

The Relationships Between Psychological Contract Expectations and Counterproductive Work Behaviors: Employer Perception

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Abstract

Purpose: The article attempts to identify the relationship between employers' psychological contract perception (relational and transactional expectations) and the occurrence of counterproductive work behavior among their employees. The study seeks to extend the understanding of the psychological contract concept and its correlation with counterproductive work behaviors. There are numerous studies analyzing the perceptions of obligations and promises of a psychological contract from the employee's viewpoint. However, the question of employer expectations and the perception of the fulfillment of these expectations is not less important, albeit much less elaborated.

Methodology: Participants were 101 managers and owners of small and medium companies who represent different businesses in construction industry in the Ukrainian market. Data were collected through a questionnaire.

Key findings: The results of the study show that employers have a high level of expectations toward their employees, and the relational character of the expectations is dominant. However, the perceptions of the fulfillment of these expectations were at a moderate level. The results also show that employers reveal a moderate level of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) and a significant relationship between psychological contract (PC), relational expectations, and CWB.

Keywords: psychological contract, counterproductive work behavior, employer perception, transactional expectations, relational expectations.

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Introduction

The employment relationship is frequently studied through the lens of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and the norms of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). Underpinned by these theories, the psychological contract (PC) is a useful concept to examine explicit and implicit aspects of the relationship between employer and employee. According to Rousseau (1995), the psychological contract outlines the individual's beliefs concerning the reciprocal obligations that exist between the employee and the organization. Based on this definition, there are numerous studies focused solely on employee behavior and perception of the psychological contract (e.g. Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Turnley and Feldman, 1998; Robinson and Morrison, 2000; Conway and Briner, 2002; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003; Sutton and Griffin, 2004; Restubog, Bordia and Tang, 2007; Zhang et al., 2010; Chao, Cheung and Wu, 2011; Chang, Hsu and Liou, 2013). However, even Rousseau (2004) states that shared understanding and reciprocal contributions of mutual benefits are the core of a functional exchange relationship. Guest (1998) argues that the neglect of the employer's perspective may be a misrepresentation of the core of the reciprocal psychological obligations between the two parties.

The small and medium enterprises (SME) are characterized by less formality in comparison with large companies, both in terms of roles and responsibilities and in terms of their strategies and procedures. Guest (2004) suggests that such conditions as smaller firm size and reliance on personal relationships with workers render the psychological contract an ideal conceptual framework for analyzing and exploring the contemporary employment relationship. Nadin and Cassel (2007) mention that, given that psychological contracting is a relational process, there is a need to examine the perceptions of both parties, especially to explore the employer's perspective of SME companies, because such firms do not have much to offer to their employees. Thus, the present study is aimed to extend previous studies on employer perceptions of PC and explore what character of PC expectations – relational or transactional – dominates among managers and owners of SME's of Ukraine construction business.

Employees' perception of PC's nonfulfillment reflects unbalanced or broken relations with the employer which, in turn, may result in the occurrence of counterproductive work behavior (CWB; e.g., Sharkawi and Rahman, 2013; Sharma and Thakur, 2016; Özdemir and Demircioglu, 2015; Minjina, 2011; Chao et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2010; Bordia et al., 2008). Although researchers estimate that the prevalence and costs associated with CWB vary greatly, they largely agree that CWB is harmful to organizations and its employees (Bordia et al., 2008; Langton et al., 2006; Geddes and Baron, 1997). One of the key PC issues is that it creates an enduring mental model of the

employment relationship, which provides an understanding of what both sides of the PC expect from each other (Chen et al., 2007). Given this fact, we must understand the nature and impact of employer perceptions along with employer expectations toward employees, which may result in different negative outcomes, including employees' CWBs. There are some studies, which examine PC perceptions from both perspectives: employees' and employers' (e.g. Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Tekleab and Taylor, 2003). However, there are practically no studies which examine the relationship between employer's PC's perception and the occurrence of counterproductive work behaviors among employees. On the other hand, there are studies that describe how leadership style (e.g., transformational or transactional) influence CWB occurrence (e.g. Holtz and Harold, 2013; Ng and Feldman, 2015; Puni et al., 2016). In turn, McDermott et al. (2013) state that the psychological contract represents a key mechanism for understanding the process through which leadership styles can foster employees' ability, motivation, and opportunity to perform. Thus, the present study seeks to distinguish the employers' perceptions of PC expectations and their experiences concerning the occurrence of employee counterproductive work behaviors in Ukrainian construction business SMEs.

Psychological Contract: Employer Perspective

Morrison and Robinson (1997) state that a PC is about reciprocal responsibilities and rights of each party, which help shape their relationship in the organization. It is an implicit set of mutual beliefs and expectations, whose fulfillment leads to the mutual satisfaction of both sides of employment relations. Rousseau (1990) proposes a conceptualization of contracts on a relational-transactional continuum. Transactional refers to short-term, economically-oriented exchanges between the employer and the employee, which happen during a specific period of time (e.g., competitive wages, short-term contracts). In contrast, relational refers to open-ended arrangements that comprise not only economic but also socioemotional terms focused on maintaining the long-term relationship between the employer and the employee (e.g., training and development, supervisor support).

Research on the employer's perspective raises an important issue regarding who represents the employer in PC relations. Rousseau (1995) suggests that there can be multiple agents (top managers, human resource professionals, immediate supervisors) in organizations, who may present the company's view of reciprocal obligations under employment contracts. Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) state that managers, as agents of organizations, are in a position to convey promises or future commitments to employees and

uphold psychological contracts regarding mutual obligations. Lester et al. (2002) state that a number of different organizational representatives (e.g., recruiters, human resource specialists, upper-level managers) also make promises to employees. Thus, direct supervisors make only some of the promises upon which employees' PCs are based. SMEs may also be represented by owner-managers (Nadin and Cassel, 2007). In the present study, the managers and owner-managers representing SME's play the role of the employers' side of PC relations.

The literature considered employers' perception of the employment relationship to a lesser extent. However, there are some studies in psychological contract research that include the employer's perspective. According to Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000), although managers are more positive in their assessment of the employer's fulfillment of their obligations, a significant discrepancy exists between what employers provide, what they owe, and what they could provide given their operating regulations. Another study by Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2002) focuses on the reciprocal influence that occurs in the exchange relationship between the employee and the employer. The perceived employer fulfillment of obligations creates an obligation on employees to reciprocate, which assumes the form of a cognitive upward adjustment in employees' obligations to their employer. Similarly, employees' fulfillment of obligations creates an obligation on the side of the employer. Moreover, Dabos and Rousseau (2004) present a study with the joint perception of employees and their employers to examine the mutuality and reciprocity in the employment relationship. The authors state that employers may find it more difficult to obtain reciprocal contributions in response to the commitments they have offered to employees. The study also suggests that it may be helpful to couple communications regarding employer commitments to workers with the types of efforts and contributions the employer expects from workers in return. Lester et al. (2002) examine the types of attributions that supervisors and subordinates are likely to make when they perceive that the other party failed to keep commitments. The results of the study show that there were significant differences in supervisor and subordinate perceptions of PC fulfillment in terms of pay, advancement opportunities, and good employment relationship. Moreover, when PC breach is perceived, supervisors' and subordinates' attributions regarding the reasons for the breach are likely to differ. In each case, supervisors perceived that organizations fulfill PCs better than subordinates. Nadin and Williams (2011) report findings from qualitative interviews with small business owners in the UK. Their research results in a vivid and detailed account of experienced PC violations and an analysis that reveals a significant disruption caused by these incidents. The consequences of the violation were perceived as more damaging when the relationships between the employer and employees were close. Such relationships are often found in SMEs. The PC in SMEs

may potentially play a more important role than in larger companies, as the obligations between the employee and the employer are implicit and emerge informally, that is, they are part of the psychological contract rather than the formal contract. Moreover, the limited resources of small businesses raise questions about the nature of what the employer has to offer in the context of the psychological contract. This may suggest that –under such conditions – PCs are more likely to be of a non-monetary nature due to the employers' limited capacity to offer things that require expensive resourcing.

Based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), we may suggest that, because SMEs have closer relationships between the employer and the employee than in large corporations (Nadin and Williams, 2011), SME employers may propose to employees relational rather than transactional PC, and expect the same in return. Relational PCs may help employers to arrange a more communicative relationship with employees (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004), which may compensate the limited resources of small business in regard to advancement opportunities, terms of payment, and career development (Lester et al., 2002). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: In surveyed SMEs, employer expectations toward employees may have a relational rather than a transactional character.

Counterproductive Work Behaviors

Spector et al. (2006) state that counterproductive work behaviors are harmful to the organizations and their members, as they may directly affect organizations' functioning or property. CWB encompasses a wide range of destructive behaviors, including insubordination, theft, physical aggression, verbal abuse, and withholding effort. The literature studies these detrimental behaviors under a variety of labels (e.g., aggression, antisocial behavior, deviance), but generally designates a common set of behaviors (Spector and Fox, 2005; Spector et al., 2006). The most common basic features of CWB include absenteeism, coming late, poor quality of work, destruction of organization's property, abuse of sick leave, sabotage, theft of property, intentionally slow work, taking long breaks, gossiping, favoritism.

Perception of psychological contract breach is one of the research approaches that scholars attempt to link with the occurrence of CWB. However, most studies on psychological contract breach and counterproductive work behavior focus on employee perceptions (Sharkawi and Rahman, 2013; Sharma and Thakur, 2016; Özdemir and Demircioglu, 2015; Minjina 2011; Jensen et al., 2010; Restubog et al., 2013; Chao et al.,

2011). There are some studies, which examine psychological contract perceptions from both perspectives – employees' and employers' – but do not consider counterproductive work behaviors. For example, Tekleab and Taylor (2003) analyze the sources of PC breach by the employer and the contribution to PC breach by the employee. Their results suggest that the managers' perceptions of employee contract violations were negatively related to managers' reports concerning employees' organizational citizenship behaviors and performance. The manager's opinions and evaluations of employee contributions were affected by their perception of the employees' violation of their obligations to the organization. Thus, Tekleab and Taylor show the possibility that the manager's perceptions of employee contract violation might have resulted from their observations of low levels of employees' OCB and performance. Chen et al. (2007) extend Tekleab's and Taylor's research by investigating the supervisor's reactions upon perceiving employee PC breach, that is, a contribution breach by the employee as seen by managers. The authors hypothesize that the kindness of the supervisor and the traditional values of the employee would reduce the negative effects of psychological contract breach.

The occurrence of CWB receives a growing number of studies through the lens of leadership theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). For example, Kessler et al. (2013) suggest that employees whose leaders display transformational leadership behaviors are less likely to engage in CWB. This is because transformational leaders show individualized consideration for each employee and generate a sense of excitement and mission (e.g., inspirational motivation) surrounding their work. On the contrary, the authors consider transactional leadership to be a type of stressor. Transactional leaders' employees are more likely to become angry and frustrated because they feel undervalued and without constructive directions. As a result, such employees are more likely to engage in CWB.

McDermott et al. (2013) suggest that the relational PC goes in hand with transformational leadership, which leads to positive employee attitudes and constructive workplace behavior. It promotes individual and firm performance (Howell et al., 2005; Tosi et al., 2004; Waldman et al., 2004). The transactional PC is supported by a transactional leadership orientation, which focuses on the motivation of employees through rewards or discipline, clarifying for them the kinds of rewards that should be expected for various behaviors. Transactional leaders may actively monitor deviance from standards, mistakes, and errors, or they may passively wait for employees to do something wrong (Bass, 1985; Bass and Avolio, 1994).

Taking into consideration that the nature of leadership influences employees' intention to engage in CWBs (e.g. Holtz and Harold, 2013; Ng and Feldman, 2015; Puni et al., 2016) while, in turn, employer's leadership orientation reflects their psychological contract

(e.g. Carlson and Perrewe, 1995; Epitropaki, 2003; Erkutlu and Chafra, 2013), we suggest that employers with a transactional character of PC expectations may more frequently observe CWB in their companies than employers with a relational character of psychological contract. Thus, the following hypothesis emerges:

H2: The PC transactional expectations have a stronger relationship with CWB than the PC relational expectations.

Study Method

Data were collected by means of a questionnaire distributed to managers and owner-managers of SMEs, which represent different distribution businesses in the construction industry on the Ukrainian market. They were participants at one of the annual meetings devoted to the problems and challenges of the development of the construction businesses in Ukraine. At the time when the research was conducted, Ukraine had to withstand not only external aggression but also a dramatically poor condition of its economy and finances. War damage, human suffering, more than twofold depreciation of the national currency, a decline of trust in the banking system, and poor governance management made the overall market unstable and unpredictable. Market shrinkage in the construction sector set companies on a path of struggling to increase efficiency in order to survive. In this situation, a productive sales force became critically important for companies, as it was the main source of income and possibilities to retain market share. However, employment relationships were viewed as depressed, tentative, and unpredictable. On the one hand, the situation could have been additionally complicated by the problems with finding a “good” employee and costs related to the recruitment of newcomers. On the other hand, good sales employees may have their own individual targets for professional life and career, which does not completely correspond with employer expectations. High turnover among salespeople is one of the most important problems in sales management, due to the realization that it affects all aspects of managing, including staffing, training, motivating, and evaluating (Jones et al., 1996). Consequently, employers should invest financial and other resources to motivate and manage their sales workforce effectively. Incentive compensation became more important because companies needed sales employees to sell more. However, forced by the market situation, SMEs could have faced the risk of high turnover intentions and lower employee loyalty due to their limited resource capacity to provide monetary benefits beyond the basic obligation to pay their staff (things such as promotions, incentives, etc.; Nadin and Cassel, 2007). Accordingly, it became increasingly important to openly communicate and understand the expectations of both sides of

the employment relationship, as it could help to avoid financial and social losses. Therefore, SMEs' managers and owner-managers were asked to answer questionnaires in regard to their sales employees, who are a strategically important human capital, especially during market turbulences.

A questionnaire was distributed to all participants of the meeting and resulted in 101 returns, which represented 101 SME companies, with a response rate of 53%. The sample was 75% male, 85% under twenty-six years of age, 18% were over forty, 95% were university graduates, 97% with more than four years of job experience, and 65% with more than ten years. 60% of respondents declared up to two people of annual rotation among employees, 30% up to five. In terms of the European Commission's definitions of SMEs (European Commission, 2006; Recommendation 2003/361/EC), the responding companies were categorized as follows: small enterprises (more than ten and fewer than fifty employees): 75%; medium-sized enterprises (more than fifty and fewer than 250 employees): 25%.

Survey Measures

Psychological Contract Expectations and Fulfilment

A scale was adapted from measures previously used by the Kozminski University HRM Department.² For the purpose of this study, the number of items was decreased to thirty-nine, assessing:

- 1) expectations of the respondents regarding their employees;
- 2) how the respondents estimate the fulfillment of these expectations by their employees.

PC expectations concern different aspects of work (i.e., respectful usage of equipment, fulfillment of applicable rules and obligations, readiness for training, organizational commitment and high job performance, readiness for career development, good relationships with other employees). Nineteen of the thirty-nine expectation items characterize the transactional psychological contract and twenty the relational. Participants were provided with a five-point scale, where responses to first part of questionnaire, ranged from "absolutely do not correspond to my opinion" (1) to "absolutely correspond to my opinion" (5) and to the second part from "absolutely not fulfilled by sales employees" (1) to "completely fulfilled by sales employees" (5). Cronbach Alpha for the psycholog-

² Elaborated and used in the ALK HRM Dept. Study (2015).

ical contract scale was 0.908, Cronbach Alpha for the scale's transactional and relational sub-dimensions was 0.775 and 0.908.

Counterproductive Work Behavior (CWB)

Counterproductive work behavior was measured by a twenty-seven-item scale developed on the basis of a forty-five-item questionnaire developed by Spector et al. (2006). For the purpose of this study, some additional types of behavior were added (ignoring clients, resolving private matters at work, purposely providing wrong information, evidently not liking his/her work). The counterproductive work behavior questionnaire included damage or stealing of the organization's or another employee's property, delaying work, wasting time and organizational resources, gossiping, misuse of information, absence, and low quality of work. The respondents were asked to indicate how often they have observed examples of such behavior on the part of sales employees at work. The scale ranged from "never" (1) to "very often" (4). The answer "I do not know" was also possible, but for the purpose of the analysis, it was treated as missing data. Cronbach Alpha for the psychological contract scale was 0.915.

Results

In the analyses, the "relational" and "transactional" dimensions of the psychological contract were considered to be independent variables, while the counterproductive work behaviors were taken as a dependent one. The data set was examined as to its "skewness" and "kurtosis" values. The result showed skewness values between -1.576 and 0.053, and kurtosis values between -0.542 and 2.664. Therefore, for the needs of processing hypothesis 2, the analysis applied Spearman correlation. However, there were no significant differences in the correlation results between Spearman and Pearson correlation analyses. Respondents' arithmetical means and correlation coefficients between variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD) and Correlations of Represented Scores (n=101)

	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	CWB	1,61	0.37	1						
2	PC expectations	4,19	0.48	-.207*	1					
3	PC fulfilment of expectations	3,55	0.53	-.356**	.321**	1				
4	PC relational expectations	4,4	0.56	-.290**	.919**	.353**	1			
5	PC transactional expectations	3,96	0.46	-0.109	.921**	.219**	.714**	1		
6	PC fulfilment of relational expectations	3,7	0.59	-.475**	.435**	.888**	.487**	.303**	1	
7	PC fulfilment of transactional expectations	3,39	0.55	-.319**	.365**	.879**	.343**	.308*	.791**	1

Note: CWB = Counterproductive work behaviour; PC = Psychological contract; *p<0.05, **p<0.01

Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 1 shows that the respondent mean CWB score was 1.61, which means that such behaviors do occur, although not frequently.

Table 2. Behaviours with the mean score > 1.5 (n=101)

	Behaviours	Mean	SD	Median
1	Solved private matters at work	2.24	0.643	2
2	Daydreamed rather than did work	2.03	0.767	2
3	Came to work late	1.97	0.806	2
4	Taken a longer break than is allowed	1.89	0.737	2
5	Purposelywasted tools and materials belonging to company without such need	1.89	0.586	2
6	Purposely worked slowly when things needed to get done	1.89	0.731	2

7	Purposely failed to follow a supervisor's instructions	1.86	0.677	2
8	Blamed someone at work for own error made	1.79	0.704	2
9	Been nasty or rude to a client or customer	1.78	0.587	2
10	Conflicted with other employees	1.74	0.744	2
11	Left work earlier than it should be	1.69	0.685	2
12	Started or continued a damaging or harmful rumour at work	1.67	0.742	2
13	Ignored clients	1.66	0.743	2

Note: SD = Standard Deviation.

Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 2 also presents behaviors, which have a mean score higher than 1.5 and a median score of 2; in descending order from the most frequently mentioned.

The PC expectations mean score was 4.19, indicating that PC expectations are at a high level. The PC fulfillment of expectations score was 3.53, suggesting that fulfillment of expectations is at a moderate level. The transactional expectations score was 3.96 and fulfillment 3.39. The relational expectations score was 4.4 and fulfillment 3.7. These results indicate a high level of respondent expectations, more relational ones, with some difference in comparison to transactional ones, which partially supports Hypothesis 1. The Student's t-test for two independent variables is 12.559, with a significance level of .000, which also supports Hypothesis 1, that employer expectations toward employees in surveyed SMEs may have a relational rather than transactional character.

The top ten respondent expectations are presented in Table 3. The expectations with the lowest mean score are shown in Table 4.

Table 3. Top 10 expectations (n=101)

	Employer expectations	Character of expectation*	Mean	SD	Median
1	Respectful usage of equipment and other resources of the company	R	4.56	0.727	5
2	Fulfilment of applicable the rules and regulations in the company	T	4.55	0.781	5
3	Advance announcement about the intent to leave the company	R	4.55	0.922	5
4	Good relationships with other company employees	R	4.53	0.701	5
5	Clear understanding of rights and responsibilities in the company	T	4.52	0.769	5
6	Adherence to generally accepted ethical rules and values	R	4.51	0.657	5
7	Organizational commitment and high job performance	R	4.50	0.820	5
8	Understanding of the assessment system of the employee's contribution within the company	T	4.50	0.770	5
9	Making work decisions will be guided by the company's interests	R	4.49	0.901	5
10	Understanding that in case of improper fulfilment of duties, the company will look for other candidates	T	4.47	0.831	5

Note: * R =Relational, T = Transactional; SD = Standard Deviation

Source: elaborated by the author.

Table 4. Expectations with the lowest mean score (n=101)

	Employer expectation	Character of expectation*	Mean	SD	Median
1	Do not expect superiors' involvement in employee's private problems	T	3.07	1.259	3
2	Employees will acquire all necessary skills to perform their professional duties on their own	T	2.89	1.232	3
3	Willingly agree to conclude an employment contract for a defined period	T	2.53	1.439	2

Note: * R =Relational, T = Transactional; SD= Standard Deviation

Source: elaborated by the author.

Hypothesis 2 states that the PC transactional expectations have a stronger relationship with CWB than PC relational expectations. This is not supported by the correlation results shown in Table 1: there is practically no relationship between PC transactional expectations (-.109) and the relationship between PC relational expectations and CWB (-.290) appears at a significant level ($p = .01$).

Conclusions

The results of the study show that managers and owner-managers of surveyed SMEs have a high level of expectations toward their employees, and the relational character of the expectations is dominant. The perceptions of fulfillment of these expectations were at a moderate level. Adamska (2011) conducted research in seven organizations from all over Poland, both public and private, representing various industries, including production and service sectors. The study intended to specify psychometric features of the Denise Rousseau Psychological Contract Inventory on the Polish sample. The results show that relational psychological contract dominated in private companies over public ones. According to Adamska, a transactional contract does not focus on open communication. Moreover, it is associated with long power distances between the employee and the employer, due to the fact that it foresees relations limited to specific short-term duties. However, a relational contract favors the shortening of the power distance and strengthening of the sense of commitment of both sides of the contract. A similar viewpoint present Nadin and Williams (2011), who report findings from qualitative interviews with SME owners in the UK. The employers in the sample clearly had strong relational psychological contracts with their employees that were characterized by informality and a strong emotional investment based on trust and mutual respect.

The results of the more dominant relational character of the expectation may also be explained with the problem of the fluctuation in surveyed SMEs. According to the results, the fluctuation is quite significant (60% of respondents stated up to two people annual rotation among employees, 30% up to five). Salesperson turnover is an important problem for many organizations, as sales jobs are always connected with stressful challenges such as rising customer expectations, need to balance the conflicting demands of the customer and the company, rapidly changing technologies and marketplaces (Lewin and Sager, 2010). In such situation, employers may express a more relational attitude toward their employees in order to keep them at work, as they identify the importance of “high-trust” relationships (Goffee and Scase, 1995). Furthermore, the relational character of the psychological contract between employer and employee may foster more efficient cooperation between the parties (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler,

2000; Grimmer and Oddy, 2007; Jensen et al., 2010). Transactional relations may strive to become relational, as organizations start to understand that the achievement of long-term goals may be more efficient with employees who support a relational character of the psychological contract.

According to the results of the current study, employers' expectations with the highest scores are: respectful usage of equipment and other resources of the company, advance announcement about the intent to leave the company, good relationships with other company employees, clear understanding of rights and responsibilities in the company, adherence to generally accepted ethical rules and values. Pawłowska and Postuła (2014) analyzed the perception of employer and employee social role by diverse social groups and its consequences for the psychological contract, which is a significant relationship factor in a working environment. Their study indicates a relatively large discrepancy in the perceptions of employers and employees. The results showed that, on the one hand, the employers expected from employees independency and self-organization skills (transactional psychological contract), but on the other hand, loyalty and commitment are of greater importance for the employers (relational psychological contract). According to the results of that study, the least important for employers are such features as flexibility, innovation, lack of conflicts, teamwork skills, and fast learning.

The current study also examined the frequency of occurrence of CWB behaviors among employees and its relationship with employers' relational and transactional PC expectations. The results showed that employers revealed a moderate level of CWB occurrence and a significant relationship between PC relational expectations and CWB. However, there is practically no relationship between transactional expectations and CWB. Incidentally, tangible and money-oriented transactional contract expectations may not predict any extra-role behaviors or CWB toward the organization. On the contrary, relational expectations have a significant relationship with CWB, so we may suppose that the higher the relational expectations, the lower the possibility of CWB occurrence.

The results of the current study may suggest that managers and owners with a dominant character of relational expectations toward their employees may pretend not to observe counterproductive work behavior by these employees, or they intentionally not want to notice CWB. We may explain such situations by the socioemotional background of the relational psychological contract (Rousseau, 2000), but also the employer's unwillingness to pay too much attention to employment problems during market turbulence when the main goal of the company is to survive. The tension caused by the risk of high turnover intentions might lead to the situation, in which an employer pretends not to

observe counterproductive work behaviors among employees, as the costs associated with the loss of an employee may be higher than the cost of counterproductive behavior. Tekleab and Taylor (2003) state that – according to the results of their research – managers tend to perceive fewer employee violations when they perceive higher employees' obligations than did employees. This means that predictions about managers' and employees' level of agreement on reciprocal obligations are important because they affect each party's perceptions of contract violations by the other.

However, the results of the current study may also suggest that the relational character of employers' expectations may reflect the positive management approach toward employees, which foresees the lower engagement in counterproductive work behaviors of the last ones. As Eisenberger et al. (2002) states, organizations are not only a source of tangible resources, like pay and other benefits, but also of socioemotional resources such as love, care, and respect. Positive, beneficial actions directed at employees by the organization and its representatives contribute to the establishment of high-quality relationships. This is further supported by the research results in leadership style theory. For example, MacKenzie et al. (2001) found that transformational leader behaviors, which reflect the relational character of psychological contract more, have stronger relationships with both sales performance and citizenship behavior than transactional leader behaviors. Bruursema (2004) states that transformational leader facets show inverse relationships with overall CWB. Employees, who report that their leaders show more positive leader behaviors, pay more attention to their problems, experience fewer negative feelings about their jobs, and therefore fewer reasons to engage in CWBs. According to the norm of reciprocity, employees who perceive support from the organization tend to care about the organization's welfare and help the firm to achieve its objectives by forging long-lasting relationships with the organization and promising complete loyalty and commitment to organizational goals.

According to the current study, the most observed counterproductive behaviors by managers and owner-managers of surveyed SMEs are: solving private matters at work, daydreaming rather than doing work, coming to work late, taking longer breaks than allowed, purposely working slowly when things need to get done, purposely wasting tools and other companies' materials without special need. Furthermore, Macko (2009) states that the psychological contract of employment relations in Poland is often violated, and the sense of procedural injustice declares 28.9 % of Polish employees. Moreover, the results of the study show that a greater degree of perceived control from the employer's side is associated with less sense of justice among employees and the higher probability of counterproductive behaviors. The following counterproductive behaviors were declared as the most frequent: gossiping about someone from work, com-

plaining about non-essential work-related matters, devotion to meditation instead of work, blaming the company (or its products/services) in the company of other people, significant extension of breaks, getting bored at work, being late to work, leaving work earlier, significant extension of breaks. Białas and Litwin (2013) also showed that the most frequent counterproductive behaviors in the surveyed organization are behaviors related to the waste of time, which should be allocated for professional duties, gossiping, getting late to work, or prolonging breaks. Turek et al.'s (2014) research revealed that, for both Polish and New Zealand employees, the relationship with immediate supervisor plays a crucial role that influences positive or negative attitudes toward the organization. Their results show that organizational procedures and perceived control do not reduce the frequency of counterproductive behavior among employees, so they completely forgo theft, waste of time, usage of the organization's resources for own purposes, work sabotage, or abuse. The frequency of CWB only drops when these procedures and rules are recognized as fair, transparently applied, and strictly enforced. Therefore, the key issue for managerial staff is the development of open and fair communication regarding expectations of both sides of the employment relationship.

Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results of the study highlight the issue that the relational character of psychological contract may be a resource that affects work engagement and employee performance, let alone provide employers with an indication of how to develop their relations with employees. Macko (2009) states that – in the absence of a formal contract – the psychological contract gains greater significance and becomes one of the main reference points of daily relationships. Due to its implicit content, frequently insufficiently spelled for both sides, the fulfillment of the psychological contract may reflect different reactions, also with negative effects. Understanding employer expectations and perceptions of psychological contract breaches may help us to clarify the differences in perspectives between employees and supervisors, which could resolve organizational conflicts and improve organizational performance (Freese and Schalk, 2008). Porter et al. (1998) suggest that the larger the gap between the employer's and employee's perceptions of the inducements offered by the employer to the employee, the lower the employee's satisfaction.

One of the most important challenges organizations now face is finding, hiring, and retaining the right employees: with the right skills, experience, and knowledge that are in line with company expectations. Moreover, this problem becomes harsher in regard to sales employees, who are the most responsible for the company's success on

the market. Open and fair communication and the fulfillment of not only economic but also socioemotional expectations from both sides of the psychological contract may impact an employee's positive or negative behavior at work. Pawłowska and Pos-tuła (2014) state that the contradictory nature of psychological contracts of employees and employers may be the source of labor market problems related to the fact that unemployment and shortages of relevant employees are both actual issues. Employers have different expectations than what potential employees believe. Such situation emphasizes the role of communication of both potential employees and employers in regard to the expectations exchange within the psychological contract.

Moreover, the findings of the current study provide insight into the relationship between employer expectations and the frequency of observed counterproductive employee behaviors. The information about the most frequently observed counterproductive work behaviors is maintained by the results of other studies (Macko, 2009; Jensen et al., 2010; Białas and Litwin, 2013; Turek et al., 2014; Hussain, 2014) and should be considered by managers and other employer representatives in supervising and the motivational management procedures.

Limitations

First, the sample of this study was taken from the construction industry in Ukraine. Different nature of work and environment may have a different influence on CWB occurrence and PC expectations and fulfillment (Sharma and Thakur, 2016; Özdemir and Demircioglu, 2015; Jensen et al., 2010). Therefore, future research should also investigate the relationship between CWB and PC expectations in other industries and countries. Second, participants in the survey mostly represented SME companies. Consequently, the results of the study may reflect some part of the close and friendly employer-employee relationships, characteristic for such firms (Vlasios, 2007; Nadin and Williams, 2011). Third, the sample size of this study is only 101, which is a very small representation of the total population, so one cannot generalize the results of this study. Small samples question the assumptions of asymptotic distribution theory and the normality of the variables under analysis (Raykov, 1998). Finally, even though the scale of PC expectations was adapted from measures previously used by the Kozminski University HRM Department, one cannot apply it as a general measure without assessing the relevance of the items in other settings. However, according to Freese and Schalk (2008), there is no evidence to assume that there will ever be one standardized and fully accepted psychological contract questionnaire. Psychological contract questionnaires should reflect the organization, sector, and cultural and economic situation.

Measuring the psychological contract remains a difficult methodological problem. Thus, due to these limitations, it is difficult to generalize the results of the research. However, the results of this study may be treated as conclusive, which may or may not be supported in subsequent future studies.

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