

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT IN A GLOBALIZED SOCIETY: NEW CONTRACTUAL AND RELATIONAL FORMS

*Stefano AMODIO¹, PhD in Philosophy, Professor of work psychology,
Director of Education², Istituto Teseo, Italy*

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ABSTRACT

Today, more and more attention is paid to the functioning of organizations, it is placed not only on the work itself, but on the actors and on those subjective dimensions of the worker. In this social-working context the psychological techniques and processes aimed at employment in the new scenario of the globalized society have not yet been studied in all aspects, although its diffusion and importance for the global economy is evident. Also the psychological contract, widely discussed, is an argument with insufficient gaps in scientific research, in particular as regards empirical analysis and theoretical interpretative models. Economic literature has never paid much attention to psychological aspects; on the other hand, psychosocial literature has often omitted use as a specific research topic, focusing on traditional placement and outplacement processes. Some scholars, especially from the Anglo-American school, have emphasized the need to direct research towards an interpretative analysis of the psychological contract based on empirical data, also considering the results of managerial and organizational literature. This article focuses on the process of acquiring and transmitting interpersonal dynamics that characterize the psychological contract with the consequent phases of insertion into the working world, describing its characteristics and its specific dynamics. It also provides an interpretation of these processes, adopting a theoretical model derived from the social psychology of interpersonal relationships.

In the end, the article provides some tips to manage the processes of the psychological contract with less stress, psychologically speaking and less organizational uncertainties, mainly addressing the new generations. The purpose of this contribution is to analyze from a psycho-social point of view, the evolution of psychological relationships between employers and workers, within the new scenario of the globalized society, opening new perspectives of investigation and study related to the study of human factors and organizational well-being, work-trust relationships and quality of working performances.

Keywords: labor market analysis, the psychological contract, psychology of work, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Psychology, Human Resources.

Astăzi, o atenție tot mai mare se acordă funcționării organizațiilor, și nu numai lucrului însăși, ci și actorilor, precum și dimensiunilor subiective ale lucrătorului. În acest context social de lucru, tehnicile și procesele psihologice, care vizează ocuparea forței de muncă în noul scenariu al societății globalizate,

¹ © Stefano AMODIO, ✉ presidenza@istitutoteseo.it, direttore@istitutoteseo.it

² STEFANO AMODIO, President and Director of Teaching of the Teseo Institute, PhD in General Psychology, teaches Occupational Psychology at the University of Cassino and Southern Lazio, shareholder and co-founder of the Armando Curcio Institute in Rome. Trainer in the field of Human Resources and Labor Organization. He deals with professional training, work psychology, motivation, work well-being, communication mediations, creativity and emotions. He is a member of the technical scientific committee of the Storytelling Observatory of the University of Pavia. Curator and author of several volumes including: *Homo Laborans. Tools for analysis and promotion of working well-being* (Teseo Editore, 2010) and *Johann Amos Comenius. Comenian thought and universal education in the analysis of Didactica Magna* (Teseo Editore, 2012), *Like leaves in the wind. Work flexibility and atypical scenarios* (Teseo Editore, 2011), the latter also translated into Romanian by Editura Romania de Maine, a university publisher of the Spiru Haret University in Bucharest.

nu au fost încă studiate în toate aspectele, deși difuzarea și importanța pentru economia globală sunt evidente. De asemenea, contractul psihologic, discutat pe scară largă, este un argument cu lacune insuficiente în cercetarea științifică, în particular, în ceea ce privește analiza empirică și modelele interpretative teoretice. Literatura economică nu a acordat multă atenție aspectelor psihologice; pe de altă parte, literatura psihosocială a omis adesea utilizarea ca subiect de cercetare specific, concentrându-se asupra proceselor tradiționale de plasare și excluziune pe piața muncii. Unii cercetători, în special din școala anglo-americană, au subliniat necesitatea direcționării cercetării către o analiză interpretativă a contractului psihologic bazat pe date empirice, luând în considerare și rezultatele literaturii manageriale și organizaționale. Acest articol se concentrează asupra procesului de dobândire și transmitere a dinamicii interpersonale care caracterizează contractul psihologic cu fazele ulterioare de inserție în lumea muncii, descriind caracteristicile și dinamica sa specifică. De asemenea, oferă o interpretare a acestor procese, adoptând un model teoretic derivat din psihologia socială a relațiilor interpersonale.

În cele din urmă, articolul oferă câteva sfaturi pentru a gestiona procesele contractului psihologic cu mai puțin stres, din punct de vedere psihologic, și cu mai puține incertitudini organizaționale, adresându-se, în principal, noilor generații. Scopul acestei lucrări este de a analiza din punctul de vedere psiho-social, evoluția relațiilor psihologice între angajatori și lucrători, în noul scenariu al societății globalizate, deschizând noi perspective de investigare a factorului uman și bunăstării organizaționale, relațiilor de încredere în muncă și calității performanțelor de lucru.

Cuvinte-cheie: analiza pieței muncii, contract psihologic, psihologia muncii, comportament organizațional, psihologia organizațională, resurse umane.

Сегодня все большее внимание уделяется функционированию организаций, не только самой работе, но и акторам, а также субъективным характеристикам работника. В этом социальном контексте работы психологические методы и процессы, нацеленные на занятость в новом сценарии глобализованного общества, еще не изучены во всех аспектах, хотя их распространение и значение для мировой экономики очевидны. Также широко обсуждается психологический контракт, являющийся аргументом с достаточными пробелами в научных исследованиях, особенно в том, что касается эмпирического анализа и теоретических моделей интерпретации. Экономическая литература никогда не уделяла много внимания психологическим аспектам; с другой стороны, психосоциальная литература часто исключала использование в качестве конкретной темы исследования, уделяя особое внимание традиционным процессам включения и исключения на рынке труда. Некоторые ученые, особенно из англо-американской школы, подчеркивали необходимость направить исследования на интерпретационный анализ психологического контракта на основе эмпирических данных, а также с учетом результатов управленческой и организационной литературы. Эта статья посвящена процессу приобретения и передачи межличностной динамики, которая характеризует психологический контракт с последующими фазами вхождения в рабочий мир, описывая его характеристики и его специфическую динамику. Это также обеспечивает интерпретацию этих процессов, принимая теоретическую модель, основанную на социальной психологии межличностных отношений.

В заключении статьи приводятся некоторые советы по управлению процессами психологического контракта с меньшим стрессом и с меньшей организационной неопределенностью, в основном адресованные новым поколениям. Цель данной работы - проанализировать с психосоциальной точки зрения эволюцию психологических отношений между работодателями и работниками в рамках нового сценария глобализованного общества, открывая новые перспективы для исследования человеческого фактора, организационного благополучия, отношений доверия и качества работы.

Ключевые слова: анализ рынка труда, психологический контракт, психология труда, организационное поведение, организационная психология, человеческие ресурсы.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Forms and contents of the psychological work contract

According to Anderson, a psychological contract begins when an employee understands that the organization is obliged to reciprocate somehow what it receives from him. People enter an organization with values, needs and beliefs which they think will be deeply taken into consideration, and that their prosperity will be protected [1, ANDERSSON, L.M., 1996]. The central point of a psychological contract concerns the exchange of promises and duties whose contents are referred to psychological aspects not put to evidence [2, MAKIN, P. et al., 1996]. These perceptions and expectations are part of the employment psychological contract, which coexists together with the contract formally and legally documented. A psychological contract is oriented to future and it is dynamic and continuously revised, as it is based on expectations evolving during the business collaboration that the person begins with the organization [3, MUCHINSKY, P.M., 2003].

Besides, this contract defines what the person expects from the organization in order to obtain and keep his psychological wealth. The worker believes that the organization has the potential to get this wealth. The terms of this 'contribution' are both in the formal employment contract and in the psychological one. If one of the two is broken, the person feels to be subjected to unfair treatment [4, STALKER, K., 2000]. Nowadays there is no agreement about what a psychological contract is concerned, but there is an agreement about some basic relational elements, as the career development, the participation to the organization, the certainty of the work [5, ANDERSON, N., SCHALK, R., 1998].

According to Anderson and Schalk, one of the main functions of the psychological contract is to reduce employee's insecurity [5, ANDERSON, N., SCHALK, R., 1998]. A Rousseau's comparative study where the contents of the psychological contract and the employers' were compared, revealed that while the employees were expecting advancements, workplace safety, development, wages increase, etc., they were on the contrary asked to be loyal, available to make overtime and extra role duties, a minimum commitment to be in the firm, and the availability to accept transfers [6, ROUSSEAU, D.M. 1990]. According to other researchers working about the psychological contracts, today the work safety is no more connected to loyalty. So, high performances do not assure anymore a work safety [7, CSOKA, L.S., 1995]. For the organizations, loyalty and work involvement have a high value: on the contrary, for the workers the priority is the work certainty.

The reciprocity principle constitutes a fundamental factor to understand the work connection by the worker. Of course, the concept of contract recalls the idea that two parts are involved, and that the reciprocity results by the comprehension and the appreciation of its duties. However, as psychological contracts exist only in the minds of people, a doubt starts about how this mutuality can be carried out between the two parts. In a normal legal contract, every part has his own perception about the contract duties, and the sharing of these perceptions gives mutuality to the parts. Before the signature of the contracts, which gives a legal value to them, ambiguities or misunderstandings are clarified and solved by the two parts.

On the contrary, the psychological contracts are different: actually, they are in the mind of the person, and are not formally negotiated. Only the employee gives substance to this mutuality adopting two points of view: a) what he *is expecting* from the organization; b) what *he believes* the organization expects from him [8, TURNLEY, W.H., BOLINO, M.C. et al., 2003]. These two perspectives influence his behavior and, not directly, how the organization works. According to Denise M. Rousseau, the mutuality is not an essential condition to make the psychological contract exist. She suggests that *believing* in the reciprocity the contract could exist, but not the reciprocity as such [9, ROUSSEAU, D.M., MCLEAN PARKS, J., 1992]. We can discuss if the organization can have an interest in being an active part in this contract or, more simply, if it can anticipate it. In this case, the satisfaction of the employee's expectations can casually occur at the same time with the obligations of a psychological contract.

Anyway all this does not prevent the organization from understanding which the expectations about the duties are, and from taking sides by accepting these duties, in order to keep productive and advantageous relationships with the employees [9, ROUSSEAU, D.M., MCLEAN PARKS, J., 1992]. New work and organizational dynamics have caused a transition from the so called *relational* contracts to

the *transactional* ones [10, CSOKA, L.S., 1995]. The first ones, in which the relationship between employer and employee is primary, are based on a common interest and are connected to the social exchange, implying an exchange of social and emotional resources [11, MILLWARD, L.J., BREWERTON, P.M., 2000]. They look like a sort of a traditional agreement between employer and employees, in which all the parts recognize the interests of the counter-part [12, MILLWARD, L.J., BREWERTON, P.M., 2000]. Or they can be considered as employment relationships which adopt policies of a high involvement, reflecting a reciprocal interest aimed at reaching positive results [13, TSUI, A.S., PEARCE, J.L. et al., 1997]. According to Kissler, the relational contracts presume a reciprocal relationship of dependency between employees and employers and can show a long term involvement [14, KISSLER, G.D., 1994].

On the contrary, the transactional contracts tend to be static, having a fixed content based on a subjective interest; tend to identify clear responsibilities and to consider short period relationships [15, CAVANAUGH, M.A., NOE, R.A., 1999]. They can be compared to employment relationships focused on the work, in which the result of the transaction is more important of the maintenance of the relationship, and are bound to the exchange of economical resources that constitute the primary incentive [16, MILLWARD, L.J., BREWERTON, P.M., 2000]. Young workers are more inclined to accept transactional psychological contracts than the oldest ones, as they accept a greater work insecurity, when being able to control their career [17, HALL, D.T., 1996].

The diffusion of the transactional contracts, above all among young generations, is considered as an orientation towards a *proteiform career*, in which the employee has a greater control and responsibility of his own destiny [17, HALL, D.T., 1996]. Of course, these aspects have an influence on the content of the psychological contract. A research that studied the passage from relational contracts to transactional contracts through the study of the perceptions of three family generations, showed that over the years, perceptions of trust, help and loyalty have diminished during the last fifty years. This means a wearing away of the relational elements of the psychological contract [18, DE MEUSE, K.P. et al., 2001]: indeed, each contract has both relational and transactional elements, so that we have a reciprocal influence. For this reason a relational-transactional codification has been proposed, meant as a psychological-based continuum, where the pure forms of each contract are positioned at each extremity [19, ROUSSEAU, D.M. et al., 1992].

Despite the relational-transactional codification is the main one, we may also have other forms of contract. Some researchers have proposed a codification that takes into account the dimensions of degree and balance of the obligations, identifying six types of contract (instrumental, weak, loyal, strong, unbound, connected to an investment), in which each type shows different levels of emotional bond and work possibilities [20, JANSSENS, M., et al., 2003]. The researchers have then produced a six dimensioned model with these characteristics: not tangible-tangible; near-distant; stable-flexible; short period-long period; fair-unfair; single-collective [21, SELS, L. et al., 2004]. Watson introduced the idea of *ideological contract*, saying that a personal position, liberal or collective, influences the judgment about the work relationship, and also the kind of a psychological contract [22, WATSON, G.W., 1997]. Other researchers say that the ideological position does not define a particular and separated kind of contract, but only an internal connotation of the contract itself, that is the possible engagement of a person who tries to pursue a principle or a cause of value.

This task appears as the contribution that the organization has in order to pursue a given ideological target [23, THOMPSON, J.A., BUNDERSON, J.S., 2003]. The engagement due to the *cause* can increase loyalty, satisfaction and participation to the work organization. These factors confirm a relational dimension of the psychological contract. Adopting the perspective of the social exchange, Shore and Barksdale propose a codification based on a reciprocal balancing of the obligations of the employee and of the employer's as a form of a relationship stronger and similar to a positive psychological relational contract [24, SHORE, L.M., BARKSDALE, K., 1998]. Between the two parts, there can be different needs in this exchange. For example, an individual could have an opposition to invest in a high specialized professionalism that, in time, could prevent him to count on an external position, a chance today possible because of the increasing trend of the transnational contracts, which ask the employees to run more risks in their job. In order to get an exchange able to satisfy the two

parts, also considering the different interests, the contract should also include the possibility to get tasks with more responsibilities and remuneration connected to the progress of their career.

A second problematic point could be the resistance of the firm to invest its technical capital of knowledge in favor of a given worker. Of course, the firm always works hoping to get as soon as possible an important competitive advantage and to have the guarantee to go on keeping the services of the employee, at least until the return of the investment. In that case, the employer expects that the employee remains in the firm the sufficient time for this return, and that leaving the enterprise, he does not give the knowledge of the firm to his rivals.

In turn, the employee will be available to invest loyally in the firm his career, if he receives the promise to be employed as a long-standing and strategic worker. In this case, a possible breach of the contract will be clear only after the two parts have made their *investments* in the relationship. In different situations, between the two parts could not be so long a time expectations, and both the single workers and the organization can *friendly* separate. For example, thank to their kind of employment, the managers tend to commit to long term contracts, in which is very important to keep the employment relationship (a non convertible to cash exchange), while fixed terms workers and consultants prefer transnational contracts. Actually, we see that the type of work relationship influences the content of the relational contract [25, MCLEAN PARKS, J., KIDDER, D.L., 1990].

1.2 The influence of the new types of work on the psychological contract

A new interest of the researchers about the psychological contract is in great part fed by recent changes in which the job market has been involved during the last ten years, influencing in a steady way the lives of the workers and the organizations'. On the whole, these changes show a marked orientation to a more flexible market, made of permanent employees, contractors and fixed-term workers. The first ones are considered the core and the intellectual force of the firm; the second ones as a sort of *stable* of contractors, and the last ones as *just-in-time* workers [26, COOPER, C.L., 1999].

The new organization of the market of work implies a greater individual responsibility concerning the self-development, the career management and more autonomy concerning legal protection [27, CAVANAUGH, M.A., NOE, R.A., 1999]. With reference to the change of organization, concerning a repositioning from the production of goods to the production of services, also the corresponding remuneration is now mainly connected to the market value and less to the position or seniority of the worker. From an individual standpoint, all these changes have produced many consequences when compared with the traditional employment. According to Guest, the main consequences are 1) a reduction of the number of individuals employed; 2) an increase of the fragmentation and flexibility of the workers in the firms; 3) the urgency and pervasiveness of the changes; 4) an increasing interest for a balance between life and work; 5) the decrease of the number of workers who are represented by the institutional systems of negotiation; 6) a decline of the collective orientation in favor of individualistic solutions [28, GUEST, D.E., 2004].

An interesting Bridges' analysis shows the meaning of these changes in a historical perspective where, starting from the XVII century and later with the industrial revolution, the work became a commitment of tasks, transforming itself in the XIX century into a job. In the XX century these jobs became *careers*, and nowadays another change is occurring, that is there is a comeback to jobs and tasks considered as a commitment of piece works [29, BRIDGES, W., 1994].

This new relationship is backed also by changes concerning the management of the human resources, where, as an indicator of the attachment, the occupational involvement has substituted the organizational one, and the traditional bounds between property and labor force are becoming less definite [30, GUEST, D.E., CONWAY, N., 1999]. The work relationship goes on evolving, and both the employees and the employers are searching for the basis of a new psychological contract that could be included and accepted, and that could add value to both the parts, instead of being imposed only by the organization, so running the risk of a further loss of the personal power by the worker [31, ROUSSEAU, D.M., 1996].

Looking at the future, it is no more possible to think, if not in rare cases, of a permanent contract and of the idea of one only working career as a main model. The companies are today oriented to be reorganized, joined, rationalized, delocalized and renewed thanks to any form of technological modernization, contributing to make the work more and more multifaceted. So, also the psychological

contract between an employee and an employer is destined to be redefined. Researchers show that these changes are influencing negatively the motivation and the satisfaction of the workers, and produce an increase of the stress due to the continuous menaces to be dismissed. This last aspect has an important influence about how a worker behaves, included his trust in the organization [32, HENDRY, C., JENKINS, R., 1997]. The staff reshaping is considered by the workers a strong violation of the psychological contract [33, MUCHINSKY, P.M., 2003]. These negative situation has discouraging consequences not only on the individuals interested by this phenomenon, but also on the rest of the workers.

What now the enterprises are communicating to the workers is that they will employ people only until when their capacities and talents are necessary and give an added value to the enterprise. The managers have destroyed the previous psychological contract, but they have not specified terms and conditions of the new one. In this way, they have begun a revolution concerning the manifestation of a new work relationship. The traditional relationship, based on a sharing of values, tasks, loyalty, engagement and *vision*, has now disappeared. The social contract between employee and employer, where the enterprises could ensure an employment and address the careers of *loyal troops* has gone to an end forever [34, HERRIOT, P., PEMBERTON, C., 1995].

The change of the focus of the psychological contract depends on some measure by the level of the work: it will be less evident for people working with a permanent contract, as the managers, but not for temporary or definite contracts [35, HANDY, C., 1989]. So, three different forms of psychological contracts have been proposed, which show specific differences in the nature of this form of contract: a *life-style contract* for part-time and interim workers; an *autonomy contract* for contract workers; a *development contract* for permanent workers [36, HERRIOT, P., PEMBERTON, C., 1995]. Also voluntary workers show a new dimension of the work relationship and of the equivalent psychological contract. Even if not paid, they also form a psychological contract with their organizations, but their expectations are not so definite as the ones of remunerated workers [37, FARMER, S.M., FEDOR, D.B., 1999].

Guest and Conway say that is possible to specify a change in the 'promises' that the organizations make to their employees. They are referred more to the conscientiousness and the involvement in the work, but less to the stimulating aspects of work and career [38, GUEST, D.E., CONWAY, N., 2001]. James and Scott specify the same: involvement is better than passivity, powering rather than benefits, adaptation to values but not compliance, development of a general competence but not specialization, competence relocation but not precise functions [39, JAFFE, D. T., SCOTT, C.D., 1997]. They also show a passage from the management to the leadership/coaching, stressing the point on the team inter-functional work, which is so preferred to the functional autonomy [39, JAFFE, D. T., SCOTT, C.D., 1997]. The flattening of the organizations also implies a criticism of the institutional career paths, which nowadays are become protean and with no precise bounds [39, JAFFE, D. T., SCOTT, C.D., 1997].

In the present working contest, the psychological contract has two critical functions: 1) it helps the employers to foresee the contributions given by the employees; 2) it helps the employees to understand which rewards or recognitions they can expect as a result of their contributions. Besides, it forms a useful system to describe how a person can interpret the work relationship in a given moment, giving information how that relationship can be managed, above all in this time, when the work relationships more and more indicate the independence of an individual and not his co-dependence [40, GUEST, D.E., CONWAY, N., 2001].

A critical environmental factor in the negotiation of the new work relationship and the new psychological contract is the trust. Violations of the psychological contract erase this basic element, causing rage and increasing the level of control. In a place where cynicism is prevailing, trust will be totally absent, and even strengthening when there have been many violations of the psychological contract [41, ANDERSSON, L.M., 1996]. Andersson says that cynicism is often common in a job site as the result of changes of the organization as internal rationalizations and reorganizations [41, ANDERSSON, L.M., 1996]. In the organizations where the decisions concerning the employees are taken unilaterally and with no dialogue, the elimination of the cynicism, the restoration of the trust

and the reactivation of the psychological contracts can be a very difficult target [42, JOHNSON, J.L., O'LEARY-KELLY, A.M., 2003].

When the individuals feel to be not considered value members of the organization, but only means to get the success of the enterprise, discontent and a motivation decrease are possible. Anyway, violations of the psychological contract very often have to do with transactional aspects (formation, benefits, promotions) more than simple relational needs [43, ARNOLD, J., 1996]. Anyway, the perception of an imbalance in the reciprocity of the contributions, constitutes a cause of conflicts for the psychological contract.

1.3 Violations of the psychological contract

The break or violation of the psychological contract has consequences both on the single behavior and on the organizational results. The precondition is that satisfying a psychological contract produces personal positive behaviors, linked to as many positive results for the organization too. So, the organization would have a strong interest to give value to the potential content of the psychological contracts of the employees, both to know and manage the expectations typical of these contracts. What an individual considers a break or interruption could be considered by someone else in the same condition as a violation of the contract. The first is less serious, and implies a cognitive evaluation of the event, while the second is more serious, and produces behaviors and emotional answers that go over the mere cognitive evaluation. So, the two individuals will have different behaviors when facing the same event, what underlines the *idiosyncratic nature* of the psychological contract [44, FREESE, C., SCHALK, R., 1996].

For instance, for an individual a missed promotion in a given time of his life could be considered not actually harmful for the work relationship, because it could be given in a next future, so the individual does not undertake particular actions against that decision. In other cases, another individual, in the same situation, could think to have received a real bad violation of the psychological contract. All this could induce him to *revenge himself* of the organization and its interests. It is very frequent that facts which are first considered only interruptions of the psychological contract, are hereafter considered, in a different contest, as bad violations. The understanding of the contents of the contract, and its relationship towards other organizational structures, must be considered fundamental to manage any violation [45, ROBINSON, S.L., MORRISON, E.W., 2000].

Guest proposed a categorization of the results of the satisfaction and the missed gratification of the psychological contract, making a difference between *aptitudinal consequences* (including reliability, work satisfaction, balance life/work, work safety, motivation, stress) and *behavior consequences* (including an intention to remain or leaving, work performance, behavior of organization citizenship) [46, GUEST, D.E., 2004]. Employer's violations of the psychological contract will cause a strong reduction of the employee's duties which they *feel* to fulfill [47, ROBINSON, S.L., 1994]. We can here speak of a feeling of resentment, when describing what they feel after having born an injustice following the results of an individual which has not found a coincidence with a *proper cognition*. The last one is an implicit contract including what a person can expect to receive as a consequence of his behavior of his performance [48, ORGAN, D.W., 1990]. Wearing away or denying an expected benefit to which an individual thinks to have a right, to brings to the perception of a violation or breaking of the psychological contract, mining the individual's wealth feeling. From a behavioral point of view all this will produce different solutions: a break of the relationship or actions which have as their target a compensation of the violation, or the silence, which always means a form of loyalty and the will to continue the relationship, or destructive behaviors [49, ROUSSEAU, D.M., 1995].

The perception of a break or of a violation of the contract, depends on the interpretation of the importance of the event, but it is also influenced by specific differences as affectivity, a sense of equity and conscientiousness [50, TURNLEY, W.H., FELDMAN, D.C., 1999]. At the beginning, the individual will judge the event in order to understand if the organization has refused the obligation or if there is an incongruence in his expectations. The evaluation of the importance of an event can increase his monitoring of the tangible results of the contract. If the importance of the promises not recognized is part of what the individual is ready to accept, he will perceive a break of the contract; but if the break goes on any reasonable negative expectation, it will be prevalent a feeling of violation, and this will

mean that the individual will behave as follows: He could leave the organization, what he could actually do; he could complain in order to get a public recognition of the violation; he could also decide, considering more details, that the new situation is not a menace for him, remaining loyal and continuing his relationship, but at the same time reducing his involvement. The last probability could be an effort to know the details of the violation, in order to revenge of the organization, and beginning to act in a harmful way [51, MORRISON, E.W., ROBINSON, S.L., 1997]. Despite all studies have analyzed till today cases of not recognition of the psychological contract, some researchers have shown a situation in which the expectations have been gratified in an exceeding way, also showing that in such cases many problems could arise.

Even a hyper-gratification of the psychological contract can be perceived by the individuals as a break or a violation of the contract. For instance, while a given autonomy in the work can be considered one of the expectations of the contract, too much autonomy could be harmful, and the individual, feeling himself abandoned, could have a bad stress able to increase the perception that the contract is being broken [52, TURNLEY, W.H., FELDMAN, D.C., 1999]. Of course, an under gratification must usually be considered worse than a hyper-gratification. A further reaction to the break or violation of the psychological contract is the silence of the employees. Their inactivity and a missed manifestation of reactions must not be considered an implicit agreement of the situation, and in this case the loyalty towards the organization will be spoiled [53, PINDER, C.C., HARLOS, K.P., 2001]. A proactive management of the psychological contract is to be considered important in such a situation. Making mistakes in the management of the violations of the contract, both for its content and the process, can cause many negative consequences for the organization, jeopardizing the fulfillment of the targets caused by a refusal of their engagement and dedication to work, the postponing of the commitments, the slowing of the work, anxiety and discord [54, BROOKS, I., HARFIELD, T., 2000].

1.4 Results of the dismissal on the psychological contract

Dismissals and severe reductions of employees in an organization usually are considered causes of many organization problems. One of the results coming out from the studies on this sector, is the reaction of the workers who remain in the organization. This phenomenon, also known as *survivor's syndrome*, is considered an important factor regarding the failure of the enterprise targets after the downsizing of the employees [55, APPELBAUM, S.H., 1999]. Negative reactions can imply rage, depression, fear, guilt, refusal of risk, distrust, vulnerability, impotence, loss of motivation [56, NIXON, R.D., HITT, M.A. et al., 2004]. Other phenomena can be an opposition to changes, unwillingness to sharing information and team work, besides further emotional reactions that rise the negativity of the employees, influencing negatively the moral sense of the person, in whom takes place the idea that the dismissals are a betrayal [57, STAVROU, E. et al., 2007]. Medical studies show an increasing of endorsed ills and a risk of death for the workers who remain in the firm after a staff reduction [58, VAHTERA, J. et al., 1997].

Anyway, the negative effects are strongly connected to a perception of fracture and violation of the psychological contract towards the workers on the whole. A feeling of distrust against managers and bosses rapidly spreads, as they are considered guilty for having made nothing to 'save' their colleagues. According to some researchers, this should be a defense mechanism, through an external transfer of the responsibility for what has happened, and aimed to face their own guilt feeling as survivors [59, MANSON, B.J., 2000]. So, in order to minimize such phenomena, it is fundamental the accuracy by which the organization reduces the employees, and above all the management of the negotiation of the new psychological contract, and the building of a new work environment, capable to balance the distrust, with initiatives aimed to favor a reciprocal investment, saving the congruence between the targets of the 'survivors' and the ones of the organization. Of course, a dismissing is considered the worst menace when managing the employees. If on one side the *survivors* feel guilty and 'different' to have been saved, on the other side fear to be the next ones on the black list. Severe interventions with cuts of the personnel, if not progressive in time, will arise the feeling of menace, with managers' reactions aimed to centralize their control and with an important reduction of the involvement in the choices of the enterprise, together with a strong attention on formal procedures and rules [60, BURKE, R. LEITRER, M.P., 2000].

If the reshaping of the employees is perceived as limited and temporary, also the rigidity of the

reactions will be limited; if the contrary, if the diminishing of the human resources should be greater, the rigidity becomes greater too, as a reaction to an increase of the perception of the insecurity and personal menace. The increase of the stress will produce a greater conflict and irresponsibility and a lesser organizational involvement [61, LEWIN, J.E., 2001]. The feeling to have lost the control of the situation, and the insecurity about one's own work future, will increase the individuals' stress. The increasing of the work (more daily hours of work) and the diminishing of holidays days, can strengthen this reaction, sometimes causing burnout and inefficiency. These reactions are more evident when the dismissing is unexpected and concentrated in short period of time, with little communication by the organization, and without any participation of the workers [62, MONE, M., 1999]. Anyway some studies show the cases of individuals who, after the dismissing, increased their efforts and productivity: but these are to be considered not durable effects but a mere reaction caused by fear [63, ARMSTRONG-STRASSEN, M., 2006]. The hidden costs of the organization to dismiss their employees – when considered a form of strategic rationalization – are often underestimate. In fact, they produce more problems than solutions, and only rarely they get the financial targets that the organization expects, as the consequences on the employees affect the general productivity [64, CARBERY, R., GARAVAN, T.N., 2005]. One of these consequences is the perception of an increase of the work. Readjusting the organization can signify that the employees from now on will perform tasks never performed before, and for which they are not ready, both technically and for the information they do not have.

So, there will be instability in the labor force, above all if a plan capable to drive the employees in the passage to the new structure is missing. New responsibilities concerning tasks carried out by colleagues dismissed, will produce burnout phenomena, frustration, a downfall of the employees' involvement in the organization and of their engagement in favor of the enterprise [64, CARBERY, R., GARAVAN, T.N., 2005]. Also a block of employments or early retirements can induce other workers to leave or change the enterprise, and they will be above all the most ambitious and productive workers. The results will be an escape of the best resources, and rapidly also its 'memory' will be cancelled, and only a group of discontented workers will stay, overcharged by work and with a not proper education for their tasks. Absenteeism and envy for the ones who have succeeded in finding a better employment or a good retirement will increase [65, KINNIE, N. et al., 2000].

A reduction of the employees changes both social relationships and work conditions. The first consequence of the increasing of the internal competition (basically provoked by the fear of uncertainty and by the wish to 'save' oneself), will produce conflicts and resentment among colleagues, caused by presumed racial or geographical preferences [66, KOEBER, C., 2002]. The perception of the justice of the organization depends mostly by the executive modes of the internal downsizing plan of the employees. If they perceive the layoff as unfair and incorrect, they will keep on projecting these judgments on all the contest of the following work, feeding uncertainty and distrust towards the organization.

The judgments of people who were considered important before the layoff, will influence the perceptions of other workers about the justice and the correctness of the organization [67, BROCKNER, J., WIESENFELD, B. et al., 1997]. In general, we can distinguish two types of reaction, according to the mode how the 'victims' have been selected, and later treated by the management: a *sympathetic reaction* and a *non sympathetic reaction* [68, THORNHILL, A.S., MARK, N.K., 1998]. The first one expresses an identification with the situation of the colleagues unfairly stricken by the layoff, and causes negative emotions and reactive behaviors against the organization. The force of the reactions is connected to the previous inter-connection with the 'victims', and by the presence of behaviors, values and experiences shared by the workers. Also being already dismissed favors a strong sharing of the situation of the colleagues.

On the contrary, a non sympathetic reaction expresses a psychological estrangement from the situation: what happened was necessary and right; the people involved have been selected in a right mode, and *they have deserved* in a way or another what happened to them. In order to reduce their guilt towards the colleagues dismissed, some employees increase their productivity and engagement, but it is a short range reaction, a negation behavior or rather a reaction caused by fear and insecurity about their work future. Some studies underline that the reaction of indifference is more frequent in

the highest levels of the chain of command [69, CAMERON, K.S., 1994].

On the whole, the redrafting of the employees, rather than renew the system, as desired, creates on the contrary a series of negative consequences which end with the dissatisfaction and the inefficiency of the workers, and with low quality services, in turn influencing negatively the judgment of the customers. The perception of a missed acknowledgment of the procedural justice in the enterprise, lows down above all the engagement and enthusiasm of the medium management, who is in charge for executive tasks and for the strategic management of the human resources. The new behavior will cause a reduction of the initiative and the liveliness of the workers, who stick rigidly to a *status quo* position, losing any productive enthusiasm and any chance of a competitive re-launch in a next future [70, PARKER, S.K. et al., 1997].

1.5 The management of the new psychological contract

The organizations cannot offer anymore a work certainty, but at the same time do not want to give off the old loyalty and dedication of their employees, which will be promoted through alternative strategies, above all to motivate their most intelligent employees after the reduction of personnel. This will need a continuous sequence of negotiations of the psychological contract that individuals and organizations stipulate during the time of work [71, HERRIOT, P., 1992]. For many firms, all this needs a change of their management of the organization: from the traditional form of control to the significance and weight given to the participation, to the team work and to the individual involvement.

It is today evident that a well identified role, symmetric communication, decentralization and a direct participation about the decisions develop involvement and engagement of the employees [72, LAWLER, E.E., MOHRMAN, S.A., 1989]. The idea of the employee's total involvement shows that the management should grant to the workers both sharing of the risks and rewards [72, LAWLER, E.E., MOHRMAN, S.A., 1989]. The management should make an effort to define tasks and structures capable to allow the individuals to feel satisfied, and express and use their capacities in order to employ their decision power. Of course, the challenges able to favor a self development are favored by a high involvement and identification with the organization. So, it is very important that the new employees could begin their socialization inside the organization through work tasks able to encourage their development. In order to obtain efficiency and effectiveness, the organization needs to complete but not to impose its values and tasks against the workers', so that they could reasonably think that if the organization develops, they will have a personal developing too. So, the organizations must develop a new involvement thanks to the creation of values coming from the individuals and from the groups, and that are not impersonally handed down from above [73, ARMSTRONG, M.A., 1991]. Only the recognition of intrinsic motivating factors will permit the employees to be more dynamic, proactive and competitive.

The new psychological contract is based on the hypothesis that the workers will not be automatically faithful to their firm, but, being professionals, they will oriented to a new type of loyalty, focused not on the firm but on their own competences. This means that the individuals will be above all careful to their personal development and to their competences, which make them more mobile from an enterprise to another [74, KANTER, R.M., 1994]. In order to attract and retain the most qualified employees, the enterprises can no more entrust to old or traditional methods. Instead of career paths or the certainty of their work, new types of incentives will be used: from the career, the status and the promotion to the personal reputation, to the team work and to demanding tasks. The enterprises must find the way to make the work involving and stimulating, so that it could become a reason to be loyal to the firm, so becoming a different type of certainty: *the employability certainty*. It is in fact the promise that the employee's abilities will be promoted, and that it will be easier for him to get different tasks. According to Kanter, above all nowadays, in a time of rapid and continuous changes, this will be the best promise that an employer could make to his staff [74, KANTER, R.M., 1994].

Many studies show that the workers' values and expectations are rapidly changing. They more and more want to be informed about what happens in the organization; they want to understand why the managers have decided in a certain way; they want to contribute with their ideas and take part to the decisional process; they want to be autonomous and have important work experiences; they want to be given value and have a recognition as individuals because of the contribution they give to the success of the organization [75, O'REILLY, B., 1994]. Satisfying these expectations, needs to be really

oriented to a team work, to the empowerment and to the decentralization, besides an important engagement for an honest and clear sharing of the information concerning the enterprise.

It can be very difficult to be honest for what concerns the uncertainty of the work, but many organizations have discovered that when they openly share with all the employees their strategic plans, intentions and results, the engagement towards the organization and the working performances increase, even if the news is 'bad'. So the building of a real open culture probably is one of the most important tasks of the leadership of the next future [75, O'REILLY, B., 1994]. One of the most significant matters of the new psychological contract, is how to place the eldest clerks when the enterprises ask continuously their employees to be more flexible to the changes, in a time when certainty of the work and promoting chances are reducing. An obvious solution seems to offer an updating to the ones who will be requested to change their role in the organization, or to offer an outplacement to the dismissing employees or to the ones who decide to leave the organization. Anyway, not all will be updated or employed again.

A main reason of these limits is constituted by the perceptions that the individuals have of themselves. The problem is the capacity to change their mentality: they must not only think of their development or their career, but they should develop a wide range of competences which could give more value to their profession [76, LESTER, T., 1994]. The main target is the increasing of flexibility, the competences and the employability of the workers. In the organization it should be necessary to increase steadily a system able to settle and discuss the workers' expectations about the work they make, starting already from the first working day, and then continuing with recurring evaluations in order to understand the validity of the psychological contract, and renewing it when necessary [77, HILTROP, J.M., 1995]. As the starting phase of the employment is particularly important for building up a future employee's background, it will be absolutely necessary to pay close attention to how the new employees enter the organization.

A greater part of the new employees tends to work with over-dimensioned expectations [78, LOUIS, M.R., 1980]. It should be better to give a realistic preview of their work, in order to show both enticing and not enticing aspects of an organization, rather than to approach by traditional means, that try to underline the positive aspects of the organization and minimize the realistic ones. Beginning a work, disappointed expectations mean a lack of engagement and an increase of the turnover during the first six months. In a situation where everyone is asked to make their duties as better as they can, to be fast and efficient, the satisfaction system should recognize the individual's contribution, rather than his status.

Besides, as the inter-functional projects are usually temporary and less hierarchical, also the system of rewards should more dynamical and flexible, thanks to recognitions and remunerations as bonuses, benefits and so on. These should encourage the employees to better their work and study key expertise through their participation to inter-functional teams. For this reason, the individuals shall be trained by counseling and coaching, in order to better carry out their leadership, facilitating the relationships between different functions and jobs in a working team [79, PFEFFER, J., 1994]. The transition of an organization towards a new psychological contract, implies the necessity to strengthen above all the planning of the human resources, and to renew on the whole the working relationship, paying specific attention both to the redeployment and when the worker will leave the work, in order to better understand and manage the building and mediation dynamics of the expectations and the needs of the workers during the working cycle [80, BURACK, E.H., MATHYS, N.J. 1987].

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