

SAME RHYTHM, DIFFERENT DANCING STYLES: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES OF MANAGING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT WITHIN MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATIONS

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Abstract

The changing dynamics within employment relations present challenges to both academics and organisational managers. This is being further exacerbated by the variations in career options and global work dynamics. Employee expectations are changing from the basic and traditional needs that form some transactional agreements to much more relational engagement with the organisation, hence the prominence within academic discourse on employment relations construct of psychological contract (PC). The PC is considered very vital in contemporary ER debate because of the negative consequences of breach or perceived breach within organisations which have been argued to occur very many times. Research suggest issues of leader-member exchange relationship, availability of alternative employments and other issues as possible antecedents of PC breach perception. There is no known study, within the understanding of the researcher, that specifically examined cultural values impact on sense making of the PC within its contexts of breach and breach perceptions and how these are manifested on work behaviours. This study addressed the gap by adopting the Hofstede's cultural dimensions to examine how migrant nurses make sense of their PC within the contexts of breach or perceived breach, thereby contributing to both theory and practice of the subject matter of the PC and Culture.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study that examined the psychological contract formation processes and its contents and narrows to understand how cultural values impact on sense making of the PC breach perceptions within multicultural organisations. In the process therefore, a phenomenological research approach is adopted to evaluate various critical incident narratives of (N=10) migrant nurses in the South of England. This represented the primary data as collected through in-depth interviews of the research participants. The Colaizzi (1978) phenomenological research analysis processes is adopted as tool of analysis. The adoption of the critical incident technique was to obtain lived experiences of each migrant nurse. These were transcribed and analysed as sub-sets of the whole data and consequently deconstructed by the researcher with emerging themes which replicated across narratives clustered. The aggregated themes were further reduced to essential structures to offer explanations for perception of behaviour and actions arising from preformed implicit expectations based on the cultural dimensions frame of reference.

Findings

The findings suggest fundamental issues and differences in cultural values between the migrant employees and management on relational terms. The employees aligned their interpretation of behaviour and actions of managers and other colleagues with previously held views and understanding drawn from their cultural value orientations. This is irrespective of length of stay within country of destination which indicates that acculturation played little or no part and positively reflected previous suggestions that ingrained cultural values are most times difficult to shed. The consequences of these included cases of disengagement with the organisation and other colleagues which are noticeable in both psychological and physical withdrawals, presentism, much reference to more of transactional relationship with the organisation than relational leading to decreased motivation for upward mobility within the organisation which impacted on career development as well as projected health implications. The research therefore argues that cultural values neglect do not only affect organisational performance and other outcomes in the negative but also impact on the wellbeing of the employees. The research argues and makes case for due management approach in the predetermination of the basic issues that form international and migrant employees' psychological

contract (implicit) expectations as well as designing structures for imbining cultural intelligence (CQ) values amongst all individuals within the organisation. Further research issues both for research and practice are suggested.

Keywords: Cultural Values, Psychological Contact, Motivation, Phenomenological Research, Migrant Employees, Work Outcomes