

# Psychological Contract and Employees' Commitment

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**Abstract:-**This study examined the empirical relationship between psychological contract and employees' commitment. The study adopted the survey research design. The study focused on employees of aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. Sample size of 140 employees was drawn from the population through a convenience sampling technique. The instrument was validated by two organizational behavioural and business consultancy experts. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained at 0.82 using Crombach Alpha. Spearman Ranking Order Correlation (r) was used for the test of hypotheses through a bivariate analysis (test of hypothesis) using SPSS Version 22 at 0.05 level of significance. Out of 140 questionnaires administered, 120 copies were retrieved. It was found that psychological contract (transactional contract and relational contract) has a significant relationship on employees' commitment (loyalty and intention to stay). The study concluded the undoubted connect between psychological contract (transactional and relational contracts) and employees' commitment (loyalty and intention to stay) calls for management's proactivity towards the accomplishment of psychological contract as to enhance competitive advantage edge while being in business. The study recommended among other things that: Employers and management of the understudied aluminium manufacturing companies must continue to ensure that a realistic perception of the employment relationship is presented to prospective employees and be ready to enhance promises made during this process; Organization must regularly evaluate the changes in employees' expectations of the organization and what the organization needs to contribute. This will enable her draw a psychological contract (transactional and relational contracts) that befits its employers and employees.

**Keywords:** Psychological Contract, Transactional Contract, Relational Contract, Employees' Commitment, loyalty and intention to stay.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every organization wishes her employees to drive its vision, mission, goals and objectives to concrete reality. This is essential because employees are human resources who harness other organization's resources among others such as machine, material, time and money to attain organization's expectations. Human Resource Management (HRM) has observed tremendous growth and development as it is holistically designed to promote organizational success through a judicious integration of both human and non-human resources. Apparently, in pursuit of organization's expectations, the development of psychological contract has become a germane function of human resource management as it helps the employees and employers get free of a thorny

employment relationship. An organization devoid of chaotic employment relationship breeds effective psychological contract which is a driver to employee's commitment. Thus, for employees to be committed to the expectations of an organization, management must map out befitting psychological contract that will develop, sustain and retain its workforce.

Some aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt face the challenge that a significant number of employees will retire in the near future. The knowledge of these employees is viewed as a very important source of wealth in which competitive advantage lies (Gupta, Aggarwal, Samaria, Sarda, & Bucha, 2012). These knowledge workers have a high degree of expertise, education and experience and their primary purpose involves the creation, distribution and application of knowledge to promoting organizational aspirations. Thus, for management of aluminium manufacturing companies to be able to obtain, develop and retain such talented employees, there must be adoption of a high-quality workforce that would contribute towards the fulfillment of their predetermined goals and objectives. To do so certain expectations of the employee need to be met by the employer, and these expectations constitute the psychological contract.

Psychological contract is often defined as the employees' perception of the implicit agreement between themselves and the organization that contains a shared responsibility between the two parties (Festing & Schäfer, 2014; Ng, Feldman & Butts, 2014). When an employee perceive a breach in this contract, hope and trust are lost, commitment drops as the employee is more likely to consider exit the organization which is the last resort (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). In the present dynamic environmental condition, where the employees' mobility has grown significantly and thought towards employee's satisfaction as well as motivation are becoming insignificant, psychological contract has transpired as useful integrative concept with most of excising and emerging work place concern converge around it (Bhawna, 2019). Employee commitment denotes the willingness of social players to promote social systems through their inputted efforts while fronting the predetermined goals and objectives of an organization. This could be seen in the attachment level the employee relates to the social system, which are self-expressive in nature. Allen and Mayer (1990) asserted that commitment is a psychological state that binds

the individual to the organization. Apparently, the level of employees' commitment towards their tasks and responsibilities change overtime in consonance with the perception they have towards the psychological contractual agreement with their employer. The tendency of the organization losing valuable employees was largely the concern for this study. When understanding the impact of the psychological contract on employee commitment better, it is ideal aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt should be able to fulfill employees' expectations to a larger extent and thus prevent employees' committable indications that would mar the organization, while breeding high commitment among employees such as loyalty and intention to stay for the success of the organization.

Despite the importance of psychological contracts to employers and management, some private and public organizations adopt hostile employment relationships. In the third world economies like Nigeria, amidst recession coupled with the increasingly alarming rate of unemployment in the country, employees have no option other than to stick to their employers' unfavourable terms and conditions on employment. These unpalatable happenings permeate negative employees' commitment among others through behavioural reflection of disloyalty and intention to quit. Patently, with the inconsistent economic reality in the Nigerian states, employees need a more robust and friendly psychological contracts such as transactional contract and relational contract. However, most companies are more interested in occupying their employees with more competitive targets with less or unpalatable consideration to effective psychological contract, taking the high rate of unemployment in the country as a string for justifying their operations. The study of Anggraeni, Dwiatmadja and Yuniawan (2017) stressed that commitment of employees was formed by the ability of business owners to understand the needs and expectations of employees regarding opportunities of self-development, pleasant working environment, the benefit as the workload and the work challenge, which are core concerns in the psychological contract. Google search has also shown that the relationship between psychological contract and employee commitment is understudied. This gave credence to the concepts under study.

#### *Objective of Study*

The main purpose of this study was to empirically examine the relationship between psychological contract and employee commitment of selected aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria.

However, the below hypotheses were proposed:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between transactional contract and loyalty.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between transactional contract and intention to stay.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between relational contract and loyalty.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between relational contract and intention to stay.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

This study is anchored on social exchange theory, a sociological and psychological theory that studies the social behaviour in the interaction of two parties that implement a cost-benefit analysis to determine risks and benefits (Roeckelein, 2018). Social exchange theory suggests that these calculations occur on romantic relationships, friendships, professional relationships and ephemeral relationships (Mcray, 2015). Social exchange theory says that if the costs of the relationship are higher than the rewards, such as a lot of effort or money put into a relationship and not reciprocated, this could lead to issues. The implication social exchange theory to the study denotes that while employers seek to maximize performance and success, employees are geared to satisfying their personal and social needs through viable psychological contracts while pledging their allegiance to their employers. Thus, the more effective the psychological contract the high committed are employees. The opposite permeate contrary effect to both employers and employees.

### *2.2 Concept of Psychological Contract*

The psychological contract is a system of beliefs which includes one side the expected performance of the employees and on the other side it includes the employer's response. It deals with the employee's belief about the meaning and the conditions of a reciprocal contract between that him or her and the other side of the contract enacted by management or employers (Rousseau, 2003). The psychological contract is principally built to fashion stability in the workplace environment while improving the relationship between the organisation and the employee (Anggraeni et al., 2017; Karagonlar, Eisenberger & Aselage 2016; Low, Bordia & Bordia, 2016). It is apparent to note that psychological contract is most times informal, subjective in nature, not legally binding and lacking precision (Naidoo, Abarantyne, & Rugimbana, 2019). Thus, the development of the psychological contract starts even before an individual embarks at a new job and then journeys through multiple stages of growth on the job. This process progresses over more or less the first year of employment and includes perceptions of the fulfilment or the violation of promised obligations explicitly tied to the employment. The psychological contract is quite stable and resistant to change when once formed. Psychological contract provides nous of control which shapes employees' future in the company. Conspicuously, employees are a party to the agreement which determines the pursuit of their obligations while working for their companies. Psychological contract amplifies confidence by creating in employees - a sense of predictability, job

security and control. It spins around the equity perception of the effort–reward relationship, thus paying attention on reciprocity. Hence, study dimensionalized psychological contract into:

### 2.3 Transactional Contract

This refers to a constricted range of behaviours over a limited time period stressing on financial rewards in exchange for a fairly tightly defined set of employee behaviours (Naidoo et al., 2019). These financial rewards among others include wages, salaries, bonuses, transport allowance and incentives.

### 2.4 Relational Contract

This is based on a longer-term relationship where a compendium of benefits and opportunities are provided in exchange for a deeper and more extensive dedication to the firm. These contracts tend to be more unstructured, uncertain and open-ended as it relies on a higher level of trust (Coyle-Shapiro & Parzefall, 2008; Middlemiss, 2011). In this contract growth in career and compensation come chiefly from seniority and other gains and rewards are only loosely associated to job performance. The contract emanates from long term membership and participation in the organization. This type of contract has ties with trusted and loyal employees who handle most of the senior managerial/supervisory work in the organization.

### 2.5 Employees' Commitment

Daan (2013) referred employee's commitment in multiple terms: (a) extent to which an employee is being bound to a goal or the determination in respect of a goal, regardless of the origin of the goal in his/her organization, (b) extent to which a staff believes in a goal and wants to achieve it as long as it has to do with the organization, (c) a psychological state that binds an individual to the organization, (d) connection to a job with the probability that someone continues to work in that job and feels psychologically bound to it regardless of whether it is fulfilling or not, and (e) someone's attitude towards work. According to Zeb-Obipi and Agada (2018) stated that committed employees high level of consistency in their involvement and dedication to organizational activities. They

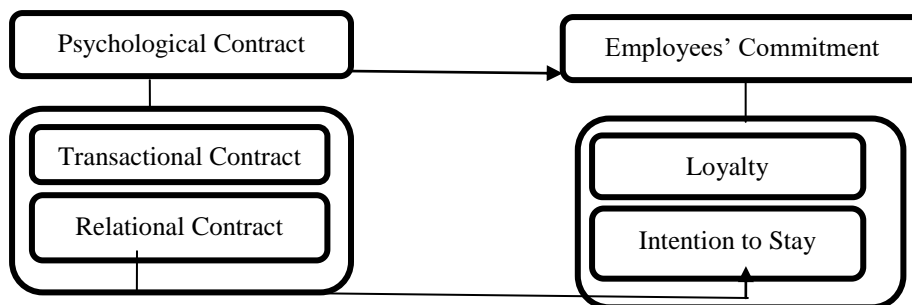
do not give unnecessary excuses why a task or goal cannot be actualized in the interest of the organization. Employees have sense of binding linkage when they are committed to their place of work. They are impelled to remain and contribute bountifully to the success of the organization, individually and collectively. Employee commitment is of a vital significance for the fruition of organization since it affects the key employee related variables such as absence, decline in productivity, poor morale, turnover and other negative tendencies. The researchers measured employees' commitment into:

### 2.6 Loyalty

It is a conscious dedication where an employee puts extra interests in furthering the vision, mission and goals of an organization, even when undergoing such may require sacrificing one's self-interest beyond what would be necessary by one's legal and other moral tasks and responsibilities. Loyalty corroborates employee's expression of trust, resistance to the adoption of opportunistic behaviour faced with an outside job offer (Dutot, 2004), significant length of service in the company, less inclination to search for outside job offers and a strong sense of belonging (Peretti & Igalens, 2015). When employees are loyally committed to an organization, they tend to emotionally invest their potentials in the company. They regularly show up on every issues raised to promote the aspirations of the organization.

### 2.7 Intention to stay

Intention to stay is defined as employees' intention to stay in the existing employment relationship with their current employer on a long-term basis (Shahid, 2018). It is the opposite of intention to quit which has to do with an employee's calculated possibility that he or she is perpetually exiting from his or her organization soon. The eagerness of employees to work and stay in an organization depends on the level to which they are sufficiently motivated (Adams & Hicks, 2000). These motivations stem from financial and non-financial grounds which must commensurate work inputs and as well are in similitude with sister organizations. This promotes employees' intention to stay and help the organization attain its expected heights and competitive advantage edge.



Source: Desk Research, 2019

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Psychological Contract and Employee Commitment

III. METHOD

The study adopted the survey research design. The target population for this study comprises of 220 employees from five manufacturing companies domicile in Port Harcourt namely: ALO Aluminium Manufacturing Co, Syndicated Metal Industries Ltd, First Aluminium Plc, Vogue Aluminium Products, and Differential Aluminum and steel Co. Ltd. The sample size is 140 which were obtained using the Krejcie and Morgan Sample Size Determination Table of 1970. Bowley’s formula (1960) was adopted in the number of questionnaires distributed in each of the institution. Data were collected through primary (questionnaire) and secondary (textbooks, journal articles and internet). The instrument was validated by two organizational behavioural and business consultancy experts. The reliability coefficient of the instrument of 0.82 was elicited using Crombach alpha. Spearman Ranking (r) was used for the test of hypotheses. Out of one hundred and forty (140) questionnaires administered, the researchers were able to retrieve one hundred and nineteen (119) copies. A bivariate analysis (test of hypothesis) was done using SPSS Version 22 at 0.05 level of significance. The formula for Spearman Rank Order Correlation is stated thus:

$$r = 1 - \frac{6\sum d^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where;

n = number of pairs of data

d = different between the ranking in each set of data.

∑ = Summation

IV. RESULTS

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between transactional contract and loyalty.

		Transactional Contract	Loyalty
Transactional Contract	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.645**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	119	119
Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.645**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	119	119

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.1 above shows r value of 0.645 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>1</sub>) which states

that there is no significant relationship between transactional contract and loyalty was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (Ha<sub>1</sub>) is accepted. This implies that effective transactional contract significantly relates to employee’s loyalty.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant relationship between transactional contract and intention to stay

		Transactional Contract	Intention to stay
Transactional Contract	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.586**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	119	119
Intention to stay	Correlation Coefficient	.586**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	119	119

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.2 above shows r value of 0.586 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>2</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between transactional contract and intention to stay was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (Ha<sub>2</sub>) accepted. This implies that effective transactional contract significantly relates to employee’s intention to stay in the organization.

Ho<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between relational contract and loyalty.

		Relational Contract	Loyalty
Relational Contract	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.744**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	119	119
Loyalty	Correlation Coefficient	.744**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	119	119

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.3 above shows r value of 0.744 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>3</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between relational contract and loyalty was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (Ha<sub>3</sub>) accepted. This implies that effective relational contract significantly relates to employee’s loyalty in the organization.

Ho<sub>4</sub>: There is no significant relationship between relational contract and intention to stay

			Relational Contract	Intention to stay
	Relational Contract	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.661**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	119	118
	Intention to stay	Correlation Coefficient	.661**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	119	119

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.4 above shows r value of 0.661 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05. Since the significance value 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho<sub>4</sub>) which states that there is no significant relationship between relational contract and intention to stay was rejected and the alternate hypothesis (Ha<sub>4</sub>) accepted. This implies that effective relational contract significantly relates to employee's intention to stay in the organization.

#### V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that there is a significant relationship between psychological contract (transactional contract and relational contract) and employees' commitment (loyalty and intention to stay) amongst aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt. These findings are in consonance with the view of Naidoo et al (2019) which stressed that both transactional and relational elements of the psychological contract were important to the employees. Thus the degree at which psychological contract (transactional and relational) is enforced by management of aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt determines employee's commitment to their jobs. When an employee is supported by the organization, he shows a high level of loyalty and affection (Hazrati, 2017). The views of Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) supported the findings as they averred that psychological contract is related to commitment as if appears that it influences the attitudes and positions of employees with regard to the relationship between them and the organization. This denotes that when the positive perception takes place, employees are more inclined to be committed and contributive to the growth and development of the organizations (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowsky & Bravo, 2007; Lövblad, Hyder & Lönnstedt, 2012; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Haselhuhn, Kennedy, Kray, Van Zant & Schweitzer, 2015; Sturges, Guest, Conway & Davey, 2002; Turnley & Feldman, 1999; Kickul, Lester & Finkl, 2002; Ng, Feldman, Butts, 2014; Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014). In other words, when employees perceive psychological

contract breach in the aluminium manufacturing companies they work for, they tend to be less committed. They portray behaviours and actions that are not healthy for the effective operations and actualizations of the organization. Commitments that are uncalled-for could be attributed to disloyalty, intention to quit, irregularity and distrust. Apparently, as for the intentions to stay, most employees of the understudied aluminium manufacturing companies positioned that there are some gains in staying with the firms. Some stated that they are not actively looking for alternative employment since searching for job constitutes a turbulent hurdle in Nigeria as a result of the massive unemployment rate among the citizenry.

From the findings, it was discovered among employees of the understudied aluminium companies that when financial rewards such as wages, salaries, bonuses, transport allowance and incentives as may be stated in the transactional contract are dully enforced by management, commitment is strengthened through positive actions, attitudes and behaviours such as loyalty and intention to stay, thus promoting the attainments of the firms. Also employees enjoy a compendium of benefits and opportunities as envisaged in the relational contract, which enhances a deeper and more extensive dedication to their employers. They enjoy growth in career and compensation thus binding the long term membership and participation in the companies they work for. In this regards, employees puts extra interests in furthering the vision, mission and goals, even when undergoing such may require sacrificing one's self-interest beyond what would be necessary by one's legal and other moral tasks and responsibilities of said aluminium manufacturing companies. They emotionally invest their potentials to the growth and development of the companies. Employees' intention to stay in the existing employment relationship with the understudied aluminium manufacturing companies on a long-term basis is promoted when they get what they are able to satisfy their personal and social needs while working for the companies.

Finally, the findings revealed that a reasonably positive psychological contract existed among employees of the understudied aluminum manufacturing companies.

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study revealed positive connection among the dimensionalized and measured elements of psychological contract and employees' commitment of aluminium manufacturing companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The undoubted connect between psychological contract (transactional and relational contracts) and employees' commitment (loyalty and intention to stay) calls for management's proactivity towards the accomplishment of psychological contract as to enhance competitive advantage edge while being in business. Organizational behaviourists have perceived that psychological contract creates opportunities to progress our acceptance about an individual's

work related needs which are crucial for building a all encompassing workforce. Thus, psychological contract should be designed to contain a balance between employers and employees interests.

Based on these findings, the following were recommended by the researchers:

1. Employers and management of the understudied aluminium manufacturing companies must continue to ensure that a realistic perception of the employment relationship is presented to prospective employees and be ready to enhance promises made during this process.
2. Organization must regularly evaluate the changes in employees' expectations of the organization and what the organization needs to contribute. This will enable her draw a psychological contract (transactional and relational contracts) that befits its employers and employees.
3. Management should consider the factors contributing to employee's loyalty and intentions to stay when determining psychological contract within the context of prevailing socio-economic issues in the country Nigeria. She should integrate them into policies and practices that would spur both employers' and employees' growth and development.

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