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The Implications of Psychological Contract on Employee Job Performance in Education Service Delivery: A Study of Ebonyi State University

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Abstract

This paper examined the implications of psychological contract on employee job performance in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki. The paper adopted descriptive research design, based on primary and secondary empirical data exploration to deal concretely with the phenomena of public personnel management as it bothers on psychological contract in employment relations and the implication on employee job performance. The study queried the psychological contract enigma in education service delivery organizations such as Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, Nigeria. Primary data were drawn from structured questionnaire administered on a sample size of 346, with secondary data sourced from empirical academic journals, newspaper publications, other internet materials, etc. In testing the research hypotheses, weighted mean and z-test statistical tools were utilized. In other to depict a clear narrative from the theoretical and empirical point of view, the paper employed the "Social Exchange Theory", propounded by the renowned American Sociologist George C. Homans (August 11, 1910-May 29, 1989). The paper revealed that the efficient and effective job performance of Ebonyi State University employees has been inhibited by breach of psychological contract, particularly on the part of the employer (i.e., the state government). The paper indicated that psychological contract problem has a serious inefficiency and brain drain implication for the University as well as incapability of the University in delivering on its mandate and mission statement "to provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching, learning, research and rapid development in order to transform the untapped, abundant unskilled, human resources in Ebonyi state into skilled power". The paper called on the state government to further create

humane work environment (i.e., favorable organizational climate) that would facilitate appropriately remunerated promotions, provide adequate training and opportunities for career advancement, and stimulate a climate that accommodates cooperation, consensus and employees' participation in decision making.

Keywords

Public Personnel Management, Psychological Contract, Job Performance, Education Service Delivery, Employment Relations, Relational Contract, Social Exchange Theory

1. Introduction

The importance of public sector services and the role of human resources in delivering these services have made public personnel management a crucial phenomenon sparking research interest globally. Amujiri (2021) avow that accomplishing organizational goals to a large extent depends on the relationship that exists between the employees and their employers; such that the proper management of the relationship to foster employee job performance is integral to public personnel management. Public personnel management according to Adamu (2021) is the management role that is concerned with people at work and their relationships within the organization. It involves personnel acquisition and utilization, personnel motivation, and personnel protection in terms of psychological needs, creating enabling environment for effective employee job performance (Burke, Noble, & Allisey, 2017).

Employee job performance is simply defined as how workers behave in the workplace and how well they perform the job duties assigned to them (Pradhan & Jena, 2016). In contemporary public administration, the measures of job performance for public officials are typically based on their commitment to what they do, how well they do them and the timeliness in doing them (Ritz et al., 2021). Hence the indicators of employee job performance encompass such factors as punctuality or timeliness, quality of work done, commitment to duty, rate of work done, completion of task, and other factors that their manifestations are directly tied to conditions of psychological contracts in an organization (Pramudita et al., 2021).

Psychological contract is a cogent issue in public personnel management that bothers on inclinations with regard to relational or transactional agreement which could influence job related outcomes (Bellou, 2017). The origin of psychological contract dates back to the writings of Argyris (1960) and Levinson et al. (1962) as the term "psychological work contract" was used to describe an implicit understanding between a group of employees and their foreman in the late 1940's to 50's. Argyris observed that as a result of the evolution of human relations

theories (being influenced by the informal employee culture) with a move away from "hierarchical ascendency" towards a more relational approach, the plant foremen realized that the best strategy to get employees to behave in the desired manner was to maintain the informal employee culture (Wong, 2021). This informal employee culture consequently gave rise to implied obligations (psychological contract) in the workplace. Therefore, during the recruitment process, the employer and employee will discuss what each can offer in the prospective relationship; if agreement is reached, most employers will impose standard form of paper contract, leaving the detail of the employee's duties to be clarified "on the job". But some of the initial statements no matter how informal and imprecise may later be remembered as promises and give rise to expectations otherwise reflected as psychological contract. Thus, at its core, psychological contract is built on the everyday actions and statements made by one party and how they are perceived and interpreted by the other (Wong, 2021).

Psychological contract represents the mutual beliefs, perception, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee; it sets the dynamics for the relationship and defines the detailed practices of the work to be done. Pramudita et al. (2021) underscore that from the perspective of public employees, the employment relationship aspects covered by psychological contract bothers on how they are treated in terms of fairness, equity and consistency, security of employment, scope to demonstrate competence, career expectations and the opportunity to develop skills, decision-making involvement and trust in the management of the organization to keep their promises. Meanwhile the employers' perspective of psychological contract centers on expectations of punctuality to work, competence in handling work, effort in completion of task, compliance, commitment and loyalty which are integral elements of employee job performance.

However, in organizational setting where there is this lack of fulfilled psychological contract, it invariably impacts on employee job performance and organizational goal attainment, which in the public sector organizations has a far-reaching consequence on the development of any nation. Nwokocha (2015) explained that a switch in employee's behaviour in the workplace is attributed to a breach of psychological contract, and this has, in most cases, snowballed into detrimental consequences resulting to decrease in performance, brain drain (exit of resourceful employees) and the retardation of productivity and desired growth trajectory.

The paper began with an introduction wherein the dependent and independent variables were explained including a brief background statement of the case study. The research problem was stated, followed by the objectives of the study with the research hypotheses. The next theme was the review of related literature with a theoretical framework for empirical analysis and summary of the literature section. The research methodology was outlined, followed by data analysis and presentation, discussion of findings and implications of the findings, con-

clusion, and recommendation.

1.1. Statement of Problem

The problem of efficient public service and the quest for efficient public personnel management in Nigeria has continued unabated; moreso as contemporary socioeconomic milieu seems to manifest psychological contracts in the breach, such that both public employees and government (as the employer) pays lip-service to psychological contract with perceived lack of punctuality, commitment, indiscipline, and dereliction of duty in relation to depravity in employees welfare, cruel organizational climate and lack of motivation. Seemingly, these constitute the psychological contract that exists in Ebonyi State University with observed consequences on its employee job performance. A major problem that seems to confront psychological contract on the performance of workers in Ebonyi State University, is workers perception of their organizational climate which may have a direct relationship with the level of commitment they have shown.

It appears that in Ebonyi State University, there is poor staffing, poor remuneration and incentives, exclusion of workers from decision making, unhealthy labour relations, inconsistencies in promotion, lack of human capacity building and opportunities for career advancement. All these are likely to affect workers emotional experience perception and their performance as workers seem to be working with anxiety, fear, frustration, anger and resentment which always results in misplacement of files, avoid commitment and play eye service in dealing with official matters that has adversely affected public service delivery. Hence, as a contemporary alarming issue under public personnel management in need of further empirical exposure, this paper aims to concretely address the "implications of psychological contract on employee job performance in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki".

1.2. Objective of Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the far-reaching implications of psychological contract breach and employees' perception of their organizational climate on workforce performance in Ebonyi State University. However, the specific objectives of the study include:

1) To determine the extent to which workers' perception of their existence in the organization affect their performance in Ebonyi State University.

2) To find out if breach of psychological contract has significant impact on workers commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi State University.

1.3. Research Hypothesis

Ho_1: Workers perception of their existence in the organization does not affect their performance in Ebonyi State University.

Ho_2: Breach of psychological contract has no significant impact on workers

commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi State University Workforce.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Public Service

The Public Service from a global perspective is a notable pillar in transforming the country's economic growth and resilience, an activity that deals with engagement between the government and citizens, originally established as process driver, to undertake, and lengthen the duties of the government, as well as delivering better commitment from the citizens and implementing government comprehensive plans and programmes (Oni, Oni, & Gberevbie, 2015; Eneanya, 2018). In Nigeria, the entirety of government institutional framework is regarded as the public service, because government across all tiers articulates and executes guidelines, plans, programmes and schemes using the instrumentally of the public service organisations. Anyebe (2016) affirms that the Nigerian public service organisations encompass the entire state apparatus or institutions providing public goods and services to fulfill the purpose of governance. Accordingly, the meaning of Public Service is captured in section 277 (91) of the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and presently in section 169 of the 1999 Constitution encompassing the Civil Service (Ministries, Departments and Agencies), Statutory Corporations or Parastatals, Judiciary, Legislature, Educational Institutions principally owned/financed by government at the State, Local and Federal levels, Nigeria Police, Armed Forces and other organisations in which the Federal or state governments owned controlling share or interest (Marshall & Murtala, 2016).

While the most public service organisations provide public goods/services beneficial to all of the Nigerian society regardless of ability to pay; public enterprises are public owned but self-financing commercial organisations. Nonetheless, these public goods and services are delivered by a crop of personnel called "public servants" who serve in the various public institutions including the public universities/schools, their agencies and departments (Fidelis et al., 2020). Burke et al. (2017) clearly note that public service institutions and their personnel are the key support system of a modern society; thus, an indispensable part of our larger society. They include all government ministries, schools, colleges, universities, research institutions, government hospitals and allied institutions, and other commercialized enterprises whose workers are paid by government.

2.2. Public Personnel Management

Public personnel management is part of the process of management in general, which Amujiri (2021) defined it as the process of obtaining and maintaining a satisfactory and a satisfied work force. This definition brings to mind the onus of public personnel management as the process of continuously ensuring that public service organizations are manned by the right number and calibre of personnel; and by personnel we imply the public officials who render services and de-

liver public goods to the masses. No wonder Burke et al. (2017) define public personnel management as the process of proper personnel acquisition and utilization, personnel motivation, and personnel protection in terms of psychological needs, creating enabling environment for effective employee job performance.

Public personnel management is therefore the management role that is concerned with people at work and their relationships within the organization. Adamu (2021) further explain that public personnel management is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of the procurement, development, compensation, integration maintenance, and separation of human resource to the end that individual, organizational and societal objectives are accomplished. Fidelis et al. (2020) affirms that it is a constituent element in the complex business of piloting any public establishment.

Bellou (2017) explains public personnel management as both a function (something which is done) and a discipline (a body of knowledge). He argued that organizations today (especially in the public domain) face many challenges in the management of their human resources; and although countries have a lot going on with organizational reengineering, restructuring, outsourcing, privatization, deregulation, rightsizing, downsizing, rationalization, retrenchment etc. there's not enough expositions intellectually; even with most of the change-management strategies which have dire implications for public personnel management. Thus, public personnel management as a course (field of study) is to provide a clear understanding of development in the field of human resources management which those managing public establishment will certainly and increasingly face, like the disquieting psychological contract issues.

2.3. Employee Job Performance

The term "employee job performance" indicates an individual worker's achievement after putting forth required effort into the job which is associated with psychological contract with regards to perceived organizational climate vis-à-vis how remunerations or rewards are handled, promotional practices in the organization, involvement in decision-making, meaningful work, opportunities for career advancement and other influencing factors that spur employees into action (Pradhan & Jena, 2016). In a similar vein, Inuwa (2017) defines employee job performance as workers' total demonstrated effort or commitment in meeting the anticipated worth and achievement of tasks under the procedure and time requirements of the organization.

Suffice to argue that employee job performance is about what a worker is able to achieve in terms of what was expected, achieving them timely and efficiently following set standards or due process. No wonder Davidescu et al. (2020) define employee job performance as the standard for advancements, redundancy, rewards, punishments, reviews and salary changes. They further argue that employee job performance symbolizes the broad belief of a worker/employee about their conduct of official duties and contributions towards the achievement of

organizational goals. Pradhan and Jena (2016) however argue that employee performance is a difficult concept to outline and measure, which they simply defined as how workers behave in the workplace and how well they perform the job duties assigned to them.

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that organizational policies ought to be congruent with performance driven objective so that the entire process moves away from being mechanical task-driven to become more strategic and a people-centric perspective. Therefore, the variables or indicators of employee job performance hinges on punctuality to work aptness in delivery tasks, quality of work done, efforts demonstrated in commitment to duty, completion of tasks, rate of work done, to mention but a few. Wong (2021) argues that employee job performance has always been linked to psychological contract in public personnel management as scholars continue to explore those intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate employees to achieve higher levels of service delivery.

2.4. Psychological Contract

Psychological contract is explained by Wong (2021) as an employee's perception of the reciprocal obligations and mutual expectations that exists between employees and the organization. It is regarded as the employee's subjective interpretation and evaluation of his employment pact encompassing views based upon promises expressed or implied regarding an exchange agreement between an individual and the organization, the employing firm and its agents (Bellou, 2017). In other words, psychological contract is an implicit agreement between the employee and employer about how each expects to be treated based on the culture, language or behaviour used in the workplace. These expectations guide workforce behaviour and how events are interpreted, and these expectations emerge from the perception of promises made by the employer to the employee.

John (2013) intellectualized psychological contract as the expectations between employee and employer and of what their mutual obligations are to each other. He further explained that many of these obligations are informally and imprecisely implied and may be inferred from actions or from what has happened in the past, as well as from statements made by the employer during the recruitment process or in performance appraisals; whereas some of these obligations may be seen as promises and others regarded as expectations. Nonetheless, those promises, and expectations are considered by the employee to be part of the contractual relationship with the employer.

Avail to say that psychological contract is the understanding on mutual responsibilities and obligations between employees and employers; described by Pramudita et al. (2021) as the kind of understanding that doesn't have a written document to clear it, but it reflects unspoken subjective commitment of the employee and the employer. In other words, it hinges on the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in employment relationship integral to public personnel

management in our contemporary times.

2.4.1. Classification of Psychological Contract

The dynamics and varying nature of psychological contract gave scholars elastic leverage to categorize the concept into two distinct kinds of contract that define the employee and employer relationship in the workplace. There are: Transactional and relational contracts. Transactional contact according to Umar and Ringim (2015) is the kind of contract which contains employment terms of exchange given in monetary value (for instance, employees may expect a bonus when they have achieved more than their expected target). Transactional contracts involve specific economic exchanges between the employer and employee; these contracts take place within a specified time period, usually with a short time orientation and often narrow in scope and definition. In the same vein, transactional psychological contracts include such terms as narrow duties and a limited short-term employment which usually involve limited connection between the employee and employer (Perkins et al., 2022; Wong, 2021).

On the other hand, Relational contract according to Kamau, Wasike, and Muturi (2021) is that which constitutes profound relationship between employee and the organization. This is normally developed on non-monetary and socio-emotional exchanges built on utmost trust, implicit emotional attachment, and organizational commitment; it is open ended and do not cover any specified time period rather changes over time with a broad scope and definition. Waiganjo and Ng'ethe (2012) noted that employees with a relational psychological contract are likely to be particularly upset when it is violated, and failure to remedy the situation typically leads to turnover or if the employee remains, his contribution to the organization will be reduced and this may further lead to the erosion of the employment relationship.

From the foregoing, it can be emphatically buttressed that both the transactional and relational types of psychological contract pose great influencing effects that can either enhance or disintegrate employee behaviour and job performance. Nonetheless, there's need for organizations to properly understand their employee's interest to offer the most suitable psychological contract or create a balance between the relational-transactional contract that will endear the support and commitment of employees to stay with the organization. Wong (2021) emphasize that this is quintessential because the kind of psychological contract that organizations build with the employees will constitute a vital determinant on workforce performance, retention of talented employees and sustainable growth of the organization.

2.4.2. Psychological Contract Breach

Employees' perception of psychological contract breach is considered as a regular situation in employment relations and has negative consequences for both employees and organizations, such as reduced job satisfaction, reduced organizational commitment, lowered performance, lowered organizational citizenship

behavior, increased deviant behaviors, and heightened turnover intention (Umar & Ringim, 2015). Morrison and Robinson (1997) cited in Bellou (2017) defined a psychological contract breach as an effective and emotional experience of disappointment, frustration, anger and resentment that may emanate from an employee's interpretation of the circumstances surrounding a perceived contravention of the contract. They also argued that breach/violation of psychological contract occurs when the perceived implicit and explicit promises of employers are not fulfilled.

Therefore, when an employer fails to meet their obligations and expectations with employees, most likely at the very next moment, employees go through the state of contract breach. By virtue of organizational psychological contract, employees expect fair treatment in promotion, staff development and support, favorable work environment, good management and leadership, appropriate remuneration, reward for extra performance, recognition, good workplace relations etc. In return, the employer expects the employee to demonstrate commitment to meet the organizations' expectations and show willingness to go above and beyond. When not met or satisfied to the extent to which both parties had met what was perceived as its promised obligations, breach of psychological contract is said to have occurred (Kanu et al., 2022; Kanu, 2014).

2.5. Historical Development of Public Personnel Management in Nigeria and the Psychological Contract Enigma

The conception of public personnel management in Nigeria is historically colonial in nature and its operations. Okon, Solomon and Ekok (2014) affirm that there were elements of personnel management in practice in both public and private sector organisations during the colonial period. The British Colonial Administrators ruled Nigeria between the early and mid-1900's, when they established the public service and bequeathed colonial legacies to Nigeria. From history, the British colonial rule was forceful in nature as Burke et al. (2017) emphasize that the colonial public service was indeed an imperialism weapon designed by the British Government to consolidate administration of colonies in Nigeria for mass exploitation of cheap labour and materials. They further explained that it started as a tool of conquests and grew into a Task Force to pacify native areas and make treaties with chiefs and natural rulers with the aim of coercing hostile and incompatible tribes to live together as "one Nigeria".

Suffice to say that the system of personnel management was exploitative, authoritative and de-humanizing under a forced labour management. Dhikru and Adeoye (2019) assert that the personnel structure of the colonial public service was hierarchically organized in such a way that it placed the colonial masters at obscene advantage. Administrative cadres were manned by the British colonial officers, while local personnel (mainly warrant chiefs and other traditional/native rulers) were used as resident errand boys. Fidelis et al. (2020) aver that excessive exploitation, forced labour, discrimination of Nigerian elites, indiscip-

line and corruption pigeonholed public personnel management in the colonial epoch.

Hitherto 1960 when Nigeria gained independence, the process of regionalization of the public service in 1954 and Nigerialization of the public service in 1957 had already begun, enforcing the appointment of Nigerians into the public service. But after independence, the public service was characterized of political instability and military dictatorship that led to efficiency/effectiveness deterioration despite its growth in functions, size, and resources; exacerbated by the increasing complexity of the society (Burke et al., 2017). The public service needed to be reformed and the subsequent reforms that took place in the civil service speak volume of the quintessence for efficient and motivating public service that is 21st century oriented.

The series of reforms ranged from the Hewn Committee (1959), Gorsuch Commission (1954), the Mbanefo Salaries and Wages Commission (1959), the Morgan Commission (1963), the Elwood Grading Team (1964), the Adebo Salaries and Wages Review Commission (1971), the Udoji Public Service Review Commission (1972,) the Dotun Philips Review Panel (1988), the Allison Ayinda Civil Service Reform (1997) and up to the Obasanjo Civil Service Reforms of 1999-2007. Fidelis et al. (2020) aver that despite all these, the problem of efficient public service and the quest for efficient public personnel management in Nigeria continued unabated.

This problem in Nigeria has been mainly linked to psychological contract breach which is increasingly becoming worse. Amujiri (2021) revealed that there has been presence of several psychological contract violations in the Nigerian public service institutions; arguing that the fall in oil prices amid practices of corruption have led to retrenchment and job insecurities, inability of government to cater for the welfare of workers and lack of achievement of workers expectation. Okon et al. (2014) note that the failure of government to fulfill their obligations has generated a lot of negative relations between Nigerian workers (labour) and the government leading to strikes, conflict, grievances and other counter-performance-related behaviours which continues to pose huge threat to meaningful transformation and sustainable development in Nigeria.

2.6. Ebonyi State University Psychological Contract Experience

In 1999, the first Executive Governor of Ebonyi State (Dr. Sam Ominiyi Egwu) launched a full-fledged multi-disciplinary University, which contemporarily comprises more than a dozen of Faculties, a School of Post-Graduate Studies, Work and Study Programme and Pre-Degree School; with over 2700 personnel (EBSU, 2021a). Nonetheless, the university has been criticized on issues bothering on its organisational climate. It is widely held that psychological contract breach causes boomerang effects of disagreements, conflicts, counter productive work behavior, negligence of duties, sabotage, insubordination etc. which ultimately undermines employee job performance. For some years now, employees of Ebonyi State Uni-

versity complain of their poor pay packages which they say can barely meet basic personal needs, not to mention supporting dependents. Even as of 2021, the university lecturers were owed salary for five (5) months (Eze, 2021).

Nweke (2016) observed that most public servants in this institution have remained in a particular rank/position beyond the stipulated period for their promotion as contained in the scheme of service, with unusual delays in the release of promotions, exacerbated by the anomaly that promotions are notionally done; hence an employee gets promoted in paper to a cadre, but continues to receive defunct cadre salary. Hence, there has been ill-preparedness among university staff for the Institution's work and lack of commitment to work due to unfavorable organizational climate caused by psychological contract unfilled obligations.

Ezeh (2020) further argue that there is no genuine interest in the development of the crop of the university personnel, except in aesthetic projects (streetlights, glass tunnels, flyovers, double cell mini bridges, the new skyscraper city) executed by the state, at huge financial cost and sacrifice of the training and development of an innovative and resourceful university system.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

In other to depict a clear narrative from the theoretical and empirical point of view, the paper made use of the "Social Exchange Theory", which is linked to the renowned American Sociologist George C. Homans (August 11, 1910-May 29, 1989), who propounded the theory in his 1958 work on "Social Behaviour as Exchange". But it was Peter M. Blau and Richard M. Emerson that further advanced Homans's work and till date recognised as propounding scholars of the social exchange theory within the field of social sciences.

The Theory holds that people engage in interactions with other people because they are motivated by the expectations of receiving inducements in return from the other party. Social exchange theory is centered on the notion that social behavior is the result of an exchange process, whose drive is to maximize benefits and minimize costs; hence, individuals consider potential reward and risks of social relationships (Kanu et al., 2022; Kanu, 2014). In other words, social exchange embroils series of interactions between two parties such that each party acts according to the norm that the other party will reciprocate such actions, creating mutual obligations over time.

Suffice to argue that the social exchange theory gives a sound theoretical framework for analyzing the psychological contract issues that connects the empirical observations of this paper to a theoretical foundation. Which in the context of the Nigeria public service organizations (Ebonyi State University in particular) is subsumed in breach of reciprocity roles, revealing dereliction of obligations which forms the basis of organizational psychological contract reality in most developing countries. Undoubtedly, employees seek a fair and balanced relationship between themselves and their organization, and psychological contract breach occurs when employees perceive a discrepancy between what they

were promised and what they receive from the organization. Such discrepancies represent inequity and an imbalance in the social exchange relationship and are associated with distributive injustice (Kanu et al., 2022; Kanu, 2014).

2.8. Summary

The foregoing argues that when employees in the context of the Nigerian public sector perceive their employer has not reciprocated their value or job contributions fairly and equally, it is seen as a psychological contract breach which has been argued to have negative consequences for both employees and organizations (Umar & Ringim, 2015). The consequence of a psychological contract breach sees employees respond with emotional reactions such as anger, frustration, anxiety, fear, and resentment which invariably culminates in misplacement of files, neglect of duty and surface acting (i.e., eye service) in dealing with official matters. Thus, the argument emphasises that relating social exchange theory to public personnel management, with the aim of ameliorating the psychological contract conundrum would therefore require an organizational climate where there exist a suitable balance between the relational-transactional contract that will endear the commitment of employees, as they will perceive themselves as crucial part of the organization and that their welfare are completely catered for by management, which would invariably spur their whole effort, resourcefulness, and initiative to work tirelessly for the growth of the organization.

3. Methods

This paper adopted descriptive research that is based on the survey analytical approach and is conducted from a positivist perspective. The information was gathered through the administration of questionnaire using the convenience sample technique. The research was based on primary and secondary empirical data investigation to deal concretely with the effects of psychological contracts on employee work performance in education service delivery, with a specific focus on Ebonyi State University. The population of this study consists of all the staff of Ebonyi State University Abakaliki with a population of 2668 personnel disaggregated into senior and junior non-academic staff and academic staff as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of research population.

SN	Category	Population
1	Academic Staff	836
2	Senior Non-Teaching Staff	913
3	Junior Non-Teaching Staff	801
4	Academic Staff	118
	Total	**2668**

Source: EBSU (2021b).

To determine the sample size for the study, the Taro Yamani sample size determination technique was adopted. The formula for Taro Yamane sample size determination is stated hereunder:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where: n = desired sample size; N = total population = 2668; 1 = constant; e = accepted error margin of 0.05. Therefore:

$$n = \frac{2668}{1 + 2668 \times 0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{2668}{1 + 2668 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{2668}{1 + 6.7}$$

$$n = \frac{2668}{7.7}$$

$$n = 346.4935$$

Approximately 346 respondents were arrived at as sample size.

Based on the calculation above, primary data were drawn from administered structured questionnaire on a sample size of 346 and secondary data sourced from empirical academic journals, newspaper publications, textbooks, internet materials etc. In testing the research hypotheses, weighted mean and z-test statistical tools were utilized. The findings were presented in a formal report, and the results of the survey were provided in the form of distribution tables showing the average mean. The collected data was subsequently examined using z-test statistical tables to determine the level of significance of the factors considered

3.1. Analysis of Research Question

Result on Table 2 shows that item 1 - 5 all fall within the acceptance region and

Table 2. **RQ 1**: To what extent does worker's perception of their existence in the organization affect their performance in Ebonyi State University (EBSU)?

SN	Question	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Workers' perceptions of their existence in the organization affect their performance in EBSU.	124	83	28	26	27	3.6346	Accepted
2	Work in ESBU is not interesting and chllenging to elicit enhanced productivity	139	78	9	46	16	3.5192	Accepted
3	Workers support, advancement, training, and development are not satisfactory and guaranteed in EBSU	144	66	13	57	8	3.5192	Accepted
	Total Mean						**17.7499**	
	Average Mean						**3.54998**	

Source: Research survey (2021).

the average mean which also shows an approximate value of 3.55 all indicates that worker's perception of their in the organization affect their performance in Ebonyi State University.

Result on Table 3 shows that item 6 - 10 all fall within the acceptance region and the average mean which also shows a value of 3.54 all indicates that breach of psychological contract affects workers commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi State University.

3.2. Test of Hypothesis

Sample mean (X) = summation X divided by n

Sample mean (X bar) = 5671/5 = 1134.2

Population

Mean (u) = 3 * 288 * 5/5 = 864

Standard deviation

(q) Square root of (∑(X − Xbar)2/n)

2369.22/5 = 473.84

Square root = 21.75

Z-test = (1134.2 − 864)/21.75 = 12.42

Z-tabulated @ 0.05 level of significance = 0.85

Decision—Since the z-test calculated above is 12.42, which is greater than the z-test tabulated from the statistical table 0.85 at 0.05 level of significance, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis to the effect that worker's perception of their existence in the organization does affect their performance in Ebonyi State University (Table 4).

Table 3. **RQ 2**: To what extent does breach of psychological contract affect worker's commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi state university?

SN	Question	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	Breach of psychological contract has significant impact on workers commitment to enhanced performance in EBSU	139	78	9	46	16	3.5192	Accepted
2	Workers commitment as an ingredient of filfilled psychological contract enhances productivity in EBSU	159	72	9	36	12	3.5962	Accepted
3	Poor staffing, poor incentives, exclusion of workers from decision making, and unhealthy labour relations educes EBSU workers job satisfaction, dedication and commitment	144	86	3	17	38	3.4808	Accepted
	Total Mean						**17.7116**	
	Average Mean						**3.54232**	

Source: Research survey (2021).

Table 4. Ho_1: Workers perception of their existence in the organization does not affect their performance in Ebonyi state university.

Question	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (X)	Xbar	X – Xbar	$(X - Xbar)^2$
1	620	332	84	52	27	1115	1134.2	2.249	5.058
2	725	284	42	74	21	1146	1134.2	11.8	129.24
3	680	312	27	92	16	1100	1134.2	−34.2	1169.64
4	720	264	39	114	8	1145	1134.2	10.8	116.64
5	720	300	42	80	13	1165	1134.2	30.8	948.64
						5671			**2369.22**
Xbar						**1134.2**			

Hypothesis one z-test result computation (Research survey, 2021).

Sample mean (X) = summation X divided by n

Sample mean (X bar) = 5873/5 = 1174.6

Population

Mean (u) = 3 × 288 × 5/5 = 864

Standard deviation

(q) Square root of (∑(X − Xbar)2/n)

3329.2/5 = 665.84

Square root = 25.8038

Z-test = (1174.6 − 864)/25.8038 = 12.04

Decision—Since the z-test calculated above 12.04 is more than the z-test tabulated from the statistical table 0.85 at 0.05 level of significance, we therefore reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis to the effect that, breach of psychological contract significantly impacts on workers commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi State University Workforce (Table 5).

3.3. Discussion of Findings

We discovered in the course of our investigation that university workers' perception of their existence in the organization (i.e., sensitivity of whether their organizational climate favors them or not) affect their performance. This means that their perception of the organizational climate which serves as a measure of individual perceptive or feelings about his/her organization determines to a very large extent their ability to perform, level of cooperation and the level of attainment of set goals and objectives. University employees perceive the organization as such who just see them as mere instrument without placing much value on their individual yearnings and aspirations. The fact that workers are not supported with their personal problems and/or goals, there are often demoralized leading them to improper attitude/behavior in the workplace such as loitering, malingering, misappropriation of funds, extortion of students and other illicit acts.

Table 5. Ho_2: Breach of psychological contract has no significant impact on workers commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi state university workforce.

Question	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total (X)	Xbar	X – Xbar	$(X - Xbar)^2$
6	695	312	27	92	16	1142	1174.6	−32.6	1062.76
7	795	288	27	72	12	1194	1174.6	19.4	376.36
8	740	322	111	0	20	1203	1174.6	28.4	806.56
9	720	344	9	34	38	1145	1174.6	−29.6	876.16
10	730	340	42	68	9	1189	1174.6	14.4	207.36
						5671			**3329.2**
Xbar						**1134.2**			

Hypothesis two z-test result computation (Research survey, 2021).

Findings agree with Kanu (2014) in his investigation into workers perception of organizational climate as prediction of retardation of productivity and employee turnover intentions which revealed that there has been ill-preparedness among university staff for the Institution's work and lack of commitment to work due to unfavorable organizational climate. The study bared that these universities that ought to be center of academic and social activities have remained dull and uninteresting leading to lack of motivation and other negative work outcomes which invariably affect the performance and public image of the university as well as its competitiveness. The findings also correspond with Nwakpa (2018) examination of the strategies of human resources management in tertiary institutions in Ebonyi State. The study amongst others, observed that workers perception of their existence is motivational, and that motivation has a positive influence on the achievement of organizational goals; in other words, motivation positively influence employee performance. Investigations revealed that while sabbaticals, promotions and in-service training programmes less often than more, are available motivational variables in the tertiary institutions alas, staff accommodations, adequate impress, teaching materials, and conducive organizational climates are not.

Effective personnel policies, good working conditions and workers participation in decision making can be said to reliably make up favorable organizational climate; thus, the findings agree that when workers perceptions of their existence are of favorable organizational climate it increases the effectiveness, productivity and satisfaction of employees in the organization. However, since the employee well-being in the workplace is threatened by prevalent unfavorable organizational climate, employee motivation towards enhanced level of performance is lacking with his/her level of job satisfaction less than optimal. When the null hypothesis (Ho_1) which stated that workers perception of their existence in the organization does not affect their performance in Ebonyi State University was

tested it was rejected since the Z-test calculated which was 12.42 was greater than the Z-test tabulated from the statistical table 0.89 at 0.05 level of significance. The alternate hypothesis was accepted to the effect that workers perception of their existence in the organization does affect their performance in Ebonyi State University.

Secondly, our investigation revealed that breach of psychological contract has significant impact on workers commitment to enhanced performance in EBSU. Findings depicts that workers commitment is an ingredient of fulfilled psychological contract culminating in enhanced productivity; this is because observed psychological contract influences workers dedication to the university and their willingness to put in his/her best performance at work. On the contrary, unfulfilled psychological contract affects workforce performance. Employee feelings of dissatisfaction over breach of psychological contract by their employers have subsequently lowered their loyalties, commitment and efforts. In Ebonyi State University there is poor staffing, poor work incentives and/or delay in payment of remuneration, inadequate recognition, exclusion of workers from decision making, exacerbated by unhealthy labour relations. The consequence is that workers work with anxiety, frustration, anger and resentment resulting in misplacement of files, dereliction, ineptitude, and in most cases the exodus of employees from the institution.

Our findings are congruent with those of Ezeh (2020) which revealed that one of the most worrisome challenges to the development of the University system and the country at large is the rising employee turnover intentions (mass exodus of staff especially lecturers, some of whom are migrating abroad) due to years of unfulfilled psychological contract. Ezeh (2020) further revealed that the university's failure to fulfill one or more obligations associated with perceived mutual promises have greatly influenced employee's dysfunctional emotional reactions and more intent to leave the organization.

The findings also agree with the research findings of Nwokocha (2015) that a feeling of psychological contract breach has negative consequences on employee willingness to continue to contribute to achieving the aims and objectives of the organization as well as their intentions to remain with the organization. Evidence pinpointed employee's feelings of self-worth as heavily dependent on observed psychological contract breach between the employees and the organization (Ma., Shao, & Li, 2019). Corroborating the foregoing, the findings of Dialoke and Nwakamma (2016) in a study of "psychological contract and human resource development in Nigeria" revealed that breach of psychological contract hinders employees' performance and ignites employees' propensity to quit the organization.

In concordance with similar studies as Nosiri (2017), they noted that this, to a considerable extent, affects organizational output. Results of their investigation indicated employee change in attitude toward their organization and toward their jobs because the employees assume that the organization does not care about

their wellbeing thus cannot be reliable to honor its obligations. When the null hypothesis (Ho_2) which states that, Breach of psychological contract has no significant impact on workers commitment to enhanced performance in Ebonyi State University Workforce was tested using the Z-test statistical tool, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted; since the Z-test calculated 12.04, was greater than the Z-test tabulated from the statistical table 0.89 at 0.05 level of significance. This means that breach, violation, or unfulfilled psychological contract significantly impact on workers commitment to perform better in realizing the set goals and objectives of the University.

3.4. Implications of Findings

In line with the findings of this study, their implications need be stated. This study has important implications for university institutions in particular and the entirety of Nigerian organizations. Organizations should be aware that unfilled promises/obligations boomerang on the violators of such promises since workers perception of unfavorable organizational climate subsumed in breach of psychological contract by management ignites actions such as: disagreements, conflicts, counter productive work behavior, negligence of duties, sabotage, insubordination etc., which ultimately reduces workforce performance. Also of dire implication to the university is the brain drain syndrome due to increased employee turnover associated with unfulfilled psychological contract.

The university's failure to fulfill one or more obligations associated with perceived mutual promises, influences employee's dysfunctional emotional reactions as well as intent to leave the organization. But these can be reversed by the degree of support i.e., favorably organizational climate that the employee perceives from university. Therefore, through developing high quality relationships with employees, the university can decrease the negative consequences of unfulfilled psychological contract. It therefore becomes a necessity to frame attainable psychological contract in order to foster workable relationship that will encourage employees' acceptance and propel them to be committed to the organizational goals and objectives.

4. Conclusion

There's no gainsaying the fact that the degree of harmonious relationship between employers and employees lies on the level of fulfillment of expectations in organization defined as psychological contract. Accordingly, this paper has concretely examined the psychological contract conundrum in the education system vis-à-vis Ebonyi State University Abakaliki, and thoroughly addressed its significant impact on employee job performance. This paper therefore concludes that the efficient and effective performance of Ebonyi State University employees has been inhibited by breach of psychological contract particularly on the part of the employer. The study sums up that psychological contract breach has a serious inefficiency and brain drain implication for the University as well as incapability

of the University delivering on its mandate and mission statement "to provide a conducive atmosphere for teaching, learning, research and rapid development in order to transform the untapped, abundant unskilled, human resources in Ebonyi state into skilled power". Therefore, there is urgent need for earnest consideration of the psychological contract issues, so as to adopt plausible solutions to better them.

5. Recommendations

The University should uphold organizational culture that promotes good management/governance, transparency, equity and fairness in dealing with employees. Workers' induction booklet, orientation manuals and other human resource manuals outlining conditions of service should be rid of all forms of ambiguity which may widen the interpretation of psychological contract obligations and entitlements, which would eventually culminate in greater propensity for misunderstanding, disagreements and conflicts.

Most importantly, Ebonyi State Government should create humane work environment i.e., favorable organizational climate that facilitates appropriately remunerated promotions, provides adequate training and opportunities for career advancement; a climate that accommodates cooperation, consensus and employees' participation in decision making. Further to this, the state government policies vis-à-vis the university rules and labour relations should treat workers in dignified manner built on the foundation of distributive, procedural and interactional justice.

6. Limitation of Research

It was difficult for the researchers to administer the research instruments face to face; thus, most of the questionnaires were administered through Google form, an online platform that enabled the study to overcome the limitation of logistics and physical contacts in this pandemic era. The study was also encumbered by the recalcitrant attitude of some respondents who were reluctant to release vital information they termed classified. However, this limitation was surmounted through ethical approvals from the University as the ethical principle of informed consent, respect for anonymity and confidentiality were fully observed. The informed consent forms were dully signed by participants for confirmation of sufficient information and clarity on the research exercise, and the forms reassured participants of the use of all information/evidence gathered for research purpose only with respect for participants' privacy. The study was also limited by statistical errors in the course of data collation; but in carrying out statistical analysis of data, the researcher gave more thorough attention to the data generated in order to avoid minor mistakes in the course of computation.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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