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# Guest editorial: Psychological contract: issues and emerging developments

This article aims to critically evaluate the dynamic, evolving nature of the psychological contract (PC) within the framework of modern organizational structures, which highlights the growing need to explore its understanding and application amidst rapidly changing external landscapes. PC is a central concept in the wider business psychology and organizational behavior domains (Argyris, 1960; Coyle-Shapiro *et al.*, 2019; Kozhakhmet *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2025). It hinges upon the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which postulates the mutual exchange and expectations in the employee-organization relationship. Rousseau (1989) reconceptualized PC as a dynamic concept, emphasizing the individual's subjective interpretation shaped by experiences within the organization regarding mutual obligations. While the concept of the PC in workplace settings has been studied for decades, the surrounding economic, sociocultural, technological, political and environmental contexts have continued to evolve and remain under-researched (Rousseau and Schalk, 2000; Thomas *et al.*, 2003; Kutaula *et al.*, 2020; Phuong and Takahashi, 2021; Kiefer *et al.*, 2022; Laulié *et al.*, 2025).

This special issue was positioned to invite articles that critically examine and address the gaps in the literature owing to these ongoing key developments. First, the lifelong employment model and the notion of a singular, stable employer are diminishing, as individualization gains prominence in the modern world of work (Boland and Griffin, 2023; Schabram *et al.*, 2023). For example, traditional workplace boundaries have been progressively eroded by the rise of temporary workers, gig workers and consultants, leading to a transition toward more complex, multi-dyadic relational structures (Doellgast and Wagner, 2022; Dries *et al.*, 2024; Kraak *et al.*, 2024). This has introduced new layers of complexity to how the PC is formed and managed, especially around its conceptualization and how it impacts other workplace outcomes.

Second, globalization has led to an increase in multicultural teams, where employees may interpret the terms of the PC differently across cultural contexts (Thomas *et al.*, 2016; Sparrow, 2018; Tung, 2024). These cultural differences could have a significant impact on not just how the expectations are formed and shaped but also how employees perceive PC breach or violation (Jayaweera *et al.*, 2021; Ng, 2025). This merits a focus on examining the broader contextual factors such as the sociocultural, institutional or political milieu within which individuals, groups and organizations operate. For instance, national culture dimensions such as individualism-collectivism or power distance can influence individuals' expectations around promises or obligations (Thomas *et al.*, 2010, 2016; Den Hartog and De Hoogh, 2024). Therefore, managing PCs effectively in global teams would require a nuanced understanding of the cross-cultural beliefs and values to positively impact the employee attitudes and behaviors.

Third, with the growing significance of global sustainability issues – such as climate change, fair working conditions and social inequality – organizations are expected to steer towards a broader set of responsibilities and consider a multi-stakeholder approach, including people, planet and profit, rather than focusing solely on profit (Schaltegger and Hörisch, 2017; Schuler *et al.*, 2017; De Roeck *et al.*, 2024; Laulié and Pavez, 2024; Bansal *et al.*, 2025; Wijen *et al.*, 2025). This shift impacts the PC by raising employees' expectations regarding social and ethical standards, renewing the workplace through a focus on these commitments rather than traditional economic transactions. Navigating these changes in the business world – and the consequent successes or failures – reshapes the discourse around the relational and transactional elements of the PC.



Fourth, the widespread adoption of technologies – such as artificial intelligence (AI), information-processing software and virtual work environments – has significant implications for the PC in the workplace (Ballas *et al.*, 2024; Moin *et al.*, 2024). In this context, employees are led to reassess mutual expectations, particularly related to the facilitation of digital competency and ethical employment of technology, which is significant for relational elements of PC, given the decrease in face-to-face interactions (Braganza *et al.*, 2021). These advances can influence how employees view fairness and trust within organizational settings, more so when AI-driven decision-making has gained momentum. Therefore, there is a need to assess the ethical consequences of integrated technology within the workplace from a PC perspective.

Finally, in addition to these changing contexts, the COVID-19 pandemic has globally brought to light the need for continual adaptation and rethinking of how we work through volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous times (Lopez and Fuiks, 2021; Karani Mehta *et al.*, 2024). Some of the main challenges faced by employees and organizations include managing work, providing effective leadership in these changing and challenging times and rebuilding businesses. This has implications for attitudinal and behavioral outcomes – such as mental health, burnout, stress and anxiety – which are fundamental to understanding, predicting and guiding practical interventions moving forward (Gong and Sims, 2023; Kim *et al.*, 2025). These changes have also redefined employees' beliefs around flexibility and psychological safety, increasing the need to investigate PC in times of heightened crises and similar events.

These ongoing global and organizational developments make the future of work even less predictable, making it important to study the PC in these changing and complex environments. The objective of the special issue is to address these gaps and serve as a conduit to broaden the understanding of psychological facets of employment relationships within the workplace by serving as a platform for disseminating novel research findings and charting the course to extending and developing the PC domain. In doing so, this special issue encourages researchers to revisit the PC and examine its content – including the transactional, relational and ideological dimensions – as well as evaluation approaches by exploring breaches and violations of mutual promises and obligations between employees and their organizations amid rapidly changing circumstances that disrupt the balance of reciprocity.

We are delighted to introduce this special issue of the *Journal of Managerial Psychology* on “Psychological Contract: Issues and Emerging Developments”. This topic continues to attract interest, as evidenced by the number of manuscripts submitted to the special issue, which was handled by the guest editors' team and underwent a double-blind peer-review process. Following multiple rounds of review, the resulting 12 manuscripts, together with this editorial essay, form our SI on issues and emerging trends in PC. This issue presents insightful research contributions that examine the PC across varied sociocultural, economic and organizational contexts and propose future research directions.

The editorial essay is organized as follows. First, we present an integrative overview of the PC through a discussion of the theoretical perspectives adopted in the 12 special issue articles, summarizing their key findings and highlighting their unique contributions. We conclude by offering six key themes around adopting diverse theoretical perspectives, integrating novel concepts and constructs, incorporating business ethics and sustainability, accounting for contextual factors, exploring links with technology and methodological considerations to guide future research.

### **Papers in this special issue**

The papers of this special issue represent a wide range in terms of the concepts covered, theories and methods across diverse global and industry contexts (for details, see Table 1). In the first paper, Conway and Clinton (2026), using a sample of sales advisers via a longitudinal study within a UK bank, bring forward the novel concept of dilemmatic commitments to PC

**Table 1.** Summary of articles in the special issue

Authors	Context/ countries	Research aim	Theoretical foundation	Methodology/ sample	Key findings
Conway and Clinton (2026)	United Kingdom	Consider role of dilemmatic commitments to examine breach, OCB and employee turnover	Social exchange theory Escalation of commitment theory	Longitudinal survey and objective data, T1- 436 sales advisers; T2- 190 sales advisers UK bank	Found evidence for opposing mediating pathways between PC breach and employee turnover, through dilemmatic commitments, breach had a positive impact on employee turnover via affective commitment and a negative impact through continuance commitment PC violation lowered trust in the organization and increased intentions to leave. Workers who rely less on gig work displayed casual cynicism towards the platform
Saksida <i>et al.</i> (2026)	United States	Examine gig workers' reactions to PC violation	Organizational justice theory	Mixed method, Study 1- quantitative, 202 Uber drivers, Study 2- qualitative 32 interviews with platform workers	Presented a conceptual model and research propositions for understanding PC, focusing on the influence of personal and contextual factors through the lens of sensemaking
Sanders and Florkowski (2026)	–	Explore a personal sensemaking model for psychological contracting	Sensemaking	Conceptual	Diversity practices increased employee engagement, which then lowered intentions to leave. PC breach moderated the diversity practices- turnover link through employee engagement
Nayak and Budhwar (2026)	India	Investigate the link between diversity practices and employee behavioral outcomes, turnover intention and engagement	Social exchange theory	Quantitative, 856 employees, software companies	CSR influenced employees' environmental behavior. Transactional PC and relational PC mediated the CSR- employees' environmental behavior link. Employees' environmental attitudes moderated the CSR- employees' environmental behavior mediation link through relational psychological contract
Arslan <i>et al.</i> (2026)	Turkey	Examine the key mediating and moderating mechanism for CSR- employees' environmental behavior relationship	Social exchange theory	Quantitative, 200 employees, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)	

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Authors	Context/ countries	Research aim	Theoretical foundation	Methodology/ sample	Key findings
<a href="#">Chaudhry et al. (2026)</a>	Pakistan	Explore role of external, socio-institutional factors on implicit promises	Social information processing theory	Qualitative, fifty-three in-depth qualitative interviews, foreign MNEs	Social stratification, relational networking and structural influences shaped employees' implicit promises
<a href="#">Foroudi and Fakhreddin (2026)</a>	Europe (including United Kingdom and Italy)	Study the influence of ideological PC fulfillment on employee outcomes, work engagement, organizational commitment, and organizational citizenship behavior	Social exchange theory	399 Employees, diverse organizational contexts	Ideological PC fulfillment influenced work engagement and citizenship behavior. Diversity climate and employee well-being moderated the ideological PC fulfillment-citizenship behavior link
<a href="#">Kusi et al. (2026)</a>	–	Propose conceptual framework based on metaverse, employee PC and customer PC	Flow theory	Conceptual	Established a set of propositions regarding organizational use of metaverse platforms and their impact on employee and customer PC and firm performance
<a href="#">Hassan et al. (2026)</a>	United States	Investigate the relationship between PC violation and knowledge-sharing behavior	Social exchange theory	Quantitative, 250 working professionals	PC violation has a negative association with knowledge sharing. Perceived job insecurity mediated the PC violation-knowledge sharing relationship and perceived organizational support moderated this mediation
<a href="#">Saef et al. (2026)</a>	United States	Explore dual-moderating role of the big five personality traits in influencing individuals' behavioral responses to PC breach	Exit–Voice–Loyalty–Neglect (EVLN) framework	Experimental, 610 participants, university students	Agreeableness was found to have a dual moderating effect on voice responses to PC breach. Neuroticism attenuated felt violation following breach, and extraversion lessened work neglect as a way to manage felt violation
<a href="#">Manchia et al. (2026)</a>	–	Evaluate relevant literature on PC antecedents over the past 3 decades	Conceptual	217 articles	Leadership, HR Practices and personality are the three most examined drivers of PC

(continued)

Table 1. Continued

Authors	Context/ countries	Research aim	Theoretical foundation	Methodology/ sample	Key findings
<a href="#">Hameed et al. (2026)</a>	Saudi Arabia	Explore PC fulfillment as mediating mechanism for ethics-centered HRM system-knowledge hiding behavior link	Social exchange theory	Quantitative, 236 employees and co-workers, public sector R & D organization	Ethics-centered HRM system has a negative relationship with knowledge hiding behavior, with PC fulfillment as a mediator and mindfulness as a moderator

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theory and research; while breach is negatively associated with affective commitment, it increases continuance commitment. They uncover dilemmatic commitments as a novel mediating mechanism for the breach-employee turnover relationship. Their results reveal a breach has a positive influence on affective commitment, which, in turn, enhances employee turnover. On the other hand, there is a negative relationship between breach and continuance commitment, which lowers employee turnover. Interestingly, dilemmatic commitments explain the negative effects of breach on OCB. This study offers detailed insights into dilemmatic commitments following PC breach by not just considering turnover but also OCB.

[Saksida et al. \(2026\)](#), in the second article, adopting a mixed-methods design, investigate the effects of PC violations amongst gig workers on trust in organizations and intentions to leave during the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey results indicated PC violations lessen organizational trust and increase intentions to leave. Exploring the quantitative findings further, the authors interviewed 32 gig workers to examine the relationships between economic dependence and cynicism. The findings suggest that cynicism has varied connotations for gig workers – those relying more on the gig work financially expressed cynicism resulting from frustration and powerlessness. However, those who had less financial dependence on the platform aired casual cynicism – showing detachment and indifference towards platform issues.

The third article by [Sanders and Florkowski \(2026\)](#) explores how individuals' PC interpretation differs as PCs are guided by personal sensemaking. This research develops a conceptual model for understanding PC through the lens of individual sensemaking, emphasizing the impact of personal and contextual factors acting upon it. The theoretical underpinning of the proposed conceptual framework is based on the formation and compliance of sensemaking, along with the behavioral outcomes adopted from the EVLN model (exit, voice, loyalty and neglect) to explain employees' attitudes and behaviors. The authors argue that personal sensemaking of the environment around them impacts PC and resulting behaviors in the workplace. The conceptual model proposes that ambiguity in new workplace relationships can initiate individual sensemaking, and they make sense of environmental signals to evaluate mutual expectations.

The fourth article by [Nayak and Budhwar \(2026\)](#) focuses on diversity-related PC, defined as implicit expectations employees harbor around fair redressal of diversity and inclusion issues by their organization. Integrating organizational justice theory and social exchange theory, this study examines the relationship between diversity practices and two employee behavioral outcomes, turnover intentions and engagement. Drawing upon a sample of 856 people working in 8 software organizations in India, they found that implementing diversity practices increases employee engagement, which then reduces employees' intentions to leave.

The authors examined the role of PC breach as a moderator for the diversity practices-turnover relationship via employee engagement.

The fifth article by [Arslan et al. \(2026\)](#) extends the special issue's focus to a critical area – corporate social responsibility (CSR), examining the mediating role of PC in shedding light on the relationship between CSR and employees' environmental behavior. Based on a sample of 200 employees in Turkish small and medium-sized enterprises, the findings reveal that transactional PC and relational PC mediate the CSR-employees' environmental behavior link. Also, employees' environmental attitudes moderate the CSR-relational PC-employees' environmental behavior.

The sixth article by [Chaudhry et al. \(2026\)](#) employed the social information processing approach to explore the concept of implicit promises within PCs, focusing on how external socio-institutional and cultural factors influence employees' perceptions of these promises. This research conducted a rich qualitative investigation involving 53 interviews with senior managers and employees across four multinational corporations (MNCs) in Pakistan, which varied in size, industry and HR policies. Its findings revealed that implicit promises are socially constructed and shaped by socio-institutional factors such as social stratification, relational networking and structural influences, expanding our context-specific PC insights.

The seventh article by [Foroudi and Fakhreddin \(2026\)](#) introduces the concept of ideological PC, which aligns with individuals' personal values and self-concept. It relates closely to deeply held personal values and the self-concept. The study adopts a quantitative survey approach, using 399 employees from various European organizations. Notable findings include significant associations between ideological PC and three employee outcomes – work engagement, organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. The study also identified and examined organizational factors like AI adoption, diversity climate and employee well-being as moderators. The results provide evidence for a positive moderation effect of diversity climate and employee well-being for the ideological PC fulfillment–organizational citizenship behavior relationship, while AI adoption negatively moderated the ideological PC fulfillment–organizational commitment relationship.

The eighth article by [Kusi et al. \(2026\)](#) explores the relationship between the metaverse and PCs, with an emphasis on frontline employees and customers. The study presents a conceptual model and propositions based on flow theory, which states that individuals develop a sense of deep engagement while using technology. The research emphasizes the need to understand the psychological expectations of employees and customers – not only in physical realities but also within the metaverse, which is increasingly being adopted by companies in the marketplace and workplace. It proposes that employee PC will be fulfilled if firms utilize metaverse platforms. Due to the immersive nature of the metaverse, companies can build long-term relationships with customers, thereby positively influencing customer PC.

[Hassan et al. \(2026\)](#), in the ninth article, examines knowledge sharing behavior, referred to as the exchange of information, knowledge and skills within the organization, as a key employee outcome of PC violation. This study goes beyond the traditional employee outcomes studied in PC literature so far and expands it to knowledge-sharing behavior. Based upon a survey of 250 US professionals, the study confirms a negative relationship between PC violation and knowledge-sharing behavior. Further, the research assessed and confirmed the role of perceived job insecurity as a mediator and perceived organizational support as a moderator for the PC violation-knowledge-sharing relationship.

The tenth article by [Saef et al. \(2026\)](#), underpinned by the theory of purposeful work behavior, tested a moderated mediation model to investigate the influence of big five personality traits on emotional and behavioral responses when employees experience breach events. This study responds to the earlier calls for examining individual differences in relation to PC breach and violation. Adopting a scenario-based experimental methodology, key results confirmed moderation effects of agreeableness on the breach-voice relationship. Also, neuroticism reinforced the feelings of felt violation experienced through breach, and extraversion lessened the responses of neglecting work as a means to deal with felt violation.

The eleventh article by [Manchia et al. \(2026\)](#), based on an extensive review of 217 articles published over a 30-year period, examines the PC antecedents – an area that remains underexplored to date. The review categorized the findings into four groups: the first comprising systematic reviews, meta-analyses and narrative reviews published between 1999 and 2019; the second including highly cited articles, defined as those cited more than 10 times; the third focusing on the latest PC research developments from 2017 to 2023 and the fourth consisting of articles from 1989 to 1999. This last period was selected particularly because 1989 signifies the year Rousseau redefined PC, emphasizing employees' perceptions of mutual exchange and the management of expectations within organizations. Leadership, human resource practices and personality emerged as the most commonly studied antecedents in the literature.

Finally, the final article by [Hameed et al. \(2026\)](#), based on data from 236 employees and co-workers from Saudi Arabia, examines PC fulfillment as a mediating mechanism for the ethics-centered HRM system-knowledge hiding behavior link. Findings show that an ethics-centered HRM system is negatively associated with knowledge-hiding behavior. Further, PC fulfillment mediated this relationship, while mindfulness served as a moderator. This research increases our scholarly understanding of how organizations can shape HRM systems better to reduce knowledge-hiding behaviors through a positive PC, thus promoting an effective organizational culture.

### Future research

The 12 papers in this special issue showcase a significant leap in our theoretical, methodological and empirical understanding of PC across varied contexts. Through this special issue, we lay a strong foundation for future research in this area, delineating six key research directional themes, as outlined in [Table 2](#). *First*, theoretically, while most researchers adopt social exchange theory as the foundational basis for examination, several authors have utilized novel perspectives, such as sensemaking ([Sanders and Florkowski, 2026](#)), flow theory ([Kusi et al., 2026](#)), social information processing theory ([Chaudhry et al., 2026](#)) and organizational justice ([Saksida et al., 2026](#)) to present newer insights into PC research. More research is needed to connect PC and related concepts, particularly where they impact and influence each other, helping PC theorization and conceptualization. For instance, [Conway and Clinton \(2026\)](#) invited researchers to look into ways dilemmatic beliefs, such as ambivalence, are triggered by PC breach. Ambivalence could hold significant value in advancing understanding of PC breaches, as employees experiencing breaches could feel positive and negative emotions concurrently. They could lose trust in the organization but could gain trust as they can adapt and become more aware of the dynamic nature of events, thus can help to better predict the future, therefore, increasing their ability to make decisions.

*Second*, future research could focus on investigating more novel antecedents and outcomes of PC while also examining their mediating and moderating roles, thus expanding our understanding of this concept, particularly within the wider organizational psychology and HRM literature. The papers in the special issue highlight many such concepts. For example, [Manchia et al. \(2026\)](#), in their comprehensive review of PC antecedents over the last 3 decades, revealed leadership, HRM practices and personality as the three most widely examined factors. Leaders are considered to play a significant role in the relationships between employees and managers and have the capability to fulfill employees' PCs. However, PC violations may be linked to a lack of supervision. The review also revealed that HR practices may vary across individuals and organizations, whereas consistent HR practices can enhance employees' PC perceptions. Research has also found a strong relationship between personality traits and the PC; for example, a leader's personality traits can lead to employees' PC breach. Considering such assumptions, future studies can focus on how factors such as age, family status or religiosity might affect PC formation. Further, more studies could emphasize exploring under-researched mediating and moderating mechanisms. While shedding light on

**Table 2.** Directions for future research in Psychological Contract

Themes	Key areas and future research
Theoretical advances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Novel theoretical perspectives such as sensemaking (Sanders and Florkowski, 2026)/flow theory (Kusi et al., 2026)/social information processing theory (Chaudhry et al., 2026)/organizational justice (Saksida et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Related constructs to advance PC theory: Ambivalence (Conway and Clinton, 2026)/moral identity, courage and resilience (Hameed et al., 2026)</li> </ul>
Novel antecedents and outcomes/mediating and moderating mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More organizational antecedents: psychological safety/diversity climate/organizational values/management team (Kusi et al., 2026; Manchia et al., 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Individual-level factors- age/gender/tenure/family status/religiosity/personality traits as PC moderators (Saef et al., 2026; Manchia et al., 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Mediating/moderating mechanisms: violation/negotiating i-deals/perceived organizational responsiveness/justice/morality/job satisfaction/trust dynamics/team cohesion (Conway and Clinton, 2026; Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026)</li> <li>• Expand outcomes: wellbeing/job performance/knowledge sharing/team dynamics/brand loyalty/revenue/customer attitudes and behaviors (Hameed et al., 2026; Kusi et al., 2026; Manchia et al., 2026)</li> </ul>
Business ethics and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideological PC fulfillment and Diversity- PC breach shaped by diversity climate (Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Transactional psychological contract- employees' environmental attitudes relationship (Arslan et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Impact of ethics-centered HRM systems on knowledge hiding through PC fulfillment (Hameed et al., 2026)</li> <li>• AI adoption in sustainability-sensitive industries to study PC fulfillment (Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026)</li> <li>• Socially responsible approach to metaverse: reducing potential negative psychological, behavioral, and health effects (e.g., addiction/anxiety/sense of detachment from reality) (Kusi et al., 2026)</li> </ul>
Contextual factors	<p><u>Cultural influences</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual-level cultural traits- xenophobia/essentialism/lack of openness (Kusi et al., 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Regional workforce and industry composition (Kusi et al., 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• National culture: individualism- collectivism/power distance/low vs high context cultures (Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Kusi et al., 2026; Manchia et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Cross-cultural comparison to explore cultural diversity and variation (Chaudhry et al., 2026; Hassan et al., 2026; Kusi et al., 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> </ul> <p><u>Structural and institutional factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-institutional factors (Chaudhry et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Internal organizational changes: restructuring/mergers/changes in structure (Chaudhry et al., 2026)</li> </ul> <p><u>Economic and labor factors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gig work (Saksida et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Economic dependence (Saksida et al., 2026)</li> <li>• Organized labor: Union activity (Sanders and Florkowski, 2026)</li> <li>• External shocks: recession/natural disaster/pandemic/political instability (Chaudhry et al., 2026)</li> </ul>

(continued)

Table 2. Continued

Themes	Key areas and future research
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence of metaverse on employee and customer PC (Kusi <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Role of technological proficiency in shaping PC perceptions in metaverse (Kusi <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Technology as enabler and barrier to sensemaking in PC processes (Sanders and Florkowski, 2026)</li> <li>• AI adoption as a moderator for PC fulfillment-employee outcomes (Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026)</li> </ul>
Methodological suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longitudinal study design to increase causal inferences (Arslan <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Chaudhry <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Hameed <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Hassan <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Saksida <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Qualitative research methodology to increase contextual understanding (Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Hassan <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Kusi <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Multi-source data such as diverse respondents (employees, supervisors, co-workers, customers)/dyadic data/objective measures (e.g. application software) to increase generalizability and reduce common method bias issues (Conway and Clinton, 2026; Arslan <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Saksida <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Hameed <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Hassan <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Mixed-methods combining qualitative and quantitative approaches (Chaudhry <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Hassan <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Novel methodologies/data collection methods: event and experience sampling/diary studies/immersive ethnographies/experimental/quasi-experimental methodologies/netnography/Think-Aloud protocol (Saef <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Saksida <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Sanders and Florkowski, 2026; Kusi <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> <li>• Multi-level examination across individual, team, and organizational levels, e.g. explore PC outcomes such as well-being/turnover intentions/team performance/organizational innovation (Hameed <i>et al.</i>, 2026; Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026; Hassan <i>et al.</i>, 2026)</li> <li>• Comprehensive measurement of PC and other constructs: perceived supervisory support/diversity-related PC breach (Nayak and Budhwar, 2026)</li> </ul>

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the ethics-centered HRM system-PC fulfillment-knowledge hiding behavior relationship, Hameed *et al.* (2026) suggest looking into moral identity, courage and resilience as mediating pathways. To illustrate one such pathway, when employees with a strong moral identity perceive PC fulfillment, they see ethical behaviors as their personal obligation, therefore, are less likely to demonstrate knowledge-hiding behaviors. Thus, we implore studies to focus on these psychological mechanisms that link organizational systems to employees' ethical attitudes and behaviors.

*Third*, a promising area of further investigation could be business ethics and sustainability. For instance, touching upon environmental sustainability, Arslan *et al.* (2026) recommend examining the interrelationships between transactional PC and employees' environmental attitudes. Given transactional contracts are usually short-term and focused on economic considerations, employees who share this view may not invest as much in the organization. Therefore, they are less likely to engage in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors, usually

seen as organizational citizenship and thus voluntary. In another paper in this special issue, [Nayak and Budhwar \(2026\)](#) propose studying organizational antecedents such as diversity climate in association with diversity-related HR practices and PC. These connect strongly with the social sustainability strand, given that diversity climate is representative of an organization's view on trust, equity and fairness. This can shape employees' PC formation and interpretation around respect and inclusion.

*Fourth*, future research can look at the influence of wider economic, cultural, social and institutional factors that could impact how PCs are formed and interpreted. [Manchia et al. \(2026\)](#) highlight the need to examine how culture can impact antecedents that form PC perceptions, more so as it plays a key role in shaping individuals' behaviors. Further, researchers can study how cultural constructs such as collectivism and power distance influence PC formation and evaluation ([Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026](#); [Nayak and Budhwar, 2026](#)). Additionally, it is crucial to understand how economic and socio-institutional factors impact PC formation and evaluation ([Chaudhry et al., 2026](#)). Regarding social stratification, they found that employees with higher qualifications, prestigious educational backgrounds and international work experience were more likely to receive strategic positions within organizations, linking status to implicit promises of developmental opportunities and career progression. Informal in-group alliances and relational networks within workplaces provided support and learning opportunities, affecting the formation of implicit mutual promises and obligations. Also, structural factors, such as the economic status of an organization, influenced employees' perceptions of whether implicit promises were fulfilled or breached. Furthermore, papers in this special issue examined PC in varied country contexts, from developed economies, e.g. the US ([Hassan et al., 2026](#); [Saef et al., 2026](#); [Saksida et al., 2026](#)), the UK ([Conway and Clinton, 2026](#)) and Europe ([Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026](#)), to emerging markets such as Turkey ([Arslan et al., 2026](#)), Saudi Arabia ([Hameed et al., 2026](#)) India ([Nayak and Budhwar, 2026](#)) and Pakistan ([Chaudhry et al., 2026](#)). We suggest future researchers continue in this direction, and further contextual and comparative research would help to increase validity and generalizability of the findings.

*Fifth*, PC research needs to respond to linkages with technology, especially the rise of AI and metaverse platforms. [Bankins and Formosa \(2019\)](#) draw upon this under-explored area, suggesting the need to explore employee interactions with AI technologies. In this special issue, [Kusi et al. \(2026\)](#) present novel insights examining the implications of the metaverse in both the workplace and marketplace by focusing on frontline-customer PC. They indicate that customers' and employees' self and social identities, expressed through avatars in the metaverse, can lead to greater PC fulfillment and, consequently, improved firm performance. Another noteworthy recommendation is by [Foroudi and Fakhreddin \(2026\)](#), who suggest future research could examine the influence of AI adoption in specific industry contexts such as technology-focused organizations. This could be because AI adoption may impact decision-making processes, job roles and communication across individual, team and organizational levels differently across industries.

*Sixth*, methodologically, PC research could benefit from capturing PC evaluation, e.g. breach or fulfillment over time, built through a longitudinal design ([Hameed et al., 2026](#); [Hassan et al., 2026](#); [Saksida et al., 2026](#)). Also, given the majority of research is quantitative in nature, largely relying on surveys, future studies can adopt a qualitative research approach, using interviews, focus groups and ethnographies or a mixed-method approach ([Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026](#); [Chaudhry et al., 2026](#)). Further, to capture sensemaking patterns, [Sanders and Florkowski \(2026\)](#) advocate the use of diary studies and incident reporting. Another fruitful recommendation is to use multiple sources to collect data such as including supervisor or co-worker ratings ([Nayak and Budhwar, 2026](#)) or using objective data such as app-based information or archival records ([Foroudi and Fakhreddin, 2026](#); [Saksida et al., 2026](#)), to reduce the issues associated with self-reported measures.

## Conclusion

The objective of this special issue is to enrich discussion on PC, advancing nuanced theoretical and practical understanding of the topic. This editorial presents an in-depth review of the 12 articles in this special issue – evaluating their theoretical underpinnings, key insights and contributions made to theory and practice. We use this special issue to draw upon future trends in this area: adopting diverse theoretical perspectives, integrating novel concepts and constructs, incorporating business ethics and sustainability, accounting for contextual factors, exploring links with technology and methodological considerations. We hope this special issue serves as a fruitful step in the direction of developing meaningful scholarship in the area of PC, particularly in light of ongoing external changes and evolving organizational shifts.

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