they were less experienced:

I had an organization that I was consulting with, and they brought in somebody I recommended they bring in. They paid that person more money than me, even though I had more experience than them, and they said I would be their highest-paid coach. And that did not happen. It was more than likely due to skin color versus anything else (Participant 1).

In some instances, although participants reported that they got a salary increment, it was not similar to their colleagues with similar or lower experience. Participant 6 indicated that although they were the first to receive a salary increment at their place of work, they soon realized that other colleagues were earning more:

I was the first analyst in my cohort and my team to get offered that promotion, where they increased my pay to about \$93,000 to \$94,000 as a senior analyst now. And about a year-and-a-half later, when the rest of the analysts were extended the

same opportunity, and we talked a lot, I realized that everyone is making well over \$100,000 for doing the same thing I am doing. \$110,000, \$107,000, so really my main takeaway from this is if I continue to stay in this company, I will constantly be in the cycle of playing catch up, despite getting promoted and what-not (Participant 6).

Subtheme 1b: Lack of Support (n = 7). The third breach was the lack of support, which spanned from limited opportunities to participate in capacity-building activities such as workplace training or self-development courses and a lack of work-life balance. Participant 2 reported that their employer had promised four hours of training per week. However, due to the long working hours and demands of their job, they had not been able to participate in professional development:

In one of our meetings, she (manager) said that she expected us all to be at least spending four hours a week on professional development, which could be training, that is, professional training or going to seminars, that type of thing, to learn our jobs better, to become better people, be better professionals, professional development that was expected. And in fact, I have an hour day carved out for it, and so far, yet this year I have not been able to use any of it (Participant 2).

Participant 8 also argued that training was necessary for IT professionals at their company. The purpose of the training was to ensure that the web hosting business was running smoothly. In the quote below, they indicated that although their employer had indicated that there would be training, none had taken place:

So, the training, for my job specifically and really all people at my company, is incredibly important because we are dealing with customers every day as a web hosting company. And so, it is important to understand the workflows and to know what to do in a particular scenario. So, I think that is the case for every company. Right. But I think more in this scenario is that the expectations are clearly laid out, and then they are clearly ignored. I think that is that breach, if you will (Participant 8).

Lack of support included a lack of a work-life balance, which was due to working long hours and the inability to take a vacation. Participants voiced that they needed additional opportunities for vacation and time off, alongside training. The challenge in terms of PCB was related to employers' demand for more working hours without providing vacation, training, or time off, as expressed by Participant 4:

So either you live with it, with whatever is the reality now, or you try to negotiate something maybe it's vacation, maybe it's time off, maybe more training, maybe a lot of other things comes in place. Specifically, and I've seen this a gazillion times. I'm sure you've seen it as well. Is that if you are salaried, there is a myth of, okay, then I can work you or her to death. Meaning we don't need to abide anymore by the 40 hours per week anymore, you could work 60, 70 as long as you get the job done.

Participants expressed that although employers expected long working hours from IT professionals, there was a lack of appreciation and support from employers in exchange for the long hours worked. Participant 2 reported a non-written expectation that individuals in the IT industry will be required to work more than 40 hours per week.

However, they had accepted their current job based on an expectation that they would not be required to be on call all the time. They reported that they often worked for 15 or 16 hours a day which was unacceptable. They argued that the work schedules made it difficult for them to take a day off or go on vacation:

I specifically made the point that I did not want to have to be on call 24/7 like I was at my previous job. So, the understanding was, yes, and we have an on-call rotation schedule. It is going to be really busy for the next few weeks, but we are hiring more people. You will not be getting calls in the middle of the night, all the time, and have to work those long hours. And what I found is exactly more of the same. So that was the breach. I would not have taken the job if I knew that I was going to be literally sitting for 15 to 16 hours straight in one spot doing this all day and on the phone all day. So that was a very big disappointment (Participant 2).

Another issue related to work-life balance as part of the perceived lack of support that participants raised was the inability to take vacations. In the case of Participant 2, the employer did not deny them leave, but the demanding work schedule made it difficult for them to take a vacation. However, Participant 5 reported a scenario where they had scheduled and communicated that they would proceed on vacation. However, their supervisor allocated them a project that could not be finalized in time for the vacation, denying them that opportunity:

So, this was Monday, he says, "(Name Withheld), I need this done by Friday." I say, "man, I will not be able to do it because it is not enough time. "I need this

done by a certain time.” I said, “I cannot, I am leaving for vacation. I will see you two weeks.” He says, “no, you cannot leave. Because this project, we need you to get this done by this time.” So, he says, “if you do not get this done by this time, you will not have a job anymore (Participant 5).

Theme 2: Technological Workers Perceived That They Had Experienced Negative Effects Due to a PCB (n = 12)

Technological workers in this study expressed that they had experienced negative effects due to a PCB. The negative effects due to a PCB identified by the participants were: (a) low job retention (n=9), (b) reduced productivity (n=7), (c) lack of motivation (n=7), and (d) lack of trust in the organization (n=7). This theme included the perceived effects of the various forms of PCB that participants reported having experienced across the identified subthemes.

Subtheme 2a: Low Job Retention (n = 9). This theme describes the various negative effects of a psychological contract on the participants. The first and most common consequence reported by participants (n=9) was low job retention. They indicated that they had left companies that breached psychological contracts because they did not consider suitable working environments. Some participants had exited from employment to start their own business, whereas others had sought employment in a different company. Participant 12 in the quote below, sums up low retention and how this affects companies:

Just people were leaving—the negative impact from a human resource perspective. Top resources top performers may decide to leave the organization.

Thus, there will always be this churn in their skillset and the number of people working for the organization. They will always find themselves in a recruitment phase. And then for the individual who does decide to leave, it keeps them in the position of having to find work and justify why they left an organization that, on the surface, looks like it is performing well, but from an operational and organizational culture perspective, not doing so well, but leaving the candidate who is looking for another job to explain that (Participant 12).

Subtheme 2b: Reduced Productivity (n=7). The following effect of PCB was reduced productivity of the employees (n=7) who experienced it. Participant 1 argued that employees who cannot leave an organization where they have experienced a breach of psychological contract suffer from reduced productivity. Participants identified different ways that indicate reduced performance, such as individuals in the tech world taking on other jobs during the company's time. Also, employees would do the bare minimum required to stay out of trouble or withhold their input when they feel that their efforts will not be recognized. In the quote below, Participant 6 sums up the lack of productivity that they had experienced and the actions that they took:

“I do not want to give my all to a company that does not value me... So I am going to go ahead and work on my side projects. After work, during work, and even look for jobs and careers while I am on the clock.” So that is two things I would mention in terms of negative consequences that stem from that psychological breach (Participant 6).

Subtheme 2c: Lack of Motivation (n = 7). The third effect is the employees' (n=7) lack of motivation. Participant 10 argued that they "would not have too much faith in that organization if there are many breaches of trust. Because when you work with someone you want to feel that you can honestly depend on what they are offering." (Participant 10).

Due to a loss of trust in the organization, there was a lack of motivation experienced by employees who have experienced a PCB. Participant 11 noted that it was difficult to co-exist with demotivated people because they tend to weigh down their colleagues who are thriving. In the quote below, Participant 6 reported that they no longer had the motivation they once had at the onset of their career:

So now I want to say, feeling there is a lack of support in terms of career trajectory and growth, that would be one. And just to touch upon that before I give a second example is knowing the pay discrepancies and some of the breaches I have experienced, it is, again, just to reiterate. I have not been as motivated as I was going into my career from the beginning, knowing the stance that my organization has taken. But the second example would be that the retention rate is big. It does not really make sense to stay at a company whose values do not necessarily align with mine. So, I would say the retention rate of the organization would severely be impacted (Participant 6).

Subtheme 2d: Lack of Trust in the Organization (n = 7). The fourth negative effect reported by participants (n=7) was a lack of trust in the organization, and it was reported to precede the lack of motivation: "If there is no trust, then there is no

commitment to the milestones. There is no willingness to go above and beyond what the expectations are. Trust plays a huge factor in motivation level.” (Participant 12)

The perceived lack of trust in the organization was the perception that individuals within the organization were deceptive or untruthful with the employee. For instance, in describing the misalignment in job responsibilities, salary, and expected work schedule, Participant 4 revealed an experience of deception that led to mistrust in the organization:

So just there we are not on the same page. They have something in their mind.

They didn’t tell me when I asked them, they smiled. And they said, well, “If we have told you the truth, we wouldn’t have hired you. And we really needed somebody to fill that position.”

Participant 7 observed that once trust is lost due to one PCB, employees lose confidence in their employer, keeping any other obligations agreed upon. They referred to an instance where an organization failed to recognize an individual’s efforts and how that could lead to a loss of confidence in other areas:

It is more of a horns effect that if you did not make good on one promise, which is, so for example, something simple to me is undoubtedly you can recognize hard work, and remunerate according to what kind of agreement I thought we had as an organization, then that may lead me to believe that you promise that we, “Hey, you can have more flexibility in your job,” but I never see it. It is that kind of deal, so the horns effect from you missing on one promise, one breach rolls into the next one, for me, I start to read, I start to lose confidence in you keeping other promises, and that is sort of where it comes from for me. One breach causes me to

lose confidence that you will make good on other aspects of the agreement (Participant 7).

In summary, participants identified various effects of a PCB. They noted that the effects sometimes differed from one person to another. For example, some people chose to leave an organization after experiencing a PCB, whereas others chose to stay based on their judgment of severity and personal obligations at the time. Participants observed that low productivity occurred when a person chose to stay in an organization that had breached a PCB. There was one positive effect that was discussed in that some individuals chose to start self-employment after experiencing a PCB, and in some cases, the start-ups thrived.

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to explore participants' perceptions of a PCB. One theme was found to address this research question. This theme was developed from responses from six participants. Illustrative quotes are utilized in the section below to describe the theme.

Theme 3: Technological Workers Perceived That Employees' PCB Experiences Would Persist Into the Future (n = 6)

This theme discusses participants' perceptions regarding types of PCB that may persist and reasons for anticipated trends.

Subtheme 3a: Continued Marginalization and Discrimination (n = 4). Some participants identified that racial minorities were likely to experience PCBs such as lack

of recognition and competitive remuneration. Participant 1 argued that discrimination would continue even if reforms and policies are implemented, such as affirmative action:

I believe that the gap or inequity between minorities, women, and other people, there will continue to be a gap that is there until you start getting people in positions of power that can start equalizing the playing field because things like affirmative action do not solve the problem (Participant 1).

Similarly, Participant 2 associated their PCB experiences with differential treatment related to gender and race. The participant was a female African American working in an environment dominated by white males. In the quote below, she associates her experiences with discrimination based on gender and race:

Being a female, being a Black female in a world that's dominated, or at least at one time when I entered the industry, dominated by white males. And being the only one and the automatic assumption that I did not know what I was doing. The automatic doubt of when I say something technically, it was doubted, and I have to really work very hard to prove myself. It is automatic; I do not get respect or say things to me in front of other people that are disrespecting me or my skills (Participant 2).

Participant 3 noted that the lack of a fair salary was due to the expectation that the employee should accept a remuneration that was equivalent to that offered in India as they were an Indian employee, despite living in Canada:

And the currency difference is one Canadian dollar is 60 Indian rupees. So this is the question... I mean, literally, people ask us that, "You know what? This

project and the remuneration you are asking for this is..." Let's say \$2,000.

"We can get it from India in \$200." So that is one of the biggest challenge I face, especially in Canada.

Due to the expectation that the employee would continue working at a salary equivalent to that provided in India, the participant believed that the inadequate remuneration by the company would continue.

A fourth participant, Participant 5, a participant of color, noted that they believe that the company viewed them as less valuable based on their race. In confirming whether the diminished value was perceived to be based on their race, Participant 5 responded: "I couldn't think of any other reason other than that, to be honest. My skills were there. They were impeccable. Unquestionable."

Subtheme 3b: Prioritization of Business Profit Over Integrity and Employees (n = 6). Participants also argued that some experiences of PCB were inherent to the IT field, such as the expectation to work long hours (beyond the 40 hours per week). Although working long hours is an expectation in the IT field a PCB was experienced by employees due to the expectation that a work-life balance should be provided by the organization to employees out of moral obligation and respect for employees (Greenbaum et al., 2011). However, it was clear from Participant 2 that some employers did not make any effort to reduce the pressure to work long hours. Participant 2 noted that the trend was common in the various places they had worked, and although they were hopeful that management would address it, there was an expectation that working hours would be over 40 hours per week.

Participant 10 argued that PCBs differed based on the type of company an individual worked for, whether public or private. They further stipulated that private companies lacked loyalty to individuals while public companies were more interested in retaining employees and providing opportunities for self-development. In the quote below, they discussed how PCBs varied in the two types of organizations:

You work with a private company, generally, they push their at-will sort of employment relationship and so the social contract, the psychological contract I must say it is a little negligent because what I have seen in private companies is that they hold no loyalty to you, as opposed to working with a public company who has a little more interest in keeping you involved and will retain them (employees) for a while because they will put more into educational opportunities, training and things of that nature. So, I think there is a dichotomy between the two different entities regarding the psychological contract and what that means for each company (Participant 10).

Participant 10 further observed that prioritization of profits over employees' wellbeing was a standard business practice. Participant 10 owned a business and was actively involved in managing employees. In the quote below, they indicated that meeting financial goals was a priority over and above meeting training obligations of employees:

Say, for instance, educational opportunities or those kinds of things, if in my company, if we offered that. I saw that it would be a detriment to our bottom line; yeah, we would probably pull that back as a first resort to try to make sure that we meet our financial goals (Participant 10).

Participant 7 argued that the PCBs would persist if the current leaders remained in power within the organizations. They identified specific PCBs that were likely to continue, including lack of recognition and competitive pay. In the quote below, they argued that company policies were unlikely to change without a change in leadership:

I perceive that they (PCBs) will be breached. I believe it will be in the categories of recognition and remuneration or pay as long as the current leaders exist, then I believe the behaviors will persist. As long as I am dealing with a leader who does not recognize that I am doing something above and beyond, and I do not feel that the recognition is there, I will continue to see it because the leader is still there. I think it is also in the space of the monetary rewards, right? So as long as I am dealing with the same company policies around bonuses and things like that, that is why I believe that I would continue to see it there, because of the policies and the leaders still being in place (Participant 7).

Specifically related to the perceived likelihood that PCBs would continue, whether based on compensation or other factors, Participant 6 expressed their expectation that breaches in the future are inevitable:

I think with a lot of tech companies and companies in general corporations, not everything will be perfect. So there's definitely going to be recurring breaches, whether it's compensation as we're discussing or any of the other ones that you mentioned. I think it's inevitable for them to be imperfect. So I think we should anticipate some level of breach and in terms of them not out holding our best interest at heart (Participant 6).

In summary, participants thought that PCBs would persist in the workplace due to existing norms within the IT field and business world. They argued that a policy reform to address PCBs in the workplace would require the action of those in leadership. They also recognized that some populations, such as racial minorities, were more vulnerable to experiences of PCBs.

Summary

This qualitative interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) study aimed to explore the technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. An IPA approach was selected to explore the lived experiences of individual study participants (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). To achieve the study purpose, I identified two research questions. The findings of the thematic analysis conducted to answer these research questions are presented in this section. The first research question sought to explore the experiences of technological workers in the context of a psychological contract breach (PCB). Two data themes were found to address the first research question.

The first theme described the various forms of PCB that participants reported that they had experienced. The findings indicated that participants identified several instances of perceived PCBs, which were PCBs in which participants expressed (a) a lack of recognition and respect and (b) a lack of support. Prioritizing profits over integrity was a breach that affected employees and the clients of their companies as well.

The second theme discussed the negative effects of a PCB on the participants. The findings indicated PCBs: loss of trust in the employer, reduced productivity, lack of motivation, and low job retention. A possible positive effect reported was employees'

venturing into self-employment that sometimes thrived. The effects were noted to differ from one person to another based on their perception of PCB severity and personal obligations at the time.

The second research question sought to explore participants' perceptions of a PCB. One theme addressed this question, and it illustrated that participants thought that PCBs would persist into the future. The findings indicated that the persistence of PCBs would be shaped by existing workplace norms that perpetuate PCBs. A change would require the intervention of workplace policies. Also, the findings indicated that specific individuals were more vulnerable to PCBs, such as gender and racial minorities. In Chapter 5, I interpret the findings and presents study limitations and recommendations. Chapter 5 concludes with a section that includes the implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The aim of this study was to understand the importance of employee relations, ethics, and values; how PCs form through the lenses of ethics, values, organizational justice, and perceptions; and how a PCB may occur in certain situations. Researchers have found that employees may perceive unethical organizational behavior, which dilutes the established PC, resulting in PCBs and violations (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Psychological contract breaches can lead to a variety of negative outcomes, such as employee turnover (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019), counterproductive workplace behavior (Ma et al., 2019), increased levels of stress and mistrust (Duran et al., 2018), and diminished OCB (Sharma et al., 2019; Tufan & Wendt, 2020).

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. Through this study, I interpreted the meaning of a PCB for the employees, the context of the PCB, and the perceived experiences of the PCB. The results of this research include data on how technological employees experienced a PCB and the impact of a PCB on employee outcomes (Anderson, 2016; Greenbaum et al., 2011).

In conducting this study, I sought to understand how technological employees form PCs and how breach occurs in the industry. The questions asked included, what triggers a PCB for these technological employees? And if a PCB did occur, how was it perceived? Are organizations not upholding their promises or obligations? How serious is the breach? Through a qualitative IPA research methodology, the findings of this study

include some answers to the gaps in the existing literature. The findings of the current study were that technological workers experience a variety of PCBs. For the participants in this study, the PCBs were triggered by a lack of recognition and respect and a lack of support. Based on these findings, organizations may not be upholding the promises and obligations expected by employees. As mentioned previously, the promises and obligations expected by employees, such as respect, recognition, and support, are not necessarily formal aspects of an employee's work contract. However, if such expectations are not met, the employee experiences a PCB. Technological workers have expressed that when a PCB is experienced, the PCB negatively affects work (Greenbaum et al., 2011). As PCBs have been found to negatively impact the motivation and performance of employees, a PCB can result in negative employee and work outcomes. Furthermore, participants in this study indicated they believe their experiences with PCB would continue.

Interpretation of the Findings

Consistent with the current literature on PCBs (e.g., Anderson, 2016; Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Lewicki et al., 2005), the findings of the current study are that employees have a variety of experiences of perceived PCBs and experiences of PCBs negatively impact employees. The findings in this study further the current literature by examining technology workers' perceptions of the impact of PCB based on their lived experiences.

Research Question 1

Two themes were identified in response to the first research question: technological workers perceive they experience various forms of PCB, and technological workers perceive they experience negative effects due to a PCB. In the following sections, each theme is discussed within the context of the current literature.

Theme 1: Technological Workers Perceived They Had Experienced Various Forms of PCB

Consistent with the literature, the findings of the current study are that a variety of factors precipitate a PCB. As presented in Chapter 4, the forms of PCBs expressed by participants were a lack of recognition and respect and a lack of support. As found in other research in the law enforcement and IT sectors (e.g., Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Laverone, 2017; Moquin et al., 2019; Taylor-Mukendi, 2019), workers in the technology sector have experienced a PCB due to organizational behaviors that resulted due to a sense of lack of respect and recognition and lack of support among workers. The findings of the current study expand on previous literature by identifying two factors pertaining to PCB in the technology sector specifically. In particular, the unethical organizational behavior noted in previous studies (e.g., Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Laverone, 2017; Moquin et al., 2019; Taylor-Mukendi, 2019) were reflected in the lack of recognition and respect and lack of support identified by the study participants.

The literature consistently reflects that counterproductive work behavior is associated with PCBs, specifically when the PCB is due to a lack of recognition and unfair treatment of the employee (Anderson, 2016; Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Costa &

Neves, 2017; Laverone, 2017). Participants in the current study reported that they experienced a lack of recognition for their work and were denied competitive salaries, even when promised a higher salary. Lack of recognition is a common antecedent of PCB across sectors (Anderson, 2016; Shi & Gordon, 2019). Unfulfilled promises, such as a lack of competitive salaries, are also common PC violations across sectors (Anderson, 2016). Consistent with the literature, these unfulfilled promises as perceived by technological employees result in negative consequences, including counterproductive work behavior.

Differences in organizational values as reflected in organizational culture have also been identified as an antecedent of PCB (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Jayaweera et al., 2021). A misalignment between organizational culture and employee values can create a PCB when an employee feels their values are not reflected in the organizational culture. In the current study, the difference in cultural values identified included the lack of work–life balance due to long hours and lack of vacation time. Although it was the organizational culture for technology workers to work longer hours than other employees, this expectation was at odds with the technology workers' values and beliefs, creating a PCB as workers expected to be able to take time off and to work hours comparable to that of other employees.

Unethical organizational behavior, which was due to a lack of recognition and respect and a lack of support, was the primary antecedent identified by participants in the current study. Participants reported a lack of opportunities for growth or training in the workplace as well as organizational practices that placed profit over integrity.

Professionals in other sectors also report that these two behaviors precipitate a PCB (Collins & Beauregard, 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Theme 2: Technological Workers Perceived They Had Experienced Negative Effects

Due to a PCB

Consistent with the current literature (e.g., Chambel & Oliveira-Cruz, 2010; Schleicher et al., 2010), the findings of the current study are that workers in the technology sector report that a PCB negatively affected their work. Participants in the current study reported that negative effects of a PCB on their work included turnover, reduced productivity and motivation, and a lack of trust in the organization. The findings in this study are also consistent with the negative consequences of PCBs due to lack of support, as experienced by employees in other sectors, such as the turnover of more than 100 police officers in Oakland, California due to lack of support (Madyun, 2022).

A wealth of literature shows the negative effects of PCBs on employees' work across a variety of different sectors. Research shows that PCBs increase employee turnover (Moquin & Riemenschneider, 2019), reduce productivity and motivation among employees (Jayaweera et al., 2021), and reduce employee trust in the organization (Duran et al., 2018). Similarly, the current study found that technology workers who experienced a PCB reported less motivation to work and lower productivity and reported less trust in the organization. Future research may consider exploring the process through which PCB leads to these negative outcomes to better understand this phenomenon.

Research Question 2

One theme identified in response to the second research question was that technological workers perceived that employees' PCB experiences would persist into the future. This theme expands on the current literature, which has focused on the antecedents of PCB and outcomes of PCB (Peng et al., 2016). Few studies have examined technology workers' perceptions of how the PCB would continue to affect their work.

Overall, technology workers believed their PCB experiences would persist into the future. Technology workers believed the PCBs would continue due to the fact that issues that were perceived to be PCBs, such as working long hours, were a standard within the technology profession and expected of technology workers within the participants' respective organizations. One specific example of this is the long hours that participants in the current study reported. The participants noted that this PCB would not stop as the expectations for long hours was now standard for technology professionals. Although these standards are common in the technology profession, they were perceived as PCBs by technological workers. The reason employees perceived that the PCB would continue to be a PCB can be understood in terms of employees' expectations that there is a moral exchange agreement between them and their organization (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011). The expectation of the employees is that their organization would show respect to for their moral obligations, including those beyond the organization's treatment of them as an employee (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021). In the context of the PCBs experienced

by participants, technological employees believed that (a) respect and recognition and (b) support were moral obligations to the employee that should be respected by the organization.

As reflected in the subthemes, the reason lack of a work-life balance, including long working hours, among other PCBs, was experienced as a PCB is due to the fact that participants perceived this as a lack of support from the organization. As an example, participants named lack of work-life balance as a PCB. The lack of work-life balance was a perceived PCB because the work-life balance was expected by employees as part of the organization's psychological contract. When the work-life balance was not being provided to employees, a PCB was experienced because employees perceived that the organization was not fulfilling its moral obligation and was therefore behaving unethically (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011). Unless there were changes made to the organization's culture and practices that led to a PCB in the first place, the impact and experience of the PCB would continue. Similarly, unless there is a change in the technological industry in which work-life balance is improved (i.e., reduced working hours and allowing for employees to take a vacation), the organizations will likely continue to engage in a PCB, as perceived by technological workers as the organizations are likely to adhere to the industry's standards of longer working hours and less time off, rather than upholding their moral obligation to employees.

As reflected in the experiences of the participants in this study, technological workers perceived a lack of support from the organization, particularly in terms of work-life balance, when compared to their colleagues within the organization (colleagues

outside of the technology industry but within the same organization). It is important to reiterate that PCBs involve implicit rather than explicit expectations within the workplace (Argyris, 1960; Greenbaum et al., 2011) and are linked to and influenced by organizational culture (Conway & Briner, 2015; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021). As such, the continued issue of PCB as perceived by technological workers appears to be an industry culture issue that is continued by organizations within their organizational culture. When organizations do not show respect and moral obligation to employees, the organization violates their exchange agreement (Greenbaum et al., 2011). The moral obligations of the organization are beyond the organization's treatment of the employee and extend to behaving ethically in alignment with employees' perceptions of the mutual agreement they have with the organization (Greenbaum et al., 2011). In other words, despite industry standards or expectations in the organizational culture, technological workers will continue to perceive the issues of (a) lack of support (including lack of work-life balance) and (b) lack of respect and recognition as PCBs because the organization is not adhering to their moral obligations (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Unless a change is made in the organizations in which employees work, regardless of the industry standard, technological workers will continue to perceive (a) lack of support and (b) lack of recognition and respect as PCBs. This finding is in alignment with Mayer (2011) in the sense that encouraging prosocial behavior in the workplace can empower employees and can even lead to broader social change in the industry. However, without prosocial behavior, such as the organization upholding their

moral obligation to employees (Englehardt, 2017; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021) (i.e., providing work-life balance), the PCB continues to be perceived by the employees and the lack of prosocial behavior in the industry and within the organization remains. The continuation of the perception of a PCB among technological workers is due to the fact that the organization is maintaining the industry standards for technological workers rather than upholding their moral obligation. Moreover, people respond negatively to a perception of a moral obligation not being upheld by the organization (i.e., a PCB) due to the expectation that organizations should abide by moral obligations (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021). The failure to uphold a moral obligation results in the failure to uphold the psychological contract, which results in a PCB (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021).

Regardless of having experienced a PCB in the past, employees will continue to perceive the failure to uphold the psychological contract as a PCB by the organization (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011). The continued perception of a PCB is based on the fact that employees uphold moral contracts (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011). Even if the employees perceive that the organization's PCB causes little to no harm and is without victims, it continues to result in a moral contract violation, which results in a PCB (Du & Vantilborgh 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Jayaweera et al., 2021). PCBs overlap with moral contract violations, ideological currency, and moral contract breaches because the moral contract is based on the employee's belief that the organization failed to uphold its moral obligation (Greenbaum

et al., 2011). The overlap, in turn, is based on the exchange agreement between the employee and organization, which includes the organization's responsibility to uphold its obligations while preventing the occurrence of unethical behavior (Greenbaum et al., 2011).

Limitations of the Study

The findings of the current literature should be considered within the context of a few limitations. First, recruitment for the current study took place using social media sites. As such, most of the participants came from the same social networks. Participants who come from the same social networks may hold similar experiences, values, and beliefs that are different from those in other social networks. However, participants in the current study reported a variety of experiences and differing values and beliefs, indicating that any impact of the recruitment method on the findings is minimal. Additional limitations of this study included a small sample size of 12 participants who were geographically dispersed across North America. Although a geographically dispersed participant population was utilized, future research with a larger sample size and evenly dispersed population could be conducted to confirm the findings of this study. For instance, 11 of the 12 participants in this study were from the United States, and one was from Canada, which reflects a need to have a population that is more reflective of populations in Canada and Mexico as part of the North American geographic region.

Another limitation is that among the technological workers in this study, there were more IT workers than software engineers in the current study, limiting the application of the findings to the entire technological sector. Although there was no

evidence that their responses differed in this study, future research may consider targeting software engineers separately from IT workers to understand their experiences with PCB and how they may differ from technological workers. Such research would help to determine whether the findings of this study are reflective of the software engineer population specifically.

Finally, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted online over Zoom. This limited my ability to read body language and other non-verbal cues that were not visible on camera. These non-verbal cues are important to consider when interviewing participants and analyzing qualitative data as they help to identify areas of emphasis not verbally articulated by the participant (Creswell & Creswell., 2018). Non-verbal cues in IPA research help to identify areas of the human experience that have resulted in an emotional impact on the participant. Non-verbal cues, which may not be articulated in the verbal response, can be expressed by their change of tone, facial expressions, etc., in response to the experience. Such emotional cues must be noted during the interview as they may not be present in the verbal expression of the participant (Smith & Fieldsend, 2021). Despite being unable to conduct interviews in person, I was able to provide evidence of trustworthiness and participants provided rich, detailed data, so this limitation appeared to have minimal impact on the results of the current study.

Recommendations

Despite the limitations outlined in the previous sections, the findings of the current study have implications for future research. First, the current study found that participants believed that their PCB experiences would persist unless significant

organizational changes were made. Though previous research has identified some recommendations to reduce the negative impacts of PCB, these recommendations have not been empirically tested. Future research may consider identifying best practices for reducing the negative outcomes associated with PCBs.

Second, participants in the current study began to describe the process through which experiencing PCB leads to negative outcomes. Future research may consider exploring the process through which PCB leads to these negative outcomes to better understand this phenomenon. Based on the identified limitations of this study, future research could also be conducted using a larger sample size and replicated in other geographic contexts to confirm the findings of the study and potential transferability.

Finally, one participant in the current study reported that they believed that PCBs differ depending on the kind of company an individual worked for, private or public. As the misalignment between organizational culture and employees' values has been noted to be related to both PCBs and employees' moral disengagement (Mayer, 2011), additional research is needed to better understand how organizational culture may be related to PCBs. Organizational context may influence the type and frequency of PCBs. Future research may consider exploring the various organizational contexts that impact experiences of PCBs, including the type of PCB, frequency of PCB, and impact of PCB on employee's work and well-being.

Previous research has suggested that employers take steps to reduce the known antecedents of PCBs or balance them with other benefits to reduce the negative effects associated with PCBs (Ambrose & Arnaud, 2005; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Greenberg,

2011; Painter, 2017). However, these recommendations have yet to be empirically tested. Future research may consider identifying best practices for reducing the negative outcomes associated with PCBs.

In addition to expanding research on PCBs, a practical recommendation is to create an organizational culture in which employees can express perceived PCBs within their organization. As PCBs differ based on context, organizations must have a platform to understand the PCBs that are perceived by employees within their organization. Creating a means of communication as part of the organizational culture in which employees can express perceived PCBs provides an opportunity to empower employees and to allow organizations to address identified PCBs. In turn, providing a means of communicating PCBs within the organization encourages prosocial behavior (Mayer, 2011). Allowing employees to express perceived PCBs is essential, as withholding such information is detrimental to the organization (Greenbaum et al., 2011; Rai & Agarwal, 2018).

Implications

The findings of the current study also have implications for practices, policies, and procedures implemented by employers in the technology sector. As expressed in Chapters 1 and 2, this research provided a deeper understanding of how PCBs affect technological employees. The findings of this study are useful in practice as they can be used by employers to avoid negative outcomes associated with PCBs that may be experienced by their employees. Specifically, a deeper understanding of how technological employees perceive and experience PCBs, as reflected in this study, will

allow employers and employees to mitigate the negative outcomes of breaches by implementing improved employee training and employee relations for technological employees.

Several employer practices and organizational cultural values were identified as antecedents to PCBs and increase the likelihood of negative outcomes among technology workers. Employers in the technology sector may consider directly addressing the antecedents of PCBs identified in the current study: (a) lack of recognition and respect and (b) lack of support. Developing organizational culture, policies, and procedures that reduce the antecedents of PCB identified in the current study has the potential to improve employees' work performance and overall well-being.

Consistent with the recommendations from previous researchers (Ambrose & Arnaud, 2005; Greenbaum et al., 2011; Greenberg, 2011; Painter, 2017), employers in the technology sector should take steps to reduce the number and impact of PCBs in their organization. Employers must uphold organizational justice (Painter, 2017). Employees should be recognized for their work, compensated fairly, and the organization should offer opportunities for career advancement through training and promotion (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Organizational leaders may consider implementing policies and procedures that provide oversight of managers to ensure that these steps are taken. It may be beneficial for the organization to practice this oversight regularly to reduce the risk of PCBs.

Beyond practical implications, this study also has implications for research. By providing a more in-depth understanding of technological employees' experiences of

PCBs, this study also contributes to the existing literature. This study builds on recent research investigating the effects of a PCB in the workplace. It continues the work of Argyris (1960), Rousseau (1989, 2011), Robinson (1996), and Greenbaum et al. (2011) to understand what is perceived as a PCB and the subsequent outcomes associated with a perceived breach or, in extreme cases, a violation.

Positive Social Change

The findings of the current study have the potential to create positive social change by reducing the number of PCBs in the workplace and thereby reducing the negative effects experienced by employees that have perceived a PCB. The findings of this study built upon existing literature to demonstrate what technological employees perceive as PCBs based on their lived experiences. The significance of understanding these experiences for creating positive social changes relates to the fact that ideological currency is central to PCBs – when an employee feels that the organization has violated its obligation to a moral principle, the employee responds with moral outrage (Greenbaum et al., 2011). Moral outrage on the part of the employee may result in negative behaviors, such as low job retention, reduced productivity, lack of motivation, and lack of trust in the organization, as experienced by technological employees in this study.

Unethical behavior is related to a lack of prosocial behavior (Mayer, 2011). Prosocial behavior, in turn, can empower employees and lead to broader social change (Mayer, 2011). In contrast, a lack of prosocial behavior inhibits social change and disempowers employees. When leaders within an organization behave unethically (i.e.,

engages in behavior they should not engage in), the consequence is a lack of prosocial behavior among the organization's employees, as demonstrated by the technological workers in this study. In connecting prosocial behavior to the concept of organizational justice, employees must be empowered to advocate for themselves and others, particularly when they feel oppressed by the organization (Vasquez, 2012). A PCB is a form of oppression caused by the organization that also results in a lack of prosocial behavior.

Psychological contract breaches have a negative impact on individuals' work and well-being. Specifically, by identifying PCBs as perceived by employees, the organization can identify the values that are important to employees and related to PCBs (Du & Vantilborgh, 2020) and take measures to prevent employees from feeling that the organization's perceived obligations are not being kept (Malik et al., 2018). As expressed in the recommendations, the use of a platform that allows employees to express a perceived PCB can help to empower employees and promote prosocial behavior that leads to positive social change within the organization and industry.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative IPA study was to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived PCBs. The aim of this study was to understand the importance of employee relations, ethics, and values, and psychological contracts formed through the lenses of ethics, values, organizational justice. This study was conducted by exploring the lived experiences of study participants within the

technological sector to understand their perceptions and how a psychological contract breach may occur.

Twelve individuals from the technology sector in North America were recruited to participate in the open-ended interviews that took place over Zoom. All data from the interview transcripts within this qualitative study were used to identify themes based on the lived experiences of study participants and to identify a collective experience among study participants. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis consistent with the recommendations of Braun and Clarke (2006) and following the guidance for IPA.

The first research question in this study was to explore the experiences of technological workers that experienced a PCB. Two data themes were found to address the first research question. The negative effects associated with a PCB demonstrate the negative effects that occur when an employee perceives that their organization has violated their moral obligation.

The second research question sought to explore participants' perceptions of a PCB. One theme addressed this question, and it illustrated that participants thought that PCBs would persist into the future. The findings of research question two were that technological workers expressed an expectation that PCBs would persist due to existing workplace norms that perpetuate PCBs. In understanding a perceived PCB, technological workers perceived that PCBs would continue in the future. Continued PCBs included the prioritization of business profit over integrity and employees, as well as continued marginalization and discrimination of employees based on race and ethnicity, and gender.

Consistent with previous literature, the current study found that technological workers experienced a variety of PCBs, and experiencing a PCB negatively affected their work. Furthermore, technological workers believed that their experiences with PCB would continue. The findings of the current study can be utilized by employers to implement interventions that allow employees to communicate perceived PCBs to leadership. By providing an organizational culture in which employees can communicate their PCBs to leadership, such PCBs can be addressed. Moreover, the role of the organization is key as the organization can raise awareness of ethical issues within the organization, such as the issue of PCBs, through interventions such as ethical training (Mitchell & Palmer, 2011). By addressing ethical issues, the organization can improve the moral self-efficacy of employees so that they can respond to moral dilemmas, such as PCBs, with prosocial behavior (Mitchell & Palmer, 2011). Moreover, the findings of this study can be used to promote social change by encouraging prosocial behavior within organizations and among employees. To enact social change as related to this study, it is recommended that organizations provide a platform for employees to express their perceived PCBs so that such PCBs can be addressed by the organization.

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Appendix A: Psychological Contract Breach Screener Questionnaire

Link to Screener Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine whether you meet the requirements to participate in this study focused on Psychological Contract Breaches. To participate in this study, it is necessary that you have experienced a psychological contract breach. The following questions should help to make this clearer. Please answer the following questions by marking the response that best fits you.

Informed Consent

You are invited to take part in a research study about psychological contract breach in the technology sector. This form is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part. This study seeks 12 volunteers who have experienced a psychological contract breach and are currently employed or have been employed in the technology sector.

Background Information:

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to explore technological employees' lived experiences of perceived psychological contract breaches. The results of this research would provide essential data and information to technological organizations on how psychological contract breaches transpired for different technological employees, the meaning of the psychological contract breach for the employees themselves, the context of the breach, and the perceived experiences of said breach. This study will involve you completing a screener survey to determine whether you have experienced a psychological contract breach. Then, if you meet the researcher's

requirements, you will be invited to participate in a one-on-one online interview that will last no longer than 60 minutes.

Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not.

If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Uganda Knapps, who is a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University.

Procedures:

This study involves the following steps:

- Preliminary screener survey (Estimated time commitment: 5-10 minutes)
- Interviews will be conducted via Zoom call with the participant, the researcher, and the research assistant as needed (Estimate time commitment: 30-60 minutes)
- Each participant will be assigned a code to maintain confidentiality.
- Interviews will be transcribed and labeled with each participant's code, date of the interview, and timestamp.
- Each interview will be labeled with the participant's code subsequently to ensure confidentiality.

Here are some sample questions:

- The content of the psychological contract can include several obligations. An obligation is a commitment to a future action. Some examples could be a competitive

salary, vacation benefits, job security, career guidance and mentoring, job training, safety at work, recognition, and interesting work. Those are just a few. Are there any other obligations that are not included on this list that you can think of?

- Are you of the opinion that at this moment, the psychological contract of the employees at your organization is breached because it does not fulfill the employee's expectations about the obligations? If so, on which obligations?

- Are there any negative consequences?

- Do you expect that in the future, the psychological contracts of employees in your organization will be breached? If so, which obligations?

- Would psychological contract breach influence employee trust in your organization?

- Would the influence on trust be different for a breach of different obligations?

- What would be the effect of an accumulation of several psychological contract breaches of different obligations?

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. There is no compensation for participation in this study. The aim of this study is to benefit society by providing valuable insight into the lived experiences of technological workers who have experienced a psychological contract breach. Once the analysis is complete, the

researcher will share the overall results by publishing his dissertation on ProQuest and will share the main findings with any participants who wish to provide their email contact information.

Privacy:

The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept completely confidential within the limits of the law. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure by password protected databases and coded identifiers. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university. The researcher is not a mandated reporter and would only be required to report information from the study should they believe there is a chance of harm to the participant, the researcher, or any third party. The researcher will report any criminal activity or child/elder abuse to the California state authorities following California state law, which would include contacting 911 and local police.

Contacts and Questions:

You can ask questions of the researcher by telephone or email at 510-374-8730 and uganda.knapps@waldenu.edu If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this

study is IRB will enter approval number here. It expires on IRB will enter expiration date.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Resources:

If you should require any mental health assistance during or following the interview, please refer to the National Alliance on Mental Illness for free support.

They are available from Monday through Friday, 10:00 am – 10:00 pm EST.

The phone number is 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) and the email is info@nami.org.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by providing your name, and the date of consent. By introducing your name and confirming the date, you confirm consent for participation in this study.

Thank you for your time!

Section I. Demographic Questions

Please answer the following questions by marking the response that best fits you.

1). I am:

Male

Female

2). Email address:

3). Age:

4). Race:

5). Religion:

6). Sexuality:

7). Disability:

Section II. Experience Information

Please respond to the following questions with the answer that best fits you.

8). Education

Bachelor's Degree

Master's Degree

Ph.D.

J.D.

Other

9). Certifications:

10). Work Experience:

11). Current Employment:

Section III. Psychological Contract

12). Are you currently an employee in the technology sector?

13). Have you ever had a boss or organization not honor their obligations or commitments to you while working in the technology sector?

14). Does your work in the technology sector fulfill you?

15). Has your organization acted in a way that goes against your morals or ethics?

16). Do you feel supported by your organization to help you to achieve your goals in the technology sector?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Technological Workers Who Self-Reported Experiencing a Psychological Contract Breach

The following questions are intended to be used during the interview process for those participants that have been through the screening process and have indicated that they did experience a psychological contract breach.

Open-Ended, Semistructured Interview Questions:

First, the researcher will engage in introductions and will verbally confirm permission to record the interview session.

The researcher will then explain what the psychological contract is. Then, the researcher will explain a psychological contract breach as when the employer is perceived not to have fulfilled obligations.

Introductory Script:

Researcher: Hi, my name is Uganda Knapps. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. Our conversation will focus on two aspects of employment relations: the psychological contract and psychological contract breach that your preliminary screening questionnaire indicated you have experienced. I want to be sure that you understand what constitutes a psychological contract and what a psychological contract breach means before we get started. Please feel free to stop me at any time should you have any questions.

A psychological contract refers to the belief that a promise or obligation exists between an individual and their organization. A Psychological contract breach occurs

when a perceived commitment or obligation changes over time and negatively affects job outcomes. When individuals perceive that promises or obligations from their organization are not being met, they may experience reduced well-being, negative job performance outcomes, negative attitudes towards their job or organization, job dissatisfaction, or reduced organizational commitment. A simple example will be if an employee participates in a company charity event outside of their paid work time. Still, they do not receive formal recognition when other colleagues do. They may feel that the organization does not value the contributions they make by going above and beyond. Does that make sense? Do you have any questions at this point?

Interview Questions:

The content of the psychological contract can include several obligations. An obligation is a commitment to a future action. Some examples could be a competitive salary, vacation benefits, job security, career guidance and mentoring, job training, safety at work, recognition, and interesting work. Those are just a few. Are there any other obligations that are not included on this list that you can think of?

Are you of the opinion that at this moment, the psychological contract of the employees at your organization is breached because it does not fulfill the employee's expectations about the obligations? If so, on which obligations?

Are there any negative consequences?

Do you expect that in the future, the psychological contracts of employees in your organization will be breached? If so, which obligations?

Would psychological contract breach influence employee trust in your organization?

Would the influence on trust be different for a breach of different obligations?

What would be the effect of an accumulation of several psychological contract breaches of different obligations?

Appendix C: NVivo Codebook

Codes/nodes (group experiential theme)	Description
Causes of PCBs	This node refers to the various causes of PCBs identified by the participants including differentials by race, gender, and workplace norms
Discrimination based on gender	This node includes narratives that indicate that experiences of PCB were related to the fact that the participant was from a particular gender.
Racial discrimination	This node includes experiences of PCBs where participants noted that they were vulnerable due to belonging to an immigrant group or racial minority group such as Indian and African American,
Workplace culture or norms	This node refers to the norms existing in the workplace that perpetuate the occurrence of PCBs.
Consequences of PCB	This is an aggregate node that includes all the negative effects of a PCB according to the participant
Emotional effects	This node refers to negative emotions inspired by experiencing a PCB such as feeling inadequate, stressed, demoralized, and insignificant.
Joining self-employment	This node refers to instances where a participant chose to join self-employment after experiencing a PCB
Lack of motivation	This node refers to a lack of drive or reason to accomplish one's roles within an organization as a result of experiencing a PCB
Loss of trust in the organization	This node refers to employees' lack of trust in an organization as a result of a breach of psychological contracts.
Low job retention	This node refers to an employee's decision to leave a company or organization due to breach of psychological contracts.

Codes/nodes (group experiential theme)	Description
Poor health outcomes	This node refers to the negative health outcomes associated with a PCB such as poor mental health outcomes and stress related health conditions
Reduced productivity	This node refers to a situation where employees who have experienced a PCB offer the bare minimum to their employer. Some may even take up other jobs while on the organization's payroll
Potential future PCB areas	This node refers to participants ideas on PCB areas that may occur in the future
Psychological contract breach	This is node aggregates codes that display participants perceptions that their organization has changed their commitment or obligations and negatively impacted the participant
Denied long-term employment	This node refers to situations where the organization that had promised an employee long-term employment after a certain period fails to honor to honor their promise.
Lack of capacity building	This node refers to situations where an employer fails to offer an employee the time promised for them to attend training or professional development seminars.
Lack of recognition	This node refers to instances where participants indicated that other people were recognized for projects or tasks that they had completed
Lack of respect	This node refers to a lack of confidence in an employee's technical opinion because of either their race or gender.
Long working hours	This node refers to instances where employees are expected to work beyond the normal (40) working hours without monetary or time compensation or protection of their personal time.

Codes/nodes (group experiential theme)	Description
Not offered a competitive remuneration	This node refers to situations where participants were denied remuneration at the agreed rate. It also includes accounts of instances where the participants remuneration rate was lower than the market rates or lower than what their colleagues at the same level were receiving.
Prioritizing business profit over integrity	This node refers to instances where a company especially profit making lies or misleads clients and partners in their presentation with the intention of making profit or gaining clients.
Unable to take vacations	This node refers to instances where participants were denied an opportunity to proceed on scheduled vacations by their employers.
