




# Psychological contract inducements and expectations conveyed to potential employees on organisations' websites



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**Orientation:** The employer–employee relationship is becoming increasingly strained, evidenced by the increase in cases referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration. These disputes are presumed to be a consequence of breach of the psychological contract of undelivered expectations or obligations. There seems to be a need to improve the management of employer–employee relationships.

**Research purpose:** The purpose of this investigation was to identify inducements and obligations made known by organisations on their websites.

**Motivation for the study:** Clarity of inducements and expectations may provide a foundation to proactively improve the employer–employee relationship.

**Research approach/design and method:** A quantitative content analysis was identified inducements and expectations on the websites of the 2015 Business Times Top 100 organisations. As two of the companies had merged with existing companies, a total of 98 companies were analysed. A codebook on content associated with the psychological contract generated quantitative data from a qualitative analysis.

**Main findings:** Comparisons between different industries (manufacturing, wholesale and financial services) yielded significant differences between organisational policies and career development inducements. Comparisons revealed that organisations with a career section convey more inducements and expectations than organisations without a career section.

**Practical/managerial implications:** Organisations are offered a means to identify inducements and expectations that are publicly conveyed through their websites and inform the psychological contract.

**Contribution/value-add:** The findings contribute to existing theory of the psychological contract. More insight is gained into the expression of inducements and expectations and the potential association with employees' psychological contract.

**Keywords:** employer obligations; employee obligations; psychological contract breach; psychological contract violation; Qiqqa; Business Times Top 100 organisations.

## Introduction

Employer–employee relations in South Africa are becoming increasingly strained as evidenced by the increasing average number of cases referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA, 2015, 2016). When conciliation and mediation fail, a dispute can occur which may be damaging or terminate the employer–employee relationship (Bendix, 2001). Such a situation implies a breach of the psychological contract between employer and employee.

The employer–employee relationship is built on both a formal contract of employment and an implied contract, referred to as the psychological contract (Montes & Irving, 2008). Employers should not underestimate the transactional promises made to employees, as the consequences could be intense and long-term (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018). The formation of the psychological contract does not always take place explicitly. Inducements and expectations are often created through indirect means (Suazo, Martínez, & Sandoval, 2009). For instance, websites are a public source of information which may convey information on inducements and expectations offered by the employer. From a job seeker's perspective, this information may already form part of the basis upon which the future psychological contract may be built (Guest, 2004). These sources of

information act as signal messages that determine employer attractiveness to job seekers (Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011). Information conveyed may implicitly initiate the foundational formation of the employer–employee psychological contract.

The psychological contract between employer and employee only becomes binding at the point that employment is official through a formal contract of employment (Suazo et al., 2009). At this point, inducements are promised by the employer in exchange for promised obligations to be delivered (Conway & Briner, 2005; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995). A promise refers to a concrete commitment to delivering an action, expressed either verbally or in writing (Conway & Briner, 2005). This differs from the term expectation, which implies the possibility that something will transpire if causal criteria are met (Conway & Briner, 2005). For job seekers, organisations may convey specific inducements that may, in turn, create anticipatory expectations associated with employment (Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011).

A pro-active solution is required in attempting to reduce or avoid a breach of the psychological contract. Knowledge of the psychological contract can be beneficial towards understanding the employer–employee relationship (Clinton & Guest, 2014; Guest, 2004; Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011). Breach of the psychological contract leads to increased turnover intention (Agarwal & Gupta, 2018; Guest, 2004; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), counter-productive work behaviour towards the organisation and supervisors (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018) and other interpersonal and organisational deviant behaviours (Suazo & Stone-Romero, 2011; Zribi & Souai, 2013), an increase in employee unethical behaviour (Ning & Zhaoyi, 2017) and a decrease in trust (Clinton & Guest, 2014; Montes & Irving, 2008), perceived organisational justice and leader member exchange (Tziner, Felea, & Vasiliu, 2017). An experience of psychological contract breach tends to lead to cynicism and a reduced self-esteem in the employee (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018). This has a snowball effect of being more likely to identify future psychological contract breaches. The risk is that the employee regards the organisation as the source of violation and correspondingly may target the organisation with negative behaviours (Deng, Coyle-Shapiro, & Yang, 2017). More detail is needed on the efficient utilisation of the psychological contract in building effective and respectful employee relationships (Conway & Briner, 2005), and support organisational well-being (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2016).

An intact psychological contract has various benefits (Guest, 2004). Benefits include elevated employee loyalty (Katou & Budwar, 2012), adjustment (Chen & Chiu, 2009), employee commitment with lower turnover intention (Clinton & Guest, 2014) and exhibiting less negative attitudes and behaviours (Choi & Lee, 2014; Zribi & Souai, 2013). An intact psychological contract is also associated with a reduction in other undesirable employee behaviours such as corruption (Kingshott & Dincer, 2008).

The number of cases referred to the CCMA is increasing annually: 179 528 (2015/2016), 188 449 (2016/2017) and 186 902 (2017/2018) (CCMA, 2017, 2018). This may imply that the employer–employee relationship is becoming progressively more strained. This is a problem common across all sectors, including local authorities, private sector, state-owned enterprises and constitutional entities (CCMA, 2016).

There is utility in using concepts such as inducements and expectations, to investigate the components that form the psychological contract (Clinton & Guest, 2014). Previous research indicates how gaps exist where expectations promised at the start of employment are not delivered (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). While most literature focuses on the effects of psychological contract breach, a proactive approach may be beneficial. Such preventative measures may harmonise employee–employer relations.

There are various factors that can lead to psychological contract breach and violation; however, not all of these factors may be obvious to identify. Incongruence refers to a scenario where one party views psychological contract promises as undelivered, while the other party views these promises as delivered (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The reasons for incongruence may be because of various factors ranging from information contained in individual schemas (Rousseau, 2001), the effects of socialisation (Conway & Briner, 2005) and communication (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Effective communication between parties on what promises were made and when or how these are delivered could potentially decrease the occurrence of incongruence (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Investigating the formation and content of this relationship from the pre-employment phase may hold benefits for the long-term maintenance or continuance of this contract.

There could be various benefits in identifying the inducements offered by employers on their websites and the expectation of obligations this creates. This information may be beneficial for both job seekers and current employees. Knowledge in this regard may prove benefit to the entire employee life cycle from recruitment to termination. From a job seeker's perspective, by identifying possible inducements and expectations job seekers identify and prefer, employers could thereby benefit in attracting the desired candidates. For existing employees, this knowledge may help to retain and harmonise employer–employee relations.

The research question in this article is, 'what inducements and expectations do different employers convey to potential employees through their websites?'

### Research purpose and objectives

The purpose of this research was to explore which inducements and obligations are published by organisations on their websites. Organisation websites convey inducements and

expectations to various parties, both internal and external to the organisation. Exploring these organisation websites may provide insight into the role these inducements and expectations play in developing the employer–employee relationship. Three objectives guided the study. The first objective focused on the inducements and expectations organisations convey to potential employees through their websites. The second objective focused on significant differences in inducements and expectations conveyed between different industries. The third objective focused on organisations' websites with and without dedicated career section pages.

## Literature review

The psychological contract is built on notions contained within the social exchange theory (Cook, Cheshire, Rice, & Nakagawa, 2013; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1958; Krause & Moore, 2017) and the equity theory (Adams, 1963; Chapman, 2001). From these theories, an exchange between parties of goods and services coincides with certain associated costs to each party (Emerson, 1976). These costs are governed by the areas of mutuality (Homans, 1958) where deliverables or exchanges made between parties are compared to external comparisons (Adams, 1963) and notions of fairness (Cook et al., 2013). The psychological contract's social exchange consists of a transactional economic currency, relational socio-emotional and covenantal ideological exchange (Krause & Moore, 2017). Exchanges between employer and employee refer to the terms inducement and expectation. Inducements are defined as that what is offered by one party in exchange for expected contributions made by the other party wishing to obtain these contributions (Hom et al., 2009).

Inducements, that is, what organisations offer to employees, can be either implicitly or explicitly conveyed (Montes & Irving, 2008). Inducements can be classified into two forms: intrinsic inducement and extrinsic inducements (Nikolaou, Tomprou, & Vakola, 2007). Extrinsic inducements are benefits that are objectively observable, such as benefits, pay, promotion, job security and a safe working environment (Lee, Liu, Rousseau, Hui, & Chen, 2011; Lub, Blomme, & Bal, 2011; Nikolaou et al., 2007). Intrinsic inducements, on the contrary, refer to those elements implied or nested within the elements of the job offered (Kickul & Lester, 2001). Intrinsic inducements include challenging and meaningful work, impact of work and feelings of achievement, to name but a few (Lee et al., 2011).

Inducements can also be classified according to a transactional, relational or balanced nature (Montes & Irving, 2008; Rousseau, 2000). Transactional inducements are similar to extrinsic inducements in that they are typically short-term focussed and economical in nature (Rousseau, 2000). Relational inducements are similar to intrinsic inducements (Rousseau, 2000) as they impact feelings and notions of trust associated with an implied relationship

(Montes & Irving, 2008). Balanced inducements, in turn, refer to rewards that contain both an intrinsic and an extrinsic element (Rousseau, 2000).

Inducements, in turn, are classified into generic and organisation specific (Clinton & Guest, 2014). Generic inducements are typically similar across different organisations, while organisation-specific inducements are context-bound and specific to an organisation (Conway & Briner, 2005).

Expectations, in the context of this study, refer to what organisations typically expect of employees, but not necessarily agreed upon to form an employee obligation towards the organisation. Expectations associated with the exchanges made between parties within the employer–employee relationship form the core of the psychological contract (Conway & Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1989). A distinction is made between traditional and contemporary conceptualisations of the psychological contract. A traditional psychological contract is classified as the unspoken agreement regarding what is exchanged between parties (Conway & Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1989). Contemporary perspectives of the psychological contract add the perceptions of promises made regarding the delivery of these exchanges (Guest, 2004; Rousseau, 1989).

Different studies have led to various conceptualisations in measures of the content of the psychological contract content advanced in the literature. These include the Psychological Contract Inventory (Rousseau, 2000), the psychological contract content dimensions (De Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2003) and the Tilburg Psychological Contract Questionnaire (Freese, 2007; Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2008).

The content of the psychological contract is vast, and only certain contents, promised by employers and employees, are applicable to certain contexts. Table 1 provides a summary of employer promises and expectations (i.e. employee promises) associated with the psychological contract.

These inducements and expectations for the elements upon which the psychological contract is built are informed by various sources (Conway & Briner, 2005). The information that determines and informs the content of the psychological contract comes from various pre- and post-entry sources (Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011). Sources include organisational documents and policies (Suazo et al., 2009), agents of the organisation (Rousseau, 1995) and interactions with friends and family (Conway & Briner, 2005). All these information sources seek to report and shape the content contained within the psychological contract. Such information is used by job seekers to inform and amend their schemas held about specific employers (Rousseau, 2001).

There are consequences if organisations do not honour their promises made during the original exchange process. Breach is defined as the awareness that an organisation has failed to deliver on obligations contained within the psychological contract (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Breach is experienced

**TABLE 1:** Summary of content informing the psychological contract.

Component	Examples
<b>Employer inducements</b>	
Job content	Varied work Limited disturbances Own work fashion Responsibility Right to supervise Right of own opinion Departmental influence
Rewards	Flexibility Fair salary Job security Additional rewards Allowances Recognition
Management policy	Procedural fairness Fair discipline Communication structures Information
Social aspects	Co-employee relationships Supporting social activities Colleague assistance Good working atmosphere Social network
Career development	Reaching true potential Stimulating work Room for own initiatives Suitable work Ability to achieve progress Promotion abilities Skills development Horizontal job mobility Training opportunities Fair work pressure
Organisational support	Quality products Customer satisfaction Feedback Righteous management Trust in management Efficient organisation Good working conditions Good HRM Fair work time Reimbursement of costs Respect for private life
<b>Employer expectations</b>	
Job performance	Good service Professional manner General honesty Skills development Satisfying performance Team player
Loyalty	Protect organisation image Confidentiality Not support competitors
Ethics	Honesty with leave Resignation notice Cost-effective
Extra-role behaviour	Respect the company Innovation Assist others Social participation

Table 1 continues →

**TABLE 1 (Continues...):** Summary of content informing the psychological contract.

Component	Examples
Flexibility	Accept transfers Do non-required tasks Work extra hours Geographical mobility Conformity

Source: Adapted from Linde, B. (2015). *The value of wellness in the workplace: A perspective of the employee-organisation relationship in the South African labour market*. London: Springer

as a perceived imbalance of the employment relationship because of failure to commitments by the employer (Payne, Culbertson, Lopez, Boswell, & Barger, 2015). Although employees do engage in coping and remediation actions (Payne et al., 2015) and enact in coping strategies (Bankins, 2015) in the case of breach, a decrease in the perceived employee obligations is experienced (Payne et al., 2015). Negative consequences include a significant negative relationship with leader-member exchange and organisational justice (Tziner et al., 2017), employees' prohibitive voice (Guo, 2017), significant positive relationship with unethical behaviour (Ning & Zhaoyi, 2017) and counterproductive work behaviour (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018). Breach is a precursor to violation (Suazo & Stone-Romero, 2011). Violation refers to the emotional perceptions and actions associated with a psychological contract breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Psychological contract violation takes place when the employee experiences deprivation of highly invested work objectives (Guerrero & Naulleau, 2016). Such experience of violation and deprivation leads to grief and reduced energy.

Although job seekers only become employees when formally employed (Suazo et al., 2009), the input to the psychological contract develops prior to engagement as part of a schema (Rousseau, 2001). When employed, employees may engage in monitoring where pre-entry information, such as those contained in the schema, is compared to post-entry experiences (Tomprou & Nikolaou, 2011). This leads to evaluations related to psychological contract fulfilment (Lee et al., 2011). When evaluations have an unsatisfactory outcome, it may lead to experiences of breach or violation.

Using concepts such as inducements and expectations may be useful to investigate the components that form the psychological contract (Clinton & Guest, 2014). Previous research indicates how over time inconsistencies exist, where expectations promised made at the start of employment are not delivered and thus lead to violation and breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). While most literature focuses on the effects of breach, a proactive approach may be beneficial to try to harmonise employee-employer relations.

There are various factors that can lead to violation and breach; however, not all of these factors may be obvious to identify. Incongruence refers to a situation where one party to the psychological contract views promises made as not delivered, while the other party views these promises as having been delivered (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). The reasons for incongruence may be because of

various factors ranging from information contained in individual schemas (Rousseau, 2001), the effects of socialisation (Conway & Briner, 2005) and communication (Morrison & Robinson, 1997).

As an example, effective communication between parties on what promises were made and when these will be delivered could potentially lead to a decrease in the occurrence of incongruence (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Investigating the formation and content of this relationship from the pre-employment phase may hold benefits for the long-term maintenance or continuance of this contract.

There could be numerous benefits in identifying the inducements offered by employers on their websites and the expectation of obligations this creates. This information may be beneficial for both job seekers and current employees. Knowledge in this regard may prove beneficial to the entire employee life cycle from recruitment to termination. From a job seeker's perspective, by identifying possible inducements and expectations job seekers identify and prefer, employers could thereby benefit in attracting the desired candidates. For existing employees, this knowledge may help to retain and harmonise employer–employee relations.

The literature review shows little to no research results that indicate the moderating effect of organisational size and industry on the psychological contract. A longitudinal study conducted by Raeder, Wittekind, Inauen and Grote (2009) was identified to test how promises made are perceived as being delivered over time. Results obtained appear to indicate that significant differences exist between different organisations on employer inducements and employee expectations (Raeder et al., 2009). Results from this study are, however, limited because the sample used is specific to a Swedish labour environment. Furthermore, no explicit information was defined for the sample with regard to industry, job type or organisational size.

## Method

In this section, attention is paid to the research approach, the research strategy as well as the design and procedure employed.

### Research approach

A pragmatist paradigm was adopted because the purpose of the research design was to answer the relevant research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), namely, what inducements and expectations do different employers convey to potential employees through their websites? A content analysis approach, a form of an unobtrusive research approach, was deemed most suitable for this research (Babbie, 2007). Unobtrusive research refers to studying phenomena without causing an impact upon the area of inquiry (Babbie, 2007). Websites act as a source of information about an employer (Lin, 2010; Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010). This information may then be used to inform the schema a

job seeker holds towards an employer (Rousseau, 2001). Websites are public records, and thus do not provide a formal employer–employee contract to evaluate.

### Research design

Content analysis, as an obvious application in the analysis of business communication (Rose, Spinks, & Canhoto, 2015), was used to do a quantitative analysis of the data. Content analysis can effectively be used in either a quantitative or a qualitative research design (Babbie, 2007; Rose et al., 2015). Content analysis is defined as a research approach used to analyse and extrapolate latent and manifest substantive content and meanings from texts (Rose et al., 2015) as sources of information against a specific background (Krippendorff, 2013). It involves the study of records of communications, documents, paintings websites and other records (Babbie, 2007).

### Sample

To ensure that the research questions could be answered successfully, a relevance (also known as purposive) sampling procedure (Krippendorff, 2013) was used. Organisations ranked in the 2015 Business Times Top 100 organisations were selected as the sample. These organisations were ranked based on financial performance and growth over a 5-year period (01 September 2010 – 31 August 2015) (Business Times, 2015). Compound Annual Growth Rate, expressed as a percentage indicating year-on-year growth of share value if an investment of R10 000 was made at the start of the 5-year period, was used to select the 100 organisations (Business Times, 2015). All these organisations are listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (2014). Of the 100 organisations, only 98 could be analysed, as two were acquired in 2016 by other organisations. These two companies were therefore excluded from the analysis. Most organisations were from the Financial Intermediation Insurance and Real Estate and Business Services industry ( $n = 42, 42.9\%$ ) (for a summary of the represented industries, see Table 2). A number of 41 organisations (41.8%), compared to the majority of organisations ( $n = 57, 58.2\%$ ), did not have a dedicated career section on their websites.

### Data collection

A codebook was developed to identify inducements and expectations conveyed on organisations' websites. Codes were

**TABLE 2:** Industries represented by the organisations in the study.

Industry	Frequency	%
Agriculture, hunting and related services	2	2.0
Mining and quarrying	1	1.0
Manufacturing	23	23.5
Wholesale and retail trade (wholesale)	16	16.3
Transport, storage and communication	6	6.1
Financial intermediation insurance, real estate and business services (finance')	42	42.9
Community, social and personal services	8	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100.0</b>

based on existing measures of the psychological contract content (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Freese et al., 2008; Rousseau, 2000, 2008; Schalk et al., 2010), and grouped according to the factor structures found by De Vos et al. (2003) and other psychological contract scholars (Freese et al., 2008; Rousseau, 2000; Vantilborgh et al., 2014).

Inducements, that what organisations use to attract potential employees, consisted of six groups and 80 codes in total. Selected examples of codes for the six groups were *work-life balance* (concern for employees, as well as offering flexible working hours), *organisational policies* (fair and equitable treatment of employees and feedback on performance), *career development* (opportunities for promotion and skills development), *job content* (a job in which employees can make decisions by themselves and also a job with responsibilities), *social atmosphere* (good atmosphere at work and good mutual co-operation between colleagues) and *financial rewards* (attractive salary and performance-related rewards). Website information was coded by assigning one to the presence of a code and zero to the absence of a code.

Expectations, in turn, that is, what organisations may expect employees to contribute, comprised 37 codes representing five groups. Selected examples of the codes for the groups were *ethical behaviour* (e.g. to protect confidential information about the organisation and the organisation's image), *employability* (e.g. to build skills to increase value to the organisation, and to take personal initiative to attend additional training courses), *flexibility* (e.g. to volunteer to do tasks that are strictly no part of the job if necessary, and to work extra hours to complete the job), *loyalty* (e.g. to not support competitors and to remain with the organisation for at least some years) and lastly *in- and extra-role behaviour* (e.g. to assist colleagues in their work and to share information with colleagues). Website information was coded similar to inducements.

## Research procedure

The content of the organisations' websites was converted to Portable Document Format and uploaded into Qiqqa, a reference management software package, which allows for text to be coded (Quantisile, 2017). Coding was performed using Qiqqa's annotation function to code instances of various inducement and expectations in the source documents. Quotations coded were reviewed by the second author to ensure consistency in coding, that is, reliability (Singh, 2007). The frequencies (count data) were then imported into SPSS Version 24 (IBM Corp., 2016).

## Statistical analysis

The occurrences of inducements and expectations were found not to be normally distributed based on inspection of the histograms and statistically significant Shapiro-Wilk and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. The Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney non-parametric tests were used to examine differences between various groups (Pallant, 2016) (industries

and organisations with and without a career section). Cohen's (1988) recommendations are used to interpret the effect sizes of the comparisons.

## Ethical considerations

Ethical principles were applied as prescribed by the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2010), in particular terms and conditions of companies' websites were respected. This complies with the determinations of the Protection of Personal Information Act (Department of Justice, 2013). The research method followed (where supervisors acted as peer reviewers to ensure inter-rater-reliability) and results obtained, are reported in a fair and factual manner, free from deception or fraud (American Psychological Association, 2010). The access to research information is free from restriction and accessible to all. Anonymity of companies was ensured by assigning a code to each company. Website copies and coding were stored in Qiqqa and username and password protected.

## Results

The study's first objective sought to explore the inducements and expectations that employers convey to potential employees through their websites. The descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3. The three inducements published by most organisations were organisational policies, career development and job content, followed by social atmosphere and financial rewards. Information about work-life balance was published by only 41.8% of organisations. More organisations published information about inducements than expectations except for in- and extra-role behaviour (61.2% of organisations) followed by ethical behaviour (45.9% of organisations). Information about flexibility was the least published compared to other expectations. A possible explanation is that organisations may consider publishing expectations as a deterrent to job seekers.

The second objective focused on how various industries are different with regard to inducements and expectations as per organisations' websites. For comparisons between the different industries, only the three largest industries (manufacturing, wholesale and finance industries; see Table 2) were included. The smaller industries (ranging between  $n = 1$  [mining and quarrying] and  $n = 8$  [community, social and personal services] [representing 17 organisations in total]) were excluded from the group comparisons to ensure adequate power and meaningful differences between the remaining groups (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014).

Table 4 summarises the results for the differences in the inducements between the larger industries. Kruskal-Wallis test was used to compare differences in non-parametric samples (Pallant, 2016). Kruskal-Wallis tests indicated that there were statistically significant differences between industries for organisational policies ( $\chi^2(2, 81) = 8.356$ ,  $p = 0.015$ ) and career development ( $\chi^2(2, 81) = 12.466$ ,

**TABLE 3:** Descriptive statistics for the inducements and expectations examined in the study.

Psychological contract content	Present		Absent		<i>M</i>	SD	Mdn	Min.	Max.
	Number of organisations	%	Number of organisations	%					
<b>Inducements</b>									
Work-life balance	41	41.8	57	58.2	0.141	0.197	0.000	0.000	0.800
Organisational policies	72	73.5	26	26.5	0.209	0.190	0.167	0.000	0.750
Career development	72	73.5	26	26.5	0.200	0.177	0.214	0.000	0.714
Job content	72	73.5	26	26.5	0.102	0.104	0.100	0.000	0.600
Social atmosphere	62	63.3	36	36.7	0.139	0.151	0.091	0.000	0.545
Financial rewards	48	49.0	50	51.0	0.080	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.500
<b>Expectations</b>									
Ethical behaviour	45	45.9	53	54.1	0.074	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.600
Employability	25	25.5	73	74.5	0.143	0.259	0.000	0.000	1.000
Flexibility	12	12.2	86	87.8	0.026	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.333
Loyalty	29	29.6	69	70.4	0.053	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.333
In- and –extra-role behaviour	60	61.2	38	38.8	0.135	0.154	0.077	0.000	0.615

*M*, mean; SD, standard deviation; Mdn, median; Min., minimum; Max., maximum.  
*n* = 98.

**TABLE 4:** Differences in the inducements between the larger industries.

Inducements	<i>df</i>	<i>n</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>	Industry	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	SD	Mdn
Work-life balance	2	81	2.119	0.347	Manufacturing	23	0.183	0.208	0.200
					Wholesale	16	0.138	0.216	0.000
					Financial	42	0.119	0.198	0.000
Organisational policies	2	81	8.356	0.015*	Manufacturing	23	0.293	0.204	0.250
					Wholesale	16	0.177	0.174	0.125
					Financial	42	0.153	0.172	0.125
Career development	2	81	12.466	0.002**	Manufacturing	23	0.280	0.184	0.286
					Wholesale	16	0.232	0.189	0.179
					Financial	42	0.128	0.152	0.071
Job content	2	81	5.906	0.520	Manufacturing	23	0.135	0.143	0.100
					Wholesale	16	0.128	0.084	0.100
					Financial	42	0.081	0.093	0.050
Social atmosphere	2	81	1.616	0.446	Manufacturing	23	0.217	0.217	0.200
					Wholesale	16	0.150	0.171	0.200
					Financial	42	0.157	0.240	0.000
Financial rewards	2	81	2.361	0.307	Manufacturing	23	0.089	0.104	0.056
					Wholesale	16	0.104	0.167	0.028
					Financial	42	0.066	0.113	0.000

*df*, degrees of freedom; *n*, sample size; *M*, mean; SD, standard deviation; Mdn, median.  
 \**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01.

**TABLE 5:** Differences in the expectations between the larger industries.

Expectations	<i>df</i>	<i>n</i>	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>	Industry	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	SD	Mdn
Ethical behaviour	2	81	0.766	0.682	Manufacturing	23	0.070	0.070	0.100
					Wholesale	16	0.056	0.081	0.000
					Financial	42	0.064	0.091	0.000
Employability	2	81	1.554	0.460	Manufacturing	23	0.152	0.279	0.000
					Wholesale	16	0.156	0.239	0.000
					Financial	42	0.095	0.227	0.000
Flexibility	2	81	0.509	0.775	Manufacturing	23	0.043	0.103	0.000
					Wholesale	16	0.021	0.057	0.000
					Financial	42	0.024	0.070	0.000
Loyalty	2	81	0.541	0.763	Manufacturing	23	0.051	0.078	0.000
					Wholesale	16	0.073	0.105	0.000
					Financial	42	0.052	0.086	0.000
In- and extra-role behaviour	2	81	0.860	0.650	Manufacturing	23	0.151	0.183	0.077
					Wholesale	16	0.144	0.125	0.154
					Financial	42	0.128	0.151	0.077

*df*, degrees of freedom; *n*, sample size; *M*, mean; SD, standard deviation; Mdn, median.

*p* = 0.002). Based on a Bonferroni alpha-level adjustment, a statistically significant Mann-Whitney test ( $z = -2.774$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ,  $r = -0.34$ ) indicated, of a medium effect size, that

only the manufacturing (Mdn = 0.250, mean rank = 41.61) published more content related to organisational policies compared to the financial industry (Mdn = 0.125, mean

rank = 28.29). No other differences between the industries were statistically significant. With regard to career development, after adjusting the  $p$ -values for multiple-group comparisons, only the manufacturing industry (Mdn = 0.286, mean rank = 43.35) published more information, of medium effect size ( $r = -0.42$ ), compared to the financial services industry (Mdn = 0.071, mean rank = 27.22) ( $z = -3.347$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). No other differences between the industries were statistically significant.

The results for the differences in the expectations between the larger industries are depicted in Table 5. A series of Kruskal–Wallis tests found no statistically significant differences between the three industries for any of the expectations; therefore, no post hoc comparisons were conducted.

In the last objective, the focus was on how organisations with and without a dedicated career website are different with regard to inducements and expectations. Considering inducements, results obtained for comparisons between organisations' websites with and without career sections performed with the Kruskal–Wallis test are summarised in Table 6. Statistically significant results, all of medium effect sizes ranging between  $r = 0.313$  and  $0.357$ , indicated that organisations with career pages published more information on work–life balance ( $z = -3.097$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), organisational policies organisational policies ( $z = -3.286$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and financial rewards ( $z = -3.539$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) compared to

organisations without career pages. A similar finding, of medium effect size ( $r = 0.402$ ), pertains to social atmosphere ( $z = -3.982$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Two additional statistically significant results, all of large effect sizes ( $r = 0.495$  and  $0.626$ ), indicate that career development ( $z = -4.899$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and job content ( $z = -6.193$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) information feature more on websites with career sections compared to those without them. The mean ranks used for the comparisons are included in Table 6.

Differences in expectations, with similar findings as for inducements, are presented in Table 7. Results reveal that statistically significant differences exist for expectations between organisations with and without a career section. Statistically significant results, all of small effect sizes ranging between  $r = 0.237$  and  $0.264$ , indicated that organisations with career pages published more information on loyalty ( $z = -2.345$ ,  $p = 0.019$ ), ethical behaviour ( $z = -2.519$ ,  $p = 0.012$ ) and employability ( $z = -2.611$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ) compared to organisations without career pages. Only one statistically significant result of medium effect size ( $r = 0.315$ ) was found where flexibility ( $z = -3.115$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ) was more prevalent on websites with career pages compared to those without. An additional one statistically significant result, of large effect size ( $r = 0.582$ ), was found where in- and extra-role behaviour ( $z = -5.765$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) was more prevalent on websites with career pages compared to those without. The mean ranks used for the comparisons are included in Table 7. Comparing the results obtained, it appears that organisations with a

**TABLE 6:** Differences in the inducements for organisations with and without a career section.

Inducements	Career section	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	Effect size ( <i>r</i> )
Work–life balance	Yes	57	0.193	0.200	0.220	56.210	-3.097	0.002*	0.313
	No	41	0.068	0.000	0.131	40.170			
Organisational policies	Yes	57	0.254	0.250	0.179	57.380	-3.286	0.001*	0.332
	No	41	0.146	0.083	0.190	38.550			
Career development	Yes	57	0.271	0.286	0.173	61.260	-4.899	0.000**	0.495
	No	41	0.101	0.071	0.131	33.150			
Job content	Yes	57	0.150	0.150	0.109	64.270	-6.193	0.000**	0.626
	No	41	0.035	0.000	0.044	28.960			
Social atmosphere	Yes	57	0.191	0.182	0.166	58.870	-3.982	0.000**	0.402
	No	41	0.067	0.000	0.086	36.480			
Financial rewards	Yes	57	0.103	0.056	0.116	57.490	-3.539	0.000**	0.357
	No	41	0.047	0.000	0.115	38.390			

*df*, degrees of freedom; *n*, sample size; *M*, mean; *z*, *z*-statistic; *SD*, standard deviation; *Mdn*, median.

*n* = 98.

\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

**TABLE 7:** Differences in the expectations for organisations with and without a career section.

Expectations	Career section	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	Mean rank	<i>z</i>	<i>p</i>	Effect size ( <i>r</i> )
Ethical behaviour	Yes	57	0.096	0.100	0.119	55.050	-2.519	0.012*	0.254
	No	41	0.044	0.000	0.074	41.780			
Employability	Yes	57	0.202	0.000	0.297	54.320	-2.611	0.009**	0.264
	No	41	0.061	0.000	0.166	42.790			
Flexibility	Yes	57	0.044	0.000	0.092	53.820	-3.115	0.002**	0.315
	No	41	0.000	0.000	0.000	43.500			
Loyalty	Yes	57	0.070	0.000	0.094	54.040	-2.345	0.019*	0.237
	No	41	0.028	0.000	0.063	43.200			
In- and extra-role behaviour	Yes	57	0.205	0.231	0.162	63.040	-5.765	0.000***	0.582
	No	41	0.038	0.000	0.065	30.670			

*df*, degrees of freedom; *n*, sample size; *M*, mean; *z*, *z*-statistic; *SD*, standard deviation; *Mdn*, median.

*n* = 98.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .



career section conveyed more inducement and expectations compared to those without a career section. This may be because of the fact that such organisations are more sensitised to marketing inducements and expectations in order to attract ideal candidates.

## Discussion

### Outline of the results

This study explored inducements and obligations that were published by the 2015 Business Times Top 100 organisations on their websites. The first objective focused on the inducements and expectations organisations convey to potential employees through their websites. More organisations publish information about inducements (except for work–life balance) compared to expectations. A possible reason for this occurrence may be that employers use their websites to attract candidates through inducements and entice job seekers to apply for vacancies as indicated by Suazo et al. (2009) and Yen, Murrmann and Murrmann (2011). Research on employee branding supports this notion explained by Srivastava and Bhatnagar (2010) that employee branding is seen to convey unique attributes about the organisation and associated benefits. A defined inducement offered by employers is the attractive and exclusive benefits associated with employment as indicated by different authors (Freese, 2007; Freese et al., 2008; Freese, Schalk, & Croon, 2011; Guest & Conway, 2002; Katou & Budwar, 2012; Penfold & Ronnie, 2015). Another explanation is offered. The element of cost (i.e. what organisations expect) is found in social exchange theory. Emerson (1976) explains through the social exchange theory that costs are associated with receiving rewards. It is possible to assume that these costs and rewards may not be published on the website as these are typically only presented in a formal contract of employment offered to employees.

Examining significant differences in inducements and expectations conveyed between different industry industries, the second objective of this study revealed that the inducements organisational policies and career development differed significantly between the manufacturing and financial services industries. In the Raeder et al. (2009) study in Switzerland, portfolio workers who had multiple jobs had statistically significant higher means for selected inducements (e.g. job security, career and skill development), compared to employees of a temporary employment agency as well as a logistics firm. One can expect a similar pattern in South African companies. Expectations were also different between these groups, where portfolio workers had higher means for participation (i.e. in- and extra-role behaviour) compared to employees of a temporary employment agency (Raeder et al., 2009). This emphasises that the context of the psychological contract is context bound, in this case industry and employed status. Regulatory requirements may also affect and impact on the results obtained. Workplace safety requirements in manufacturing industry are highly regulated and regularly audited (Department of Labour, 1994). Companies within

the financial services industry are governed by similarly applicable regulations and codes of conduct such as the *Financial Intelligence Centre Act* (National Treasury, 2002). Observed differences may be because of the rules and requirements imposed by these regulatory bodies. Other relevant legislation requirements may also play a part in regulating how companies provide organisational policies and career development inducements. As an example, details contained in the *Skills Development Amendment Act* (Department of Labour, 2008) seek to enhance skills development within the manufacturing industry and trades by offering rebates in the form of grants. Bischoff and Wood (2013) argue that the prevalence of unions and bargaining council structures, in the large enterprise industries, are also more prominent than in other smaller industries within the manufacturing industry in South Africa. The influence of unions may, to some degree, illuminate the observed difference between these two industries. Union representation is, however, not only limited to the manufacturing industry. However, no literature was found to support or refute this notion.

The third objective focused on the differences in inducements and expectations between organisations with and without dedicated career sections on their websites. Organisations with dedicated career pages convey significantly more inducements and expectations. A possible explanation may reside in that the theory of planned behaviour, explained by Lin (2010) supporting the notion that information that is easily accessible, will more likely be used. Suazo et al. (2009) and Yen et al. (2011) explain that organisations may use such pages as a dedicated ‘one-stop’ page to entice and attract suitable candidates.

### Practical implications

Managers, as agents and contract makers of the employer, have a determining impact on the content contained in the psychological contract (Conway & Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1989). Practices surrounding recruitment, training interventions, performance appraisals, compensation systems and employee handbooks all play a role in informing the psychological contract (Suazo et al., 2009). Results obtained from this study provide human resource practitioners and managers of organisations a practical means of identifying the inducements and expectations conveyed through their public websites. The incidences of inducements and expectations serve as a warning to employers that breach and violation could lead to the negative effects of reduced leader–member exchange and organisational justice (Tziner et al., 2017), employees’ prohibitive voice (Guo, 2017), an increase in unethical behaviour (Ning & Zhaoyi, 2017) and counterproductive work behaviour (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018).

A website, as a form of organisational text, was shown to convey a fair number of inducements and expectations.

This information could enable organisations to identify and better manage the employer–employee relationship. The measure used in this research provides insight into the elements on which the psychological contract is built and informed. Future research on the inducements and expectations not conveyed on any of the organisations' websites may be undertaken. The focus of this future research may be to determine the reasons for non-conveyance.

### Limitations and recommendations

The codebook developed was only applied to organisations' websites. Future research should be conducted that applies the same measure to different forms of organisational texts. By taking a broader approach in analysis, a more complete picture of which inducements and expectations are conveyed may be obtained. Duplication studies on different organisations' websites listed on different stock exchanges, as well as non-listed organisations, may further enhance the reliability and validity of the measure.

The results obtained through the measure indicate that organisations may find utility from these results in an attempt to improve and maintain the employer–employee relationship. To be able to answer this question, future research should be undertaken that is aimed at proving the effectiveness of the information obtained from the measure at maintaining or improving the psychological contract between employer and employee.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore which inducements and obligations are made known by top-listed organisations on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. Organisations convey and communicate inducements and expectations through various means to a wide audience. Management should be sensitive to the potential determining impact on the psychological contact, communicated through different forms of content to current and potential employees. Organisations ought to be sensitised to the fact that inducements and expectations conveyed through their websites create expectations that need to be honoured and may have a long-term effect on the employer–employee relationship. Breach or violation of these inducements and expectations may lead to adverse negative effects in the organisation.

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### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

J.V.N. was the student who conducted the research as part of the requirements for the MPhil Employment Relations degree. P.C.-F. was the supervisor and R.V.W. was the co-supervisor. P.C.-F. and R.V.W. provided inputs, advice, guidance, support and reviews. All authors prepared the article.

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