

Mapping Two Decades Of Research On Psychological Contract And Organizational Commitment: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This research conducts a bibliometric analysis to explore the role of the psychological contract in fostering organizational commitment. Employees' trust, happiness, and loyalty are all boosted by psychological contracts, which in turn increase commitment. Using information from Scopus, the research examines 81 scholarly articles published between 2005 and 2025. Scholarly interest was low in the early years, but there was a dramatic uptick starting around 2015. Important markers of academic influence are highlighted in the study, such as the most influential publications, top writers, most prestigious journals, and most prolific countries and institutions. In this area, the University of Illinois at Chicago stands out as a top institution, and the United Kingdom takes the cake as the most productive nation overall. The most consequential writer is Bal, P. Matthijs. To better understand the academic environment of this field, the study uses VOSviewer to build comprehensive networks of co-authors and does co-citation analysis. (1) *Psychological contracts and commitment*, (2) *psychological contract breaches and attitudes toward work*, and (3) *antecedents and outcomes of psychological contracts* are the three main themes that emerge from the data. In order to capture emerging trends across different times, the research also looks at how the focus of studies has altered throughout time. Not only does this study synthesize the prominent issues influencing the area, but it also identifies present research gaps and possible future study topics by methodically reviewing the available literature. Overall, it offers a comprehensive overview of scholarly progress in this important area of organizational research.

Keywords: Bibliometric Analysis, Organizational Commitment, Psychological Contract, Research Trends, Scholarly Productivity, VOSviewer

Introduction

In today's dynamic business environment, fostering organizational commitment is deemed vital for attaining strategic objectives. Human resource management plays a crucial role since it promotes healthy work environments, which in turn boosts morale, which in turn increases commitment from employees (Tiwari & Singh, 2014; Kurtessis et al., 2017). The psychological contract, which is a worker's belief in the mutual commitments in the job relationship, greatly shapes the allegiance that comes from the transaction between the worker and organization (Rousseau, 1995; Buchanan, 1974). Betanzons and Paz(2007), Rousseau and Parks (1993). Guest (1998), and Zaragoza and Solanes Puchol (2013) all found that when employees' expectations are being fulfilled, their emotional investment in the company grows, leading to better performance on the job and lower absenteeism and turnover rates. Unfulfilled promises constitute a breach of this agreement and have the potential to

damage relationships in terms of trust, equity, and overall quality (Robinson, 1996; Cantisano et al., 2008).

Both transactional and relational psychological contracts exist, with the former focusing on long-term emotional involvement and the latter on short-term economic exchange (MacNeil, 1985; Rousseau, 1995). These arrangements constitute different aspects of organizational commitment, which is a complex concept with many facets, including emotive, continuational, and normative aspects (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Relational contracts foster a sense of moral obligation and shared purpose (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010), but some argue that psychological contracts are more commonly linked to normative commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Bunderson, 2001). In contrast, transactional contracts encourage non-voluntary donations based on need. Age, organizational culture, and occupational category are a few examples of demographic and environmental characteristics that influence the kind and degree of commitment (Rousseau, 1995; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2019) found that understanding employee behaviour and organizational performance requires delving into the complex link between organizational commitment and psychological contract.

Although many studies have investigated the link between psychological contracts and organizational commitment, the majority of these studies have used data from the Web of Science database, which mostly covers the years 1994 to 2018. Although the theoretical groundwork is solid, the study's scope is narrow because it uses only one database and is from a bygone era. On the other hand, this study fills that void by performing an extensive bibliometric analysis utilizing the Scopus database, which has a broader selection of journals and more current articles. This study offers a more comprehensive and up to date assessment of the changing research landscape in the subject of organizational commitment and psychological contracts by examining data from 2005 to 2025. It sheds new light on prominent figures, current trends, and developing themes.

Research Questions:

1. What are the current trends in the role of Psychological Contract in Organizational Commitment using Bibliometric data?
2. What are the most influential authors, institutions and countries contributing to Psychological Contract and Organizational Commitment studies?
3. What are the most influential articles in this research domain?
4. What are the prominent themes prevailing in this area of research?
5. What is the scope for future research?

1. Bibliometric Research Method

2.1 Data Origin and search strategy

This bibliometric study used a methodical and organized strategy to go through the SCOPUS database in search of applicable literature. On July 29, 2025, we searched for articles that combined the terms “psychological contract” and “organizational commitment” in the title, abstract, and keywords segments. Table 1 details the initial retrieval of 262 papers, which was done by restricting the search to publications from 2005 to 2025 in order to maintain a contemporary scope.

The dataset was subjected to a multi-stage screening process to guarantee its quality and usefulness. A total of 28 articles that were published outside of the specified data range were omitted. The next step was the elimination of 25 documents that did not pertain to the key academic areas: Psychology, Social Sciences, Business, Management, and Accounting. Then, 4 documents were removed according to their publication kind; later on, only articles for journals, conferences, books, and reviews remained. The next step was to apply a language filter, which removed 7 documents that were not in English. This meant 198 articles might go on to the next round of reviews.

Accurate author information verification, content relevance evaluation, and elimination of duplicate entries were the 3 main components of the quality assessment procedure. Records were removed because they contained duplicate or incorrect author information. But 117 papers didn't make the cut when we checked for content relevancy since their keywords, abstracts, and titles weren't relevant enough to the study. The inclusion criteria were carefully reviewed and a total of 81 papers were ultimately chosen for the core analysis (Table 1).

Table1. Article Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Selection criteria	Eliminated	Accepted
Database SCOPUS		
Date of Search 29th July 2025		
initial search result (on search term): "Psychological Contract" AND "Organizational Commitment"	262	
period of publications: 2005 to 2025	28	234
Subject Area: "Business, Management & Accounting, Social Sciences, psychology"	25	209
Publication type: "Articles, Conference papers, Book Chapter and Review"	4	205
Language Screening: "include documents published in English only "	7	198
Articles Selection for Quality Screening	0	198
Duplicate titles Screening	0	198
Erroneous records Screening: Include documents with valid author information only	0	198
Content screening: Include articles if "Titles, abstracts, and keywords" indicate relevance to scope of study	117	81
Note(s): This table outlines the systematic process followed to identify and select the final set of 81 articles for review. The search terms were developed through collaborative brainstorming among the authors, involving both subject -matter specialists and methodological experts.		

2.2 Search string used for finding the papers

The search strategy was developed in collaboration with experts in both the subject area and research methodology. The SCOPUS query was used: (TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Psychological Contract") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Organizational Commitment")) AND PUBYEAR > 2004 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA ,

"BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ch") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "cp") OR LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

2. Findings

2.1. Performance Analysis

The publication trends from 2005 to 2025 are shown in Figure 1. They show a pattern of fluctuating but sustained academic interest in the relationship between the psychological contract and organizational commitment. The number of publication started to rise gradually in 2005 and reached 15 in 2016. From 2008 to 2013, there was a steady level of output, with annual publications ranging from 8 to 13. 2004 had the lowest publication count with only 3 articles, but 2025 showed a notable resurgence with 10 publications. Overall, the trend suggests that the topic remains theoretical significant and continues to attract scholarly attention across related academic disciplines.

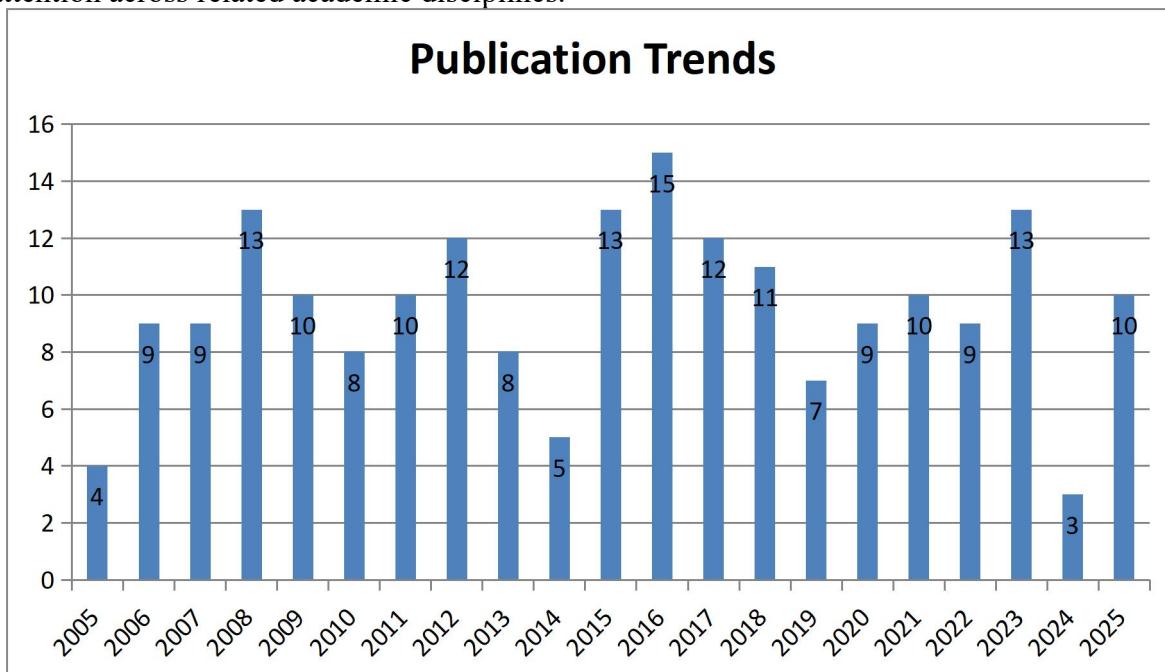


Figure 1: Psychological contract and organizational commitment research publication trends.

2.2. Prominent authors, institutions and countries

Table 2 presents a comprehensive overview of the most important figures in the academic discussion of psychological contacts and organizational commitment, including the most prominent writers, organizations, and nations. Bal. P. Matthijs stands out among the individual's researchers with 495 citations over 3 works. Additionally, De Lange, Annet H. has 2 papers that have 374 citations. Arizona State University's Lally School of Management and Agribusiness and the University of Illinois at Chicago's Department of Managerial Studies both garnered 1134 citations, making them the most heavily mentioned institutions in this field. In addition, with 1 article and 344 citations, the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium distinguished themselves. The United States recorded 816 citations across 18 Journals, closely followed by the United Kingdom with 887 citations from 11 publications, when looking at the citation count from a national viewpoint. According to the data, the most

productive authors in this field are Bal, P. Matthijs, Mohamed Behery, and Jose Ramos, while the country with the highest productivity is the United States.

Table 2: Most influential authors, organizations and country

TC	Author	TP	TC	Institution	TP	TC	Country	TP
495	Bal, P. Matthijs	3	1134	Department Of Managerial Studies, University Of Illinois, Chicago	1	887	United Kingdom	11
374	De Lange, Annet H.	2	1134	Lally School Of Management And Technology, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	1	816	United States	18
286	Feldman, Daniel C.	2	1134	Lally School Of Management And Technology	1	513	Belgium	5
286	Ng, Thomas W.H.	2	1134	Morrison School Of Management And Agribusiness, Arizona State University	1	495	Netherlands	3
90	Lapointe, Émilie	2	344	Research Group Stress, Health And Well-Being, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium	1	397	Hong Kong	5
90	Vandenbergh, Christian	2	344	Research Group Stress, Health And Well-Being, Ku Leuven, Belgium	1	259	Canada	7
81	Lapalme, Marie-Ève	2	329	Department Of Management And Organization, Vu University Amsterdam, Netherlands	1	150	Australia	4
68	Behery, Mohamed	3	329	Department Of Social And Organizational Psychology, University Of Groningen, Netherlands	1	146	China	6
33	Chambel, Maria José	2	329	Utrecht School Of Governance, Utrecht University, Netherlands	1	137	Spain	5
23	Cistulli, Mark D.	2	285	Department Of Management And Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck College, London, United Kingdom	1	115	United Arab Emirates	4
23	Ramos, José	3	285	Department Of Management, King's College London, United Kingdom	1	88	Taiwan	4

23	Snyder, Jason L.	2	285	Department Of Management, King's College London, United Kingdom	1	61	Pakistan	4
21	Tomás, Inés	2	285	Department Of Management, King's College, University Of London, United Kingdom	1	53	Ireland	2
18	Bastos, Antonio Virgilio Bittencourt	2	285	Department Of Organizational Psychology, Birkbeck, University Of London, United Kingdom	1	33	Portugal	2
18	Maia, Leticia Gomes	2	207	School Of Business, University Of Hong Kong, Hong Kong	1	30	Indonesia	3
11	Estreder, Yolanda	2	207	Terry College Of Business, University Of Georgia, United States	1	25	India	7

Note(s): TC = Total Citations, TP = Total number of article(s) Publications.

2.3. Most influential journals

Table 3 lists the top journals and books that have contributed to our understanding of the psychological contract and the importance of organizational commitment. The most influential source in this field is a single article from the *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, which has amassed 1134 citations. Overall, the *Journal of Vocational Behaviour* has published 6 articles, making it most prolific Journal, followed by the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* with 5 articles. For top-tier journals, the most fruitful years for high-impact publications were 2005-2010. Notably, when it comes to non-HRM journals, the most productive one is the *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*. However, when it comes to HRM- specific journals, the main outlet is the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*.

Table 3: Most influential journals

Source	TC	TP	HRM	2005-2010	2011-2015	2016-2020	2021-2025
Personnel Psychology	1134	1		1			
Journal Of Vocational Behavior	716	6		4	2		
Journal Of Organizational Behavior	406	2	X	1		1	
Journal Of Occupational And Organizational Psychology	344	1		1			
International Journal Of Human Resource Management	214	5	X		2	2	1
Journal Of Applied Psychology	207	1		1			
Journal Of Managerial Psychology	145	3		1		1	1
European Journal Of Work And Organizational Psychology	124	2		1	1		
Public Policy And Administration	94	1		1			

Industrial Marketing Management	85	1			1		
Frontiers In Psychology	84	1					1
Australian Journal Of Management	81	1	X		1		
Journal Of Business And Psychology	81	2			2		
Journal Of Business Research	67	1		1			
International Journal Of Manpower	63	2	X	2			
Journal Of Leadership And Organizational Studies	51	1	X		1		

Note(s): TC = Total citation, TP = Total number of article(s) Publication and HRM=X if a journal is classified as a 'HRM'

2.4. *Most influential articles on psychological contract and organizational commitment*

Table 4 highlights the most cited and influential articles in the field of psychological contract and organizational commitment research. Most notably, with 1130 citations, the article "*The impact of psychological contract breach on work related outcomes: A meta-analysis*" by Zhao H et al. (2007) stands out. Perceived psychological contract violations considerably lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, trust, and constructive work behaviour, but have a small impact on real turnover rates, according to this study. De Cuyper and De Witte's (2006) "*The impact of job insecurity and contract type on attitudes, well-being and behavioural reports: A psychological contract perspective*" is another highly cited paper that has 342 citations. Employees with long-term, relational contracts are more negatively impacted by job insecurity than those with short-term, transactional contracts, according to this study that looks at the effects of work uncertainty on attitudes and well-being. However, both groups report similar levels of overall life satisfaction and job performance.

Table 4: Most influential articles on psychological contract and organizational commitment

Authors	Title	TC
Zhao H et al.(2007)	"The impact of psychological contract breach on work-related outcomes: A meta-analysis"	1130
De Cuyper N.; De Witte H. (2006)	"The impact of job insecurity and contract type on attitudes, well-being and behavioural reports: A psychological contract perspective"	342
Bal P.M et al. (2008)	"Psychological contract breach and job attitudes: A meta-analysis of age as a moderator"	327
Sturges J et al.(2005)	"Managing the career deal: The psychological contract as a framework for understanding career management, organizational commitment and work behaviour"	284
Meyer J.P.; Parfyonova N.M.(2010)	"Normative commitment in the workplace: A theoretical analysis and re-conceptualization"	267

De Cuyper N.; De Witte H.(2007)	“Job insecurity in temporary versus permanent workers: Associations with attitudes, well-being, and behaviour”	213
Ng T.W.H et al.(2010)	“Psychological contract breaches, organizational commitment, and innovation-related behaviors: A latent growth modeling approach”	207
D'Amato A.; Herzfeldt R.(2008)	“Learning orientation, organizational commitment and talent retention across generations: A study of European managers”	192
Conway N et al.(2011)	“Testing the differential effects of changes in psychological contract breach and fulfilment”	149
Haque A et al.(2019)	“The Relationship Between Responsible Leadership and Organisational Commitment and the Mediating Effect of Employee Turnover Intentions: An Empirical Study with Australian Employees”	142
Rosen C.C et al.(2009)	“Perceptions of the organizational context and psychological contract breach: Assessing competing perspectives”	138
Bulut C.; Culha O.(2010)	“The effects of organizational training on organizational commitment”	133
Ng T.W.H.(2015)	“The incremental validity of organizational commitment, organizational trust, and organizational identification”	128
Suazo M.M.(2009)	“The mediating role of psychological contract violation on the relations between psychological contract breach and work-related attitudes and behaviours”	127

Note(s): TC = total citations

2.5. Knowledge foundation through co-citation analysis

Co-citation analysis elucidates the semantic relationships among commonly cited references, underscoring the core knowledge within a research domain. Figure 2 illustrates a co-citation map of references mentioned a minimum of 20 times within the articles of the review corpus. Prominent authors in the field of organizational commitment and psychological contracts include Rousseau, Robinson, Bal, Meyer, and Allen, as indicated by the red nodes. Likewise, substantial contributions by Morrison, Robinson, Meyer & Allen, and Coyle (green nodes) are prominently cited. The works of Aiken and Van Dyne (blue nodes) represent a significant cluster of often co-cited literature in this research domain.

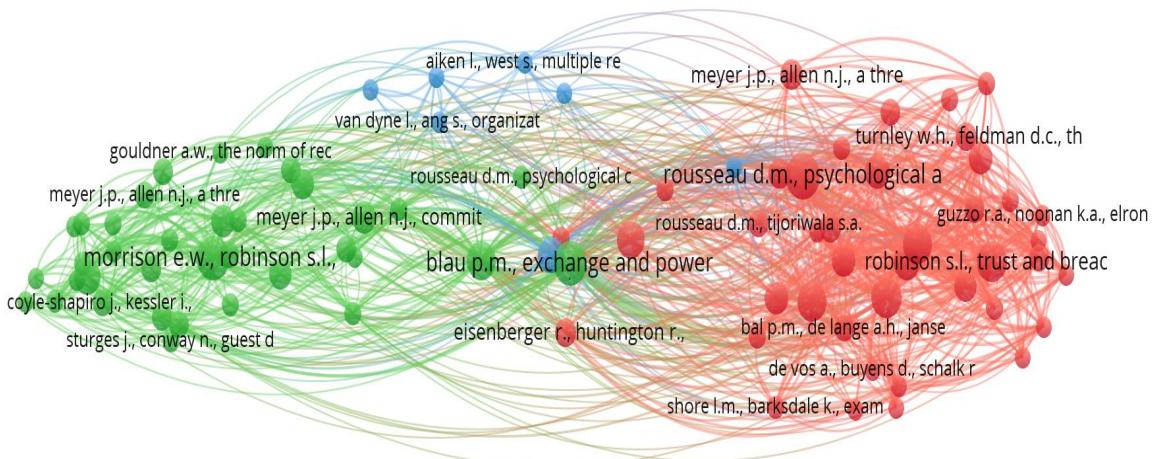
**Figure 2: Co-Citation Analysis****2.6. Thematic and influence structure analysis through bibliographic coupling**

Table 5 shows the thematic clusters associated with organizational commitment and psychological contracts, as determined by bibliographic coupling. The examination identifies three primary topic clusters: *the psychological contract and commitment*, *the breach of the psychological contract and its impact on work attitudes*, and *the antecedents and consequences of the psychological contract*. Table 5 provides a detailed overview of the most influential articles within each cluster. The combination of these three groups provides a thorough examination of the different dimensions of organizational commitment and psychological contracts.

Table 5: Thematic cluster of psychological contract and organizational commitment through bibliographic coupling

Themes	Authors	Title	TC
Psychological Contract and Commitment	Ng T.W.H et al. (2010)	“Psychological contract breaches, organizational commitment, and innovation-related behaviors: A latent growth modeling approach”	207
	Solinger O.N et al. (2016)	“Bouncing back from psychological contract breach: How commitment recovers over time”	121
	Castaing S. (2006)	“The Effects of Psychological Contract Fulfilment and Public Service Motivation on Organizational Commitment in the French Civil Service”	94
	Herrera J.; De Las Heras-Rosas C. (2021)	“The Organizational Commitment in the Company and Its Relationship With the Psychological Contract”	84
	Cassar V.; Briner R.B. (2011)	“The relationship between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment: Exchange imbalance as a moderator of the mediating role of violation”	79

	Ng T.W.H.; Feldman D.C.(2008)	“Can you get a better deal elsewhere? The effects of psychological contract replicability on organizational commitment over time”	79
	Lapointe T et al. (2022)	“Psychological contract breach, affective commitment to organization and supervisor, and newcomer adjustment: A three-wave moderated mediation model”	71
	McInnis K.J et al. (2009)	“Psychological contracts and their implications for commitment: A feature-based approach”	56
	Quratulain S et al. (2018)	“A study of employee affective organizational commitment and retention in Pakistan: the roles of psychological contract breach and norms of reciprocity”	47
	Bal P.M et al. (2013)	“A lifespan perspective on psychological contracts and their relations with organizational commitment”	45
	Guerrero S et al. (2014)	“Idiosyncratic Deals and High Performers' Organizational Commitment”	39
Psychological contract breach and job attitudes	Zhao H et al. (2007)	“The impact of psychological contract breach on work-related outcomes: A meta-analysis”	1134
	Bal P.M et al. (2008)	“Psychological contract breach and job attitudes: A meta-analysis of age as a moderator”	329
	Suazo M.M. (2009)	“The mediating role of psychological contract violation on the relations between psychological contract breach and work-related attitudes and behaviours”	128
	Birtch T.A et al.(2016)	“A social exchange theory framework for understanding the job characteristics “job outcomes relationship: the mediating role of psychological contract fulfilment”	108
	Coyle-Shapiro J.A.-M.; Morrow P.C.(2006)	“Organizational and client commitment among contracted employees”	102
	Rigotti T.(2009)	“Enough is enough? Threshold models for the relationship between psychological contract breach and job-related attitudes”	79
	Lapalme Marie-Ã et al. (2011)	“The Influence of Psychological Contract Breach on Temporary Workers' Commitment and Behaviours: A Multiple Agency Perspective”	42
Antecedents and outcomes of psychological	De Cuyper N.; De Witte H. (2006)	“The impact of job insecurity and contract type on attitudes, well-being and behavioural reports: A psychological contract perspective”	344

contracts	Sturges J et al. (2005)	“Managing the career deal: The psychological contract as a framework for understanding career management, organizational commitment and work behaviour”	285
	Hartmann N.N.; Rutherford B.N. (2015)	“Psychological contract breach's antecedents and outcomes in salespeople: The roles of psychological climate, job attitudes, and turnover intention”	85
	Grimmer M.; Oddy M. (2007)	“Violation of the Psychological Contract: The Mediating Effect of Relational Versus Transactional Beliefs”	81
	Richard O.C et al. (2009)	“Antecedents and consequences of psychological contracts: Does organizational culture really matter?”	67
	Philipp B.L.U.; Lopez P.D.J. (2013)	“The moderating role of ethical leadership: Investigating relationships among employee psychological contracts, commitment, and citizenship behaviour”	51
	Chi S.-C.S.; Chen S.-C. (2007)	“Perceived psychological contract fulfilment and job attitudes among repatriates: An empirical study in Taiwan”	35

Note(s): TC= total citation

2.7. *Thematic trends of psychological contract and organizational commitment*

This study examines thematic trends in research on psychological contracts and organizational commitment by utilizing co-occurrence analysis, building on insights derived from co-citations analysis and bibliographic coupling. This approach employs authors' keywords, categorized by publication year, to map the evolution of recurring themes that are present in a minimum of three articles within review sample. Figures 3 to 6 depict the sequential development of these themes.

Normative commitment, psychological empowerment, organizational commitment, and psychological contracts were the primary foci of research on psychological contracts and organizational commitment from 2005 to 2010. Purple nodes represented contract violations, while sky blue nodes represented organizational commitment. Furthermore, research conducted during this time highlighted the importance of supervisorial support, work satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment (red nodes). There was a heavy emphasis on studying affective commitment (green node) during that time as well.



Figure 3: Influential topics in the period of 2005 to 2010

Note(s): Purple nodes = psychological contract, Red nodes= affective organizational commitment, Sky blue nodes = organizational commitment, Green nodes = affective commitment, Yellow nodes = job satisfaction

Job attitudes and performance were among the main themes of the psychological contracts, organizational commitment, and green node research that occurred between 2011 and 2015. The purple nodes represent organizational commitment and citizenship behaviour; the red nodes represent contract breach; and the blue nodes represent general commitment. All of these themes were quite prominent during this time. Psychological contracts and organizational commitment were common topics of study at this time because of their potential effects on employee performance and civic engagement.

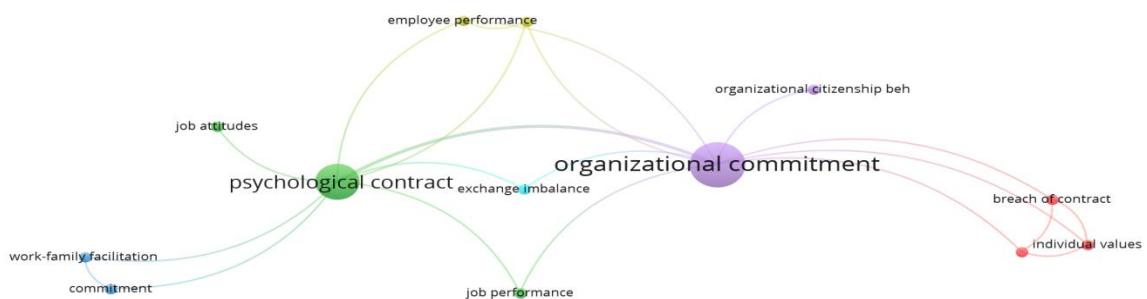


Figure 4: Influential topics in the period of 2011 to 2015

Note(s): Purple nodes = organizational commitment, Green nodes = psychological contract, Red nodes = breach contract, Sky blue nodes = Commitment, yellow nodes = employee performance

Studies examining the relationship between psychological contracts, organizational commitment, and topics like employment attitudes, organizational support, and psychological contracts (yellow nodes) dominated the literature from 2016 to 2020. During this time, other important topics included: (red) violated psychological contracts, (blue) fulfilled

psychological contracts and employment relationships, (sky blue) organizational commitment, (orange) supervisor support, and (green) relational psychological contracts, affective organizational commitment, and occupational commitment. These findings suggest that the study of psychological contracts and organizational commitment expanded and became a broader research area during this time.

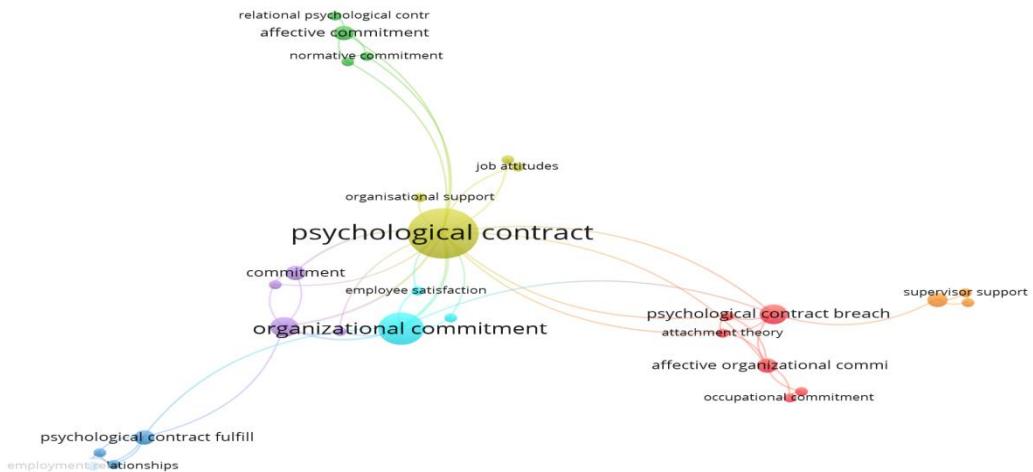


Figure 5: Influential topics in the period of 2016-2020

Note(s) : Yellow nodes = psychological contract, Red nodes = psychological contract breach, Purple nodes = organizational commitment, Blue nodes = psychological contract fulfil, Green nodes = affective commitment, Orange nodes = supervisor support

Organizational commitment and the intensity of the psychological contract (blue nodes) have been the primary focus of studies examining the relationship between the two from 2021 through 2025. Studies conducted during this time have also looked at green nodes representing psychological contracts, commitment, and relational capital; red nodes representing psychological contract breaches, job satisfaction, and psychological contract theory; yellow nodes representing supervisor-subordinate relationships and psychological contract violations; and purple nodes representing citizenship behaviour.



Figure 6: Influential topics in the period of 2021 to 2025

Note(s): Blue Nodes= organizational commitment, Green nodes = psychological contract, Red nodes = psychological contract breach, yellow nodes = psychological contract violation, Purple nodes = citizenship behaviour

3. Future research directions

This bibliometric study indicates that future research should first investigate the dynamic and longitudinal aspects of psychological contract recovery, elucidating how organizations may effectively rebuild trust and re-establish commitment following a violation. Secondly, research must examine the impact of novel work arrangements, such as remote, hybrid, and gig economy models, on the formation and maintenance of psychological contracts and their ensuring consequences on organizational commitment. Thirdly, it is essential to examine the influence of cross-cultural and generational moderators to understand how national culture and generational values affect employee expectations of the psychological contract and their relationship with kinds of commitment.

4. Conclusion

Finally, this bibliometric study integrates research from the last 20 years, confirming the psychological contract as a precondition for dedication to one's company. It provides an organized framework for thinking about the area by naming influential writers and publications and tracking development of thematic clusters from breach and attitude outcomes to dynamic recovery and contextual moderators. Academics and practitioners alike can use this study as a road map to further the field's understanding of strategic human resource management strategies grounded in strong empirical data and to build more resilient and dedicated workforces.

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