Work satisfaction and the relationship between the psychological contract and an employee's intention to quit. The results of a survey of public administration employees in Poland*

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Abstract

This study focused on demonstrating that the psychological contract influences employees' intention to leave the organization. Both factors in the context of work satisfaction. It also examined: (1) whether there is a relationship between the psychological contract, work satisfaction and the intention to quit; (2) which variable (the psychological contract or work satisfaction) better predicts the intention to quit; (3) whether – and how – the type of the psychological contract differentiates the intensity of work satisfaction and the intention to quit. The questions were answered based on information obtained during *Computer-Assisted Web Interviews* conducted with 5,930 employees representing three levels of a public administration organization. The effect of the psychological contract and work satisfaction on respondents' intention to quit was measured by structural equation analysis.

According to the study's results, a relational psychological contract significantly contributes to the development of strong relations between the employer and employees and makes the latter less willing to leave the organization. Its association with employees' intention to leave can be direct or indirect, through work satisfaction. It has also been established that a relational psychological contract can be useful for the studied organization as a predictor of employees' intentions to stay or leave.

1. Introduction

Employment can add flavour to the human life and be source of deep satisfaction. A job that is consistent with an employee's subjective beliefs and abilities evokes contentment and a sense of belonging to the organization. However, volatile business environments, global competition and dynamic changes that we observe in present-day economies make relations between employers and employees more complicated and intricate, and frequently cause the latter to consider a change of job.

There is an increasing number of studies that seek to explain employees' motivations to quit in the framework of variables such as personality traits, career preferences, a match, or a lack thereof, between employee and organizational

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expectations and values (Oh et al. 2014; Wojtczuk-Turek 2016), a sense of attachment to the organization (Rhoades et al. 2001; Borkowska/Jawor-Joniewicz 2016), perceived organizational support (Rhoades/Eisenberger 2002; Neves et al. 2018), or the awareness of support from the superior (Maertz, et al. 2007; Kumar et al. 2018), which are believed to have an effect on the motivation to quit. By determining employees' work satisfaction, the variables also shape their propensity to terminate employment with the present employer.

The fact that a psychological contract significantly determines the entire system of complex employment relations implies that it is also important for employees' work satisfaction and their plans to stay or leave. Employees can be presumed to feel satisfaction with their work when they see that the provisions of their psychological contract are respected. More generally, this means employees' attitudes toward the employer are shaped by how they are treated. This mechanism has an additional advantage of protecting them from cognitive dissonance. In an organisation that is helpful and interested in workforce welfare, development and needs, employees will adopt positive attitude and feel satisfaction with their jobs. However, an organisational failure to provide them with a favourable and supportive work environment, and to meet their individual needs, may lead them to behaviours and attitudes suggesting that may be willing to quit. The practical implication of this mechanism is that human resources should be viewed as an asset determining positive organizational activities (Shuck/ Reio 2011; Haque 2018). This said, it must be noted that few studies explore the influence of the psychological contract on employees' propensity to quit in Central and Eastern European countries. The only study known in Poland was carried out by Wołowska (2013) who examined employees' attachment to their organization and the impact of a breached psychological contract.

The problem of employees leaving their organisations is attracting increasing interest also in the public administration sector. The systemic reforms in the Polish public administration sector in the early 1990 s which scrapped, *inter alia*, the traditional (bureaucratic) model of management were followed by efforts to improve the performance of public institutions. More economic use of public funds, better quality of services and higher effectiveness of public institutions have been put high on the list of priorities. The main goal of the changes has been to ensure more effective delivery of public tasks, to widen management responsibilities, and to increase organisational flexibility. The success of the changes will depend on employees' positive attitudes and their readiness to contribute to the achievement of organisational goals.

This study provides empirical evidence that considerably extends the knowledge of the nature of relations between employees and the employer in Poland. Its purpose is to fill the gap in research on the psychological contract by looking into its influence on employees' intention to leave the organization and by eval-

uating the mediating effect of work satisfaction. The analysis of the psychological contract, employees' intention to quit and the mediating effect of work satisfaction, and of the relations between them, will advance our understanding of why employees consider a change of employer, thus allowing better measures for controlling this process to be developed in the future. Its outcomes may also help organizations become more competitive, because today humans are increasingly believed to be a key organizational resource.

Last but not least, the study also provides an extended description of the insufficiently covered dynamics of employment relations based on a sample of public administration employees in Poland. This group of employees has wide decision-making powers and carries out a socially vital mission of serving the law and implementing social relations organized by it (Jasudowicz 2005), so it seems important to know why some of them voluntarily quit their organizations.

2. A review of the literature

2.1. Psychological contract

There are many types of contracts that apply to various aspects of human life (Wellin 2013). Some of them are necessary to ensure stable and harmonious relations between employees and the employer, e.g. legal contracts setting out employment terms and conditions or economic contracts explaining how an employee will be remunerated for their work. Apart from these formal spheres there is also a less official domain of expectations that employees and employers hold about different aspects of their relations and organizational functioning. Many researchers agree that an employee and the employer enter into a tacit understanding (Guest/Conway 2002) known as the psychological contract, which is shaped by the employee's beliefs about the terms and conditions regulating the exchange of services with the employer and about the parties' obligations (Rousseau 1989). Rousseau (2001) observed that the perception of the contract varies with employee's experience and beliefs that are formed in the early phase in a controlled manner and then automatically. The first stage takes place when new information has to be structured and processed but employees lack experience and therefore cannot properly assess it. In such cases, experience is replaced by an active and planned search for information that, once found, is carefully studied to determine the likely losses and benefits of staying in the organization and to make a quit-or-stay decision as appropriate. The stage ends with the employee becoming experienced enough to instinctively process information. When the motivation to stay in the organization and continue the psychological contract is strong, the set of beliefs solidifies and allows predicting future responses, because people adjust their beliefs to experiences rather than vice versa (Rousseau 2001). Therefore, sets of beliefs stemming from the psychological contract influence the parties' responses workplace stimuli, including the re-

jection of groundless claims, work satisfaction or a lack thereof, a sense of guilt for not doing enough, or disappointment that the other party failed on its promises. Employee's specific expectations determine their attitude to organizational decisions and whether they will be perceived as fair and just (Hartley 2006; Lamond 2005). If the creation of the psychological contract and the way it is fulfilled address the needs and expectations of an employee, then the experienced work satisfaction becomes a motivator for staying in the organization (Lee/Liu 2009). In the case that delivered under the psychological contract exceeds what has been promised an employee may develop a feeling of engagement and attachment to the organization, but a failed contract may cause an employ to consider a change of a job (Wangithi/Muceke 2012).

Psychological contracts are transactional or relational (Rousseau 1995; Raja et al. 2004). The transactional contract involves measurable monetary rewards for performance meeting relatively specific criteria. In contrast, the relational psychological contract is based on socio-emotional and non-financial exchanges that are dynamic in nature, unlimited by any specific time frame and vary with individual beliefs and experiences (Rousseau 1995).

Rousseau and Wade-Benzoni's (1994) have compared the transactional psychological contract to an equation between work and pay, meaning by this that the requirements of a job, career development opportunities and the estimates of costs and benefits are specifically defined long before a formal contract is concluded (Raja et al. 2004). On the other hand, the relational contract comes with intangible rewards such as trust, respect and loyalty (DeMeuse et al. 2001) that require substantial effort from employees and employers to be exchanged (Guzzo/Noonan 1994). Because of its character, the relational contract is valued by stable organizations that invest in the development of their personnel to make them more efficient, loyal and engaged in the organization (Rousseau/McLean-Parks 1993; Flood et al. 2001). Psychological contracts are transactional or relational (Rousseau 1995; Raja et al. 2004). The transactional contract involves measurable monetary rewards for performance meeting relatively specific criteria. In contrast, the relational psychological contract is based on socio-emotional and non-financial exchanges that are dynamic in nature, unlimited by any specific time frame and vary with individual beliefs and experiences (Rousseau 1995).

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stable organizations that invest in the development of their personnel to make them more efficient, loyal and engaged in the organization (Rousseau/McLean-Parks 1993; Flood et al. 2001).

While the course of socio-economic and technological changes seems to require that the traditional relational psychological contract be redefined towards a new type of a transactional contract (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2011), both types of contracts are still equally important. In the constantly changing environments modern organizations may also choose to reach for contracts of indefinite character (neither relational nor transactional) and thus less stable. Sarantinos (2007) argues that employers should clearly state in relations with employees which type of the psychological contract they consider valid (relational or transactional). In Poland, the predictability and durability of employment relationships was until recently determined by the indefinite employment contract and employers' paternalistic attitudes. However, these are now being increasingly replaced by transactional contracts (Florczak 2018), because of serious discrepancies in the interpretation and execution of the formal employment contracts that cause many employees to feel uncertain in the workplace (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2018).

2.2. An employee's intention to quit

The intention to quit can be defined as an employee's desire to find another job at some point time for reasons such as the employee's negative opinion and attitude about their organization and job, etc. (Shwu-Ru/Ching-Yu 2010).

Even though an employee's decision to quit is not, by itself, detrimental to the organization, employee turnover has adverse consequences, such as the HR department having to spend additional amounts to recruit and employ new staff and develop their skills (O-Connell/Kung 2007). Another consequence is that the loss of well-trained and high-performing employees who feel failed by the employer may reduce the productivity and engagement of those who stay, as well as affecting the performance of the whole organization. Many voluntary departures have long-term impacts, including greater pressure on the remaining employees to work harder to achieve organizational targets (Grobler/ Warnich 2005). However, they may also be a relief for an organization when the quitting employees are regular, ineffective underperformers and an opportunity to improve its results by reducing the wage fund (Dess/Shaw 2001), or even to strengthen its market position. In some cases, some of those who leave an organization are spoilers souring the workplace atmosphere or relations with customers (Cubulski 2008).

Both theoretical and empirical studies point out that employees may consider leaving the organization for a variety of reasons (Thatcher et al. 2003; Kassing et al. 2012) and a commonality on what the reasons actually are is yet to find.

Williamson (1983) points to employee's low productivity and a coincidence of external factors including the availability and attractiveness of job opportunities in the market. Call et al. (2015) divides factors resulting in employees' 'leave' decisions into: a) extraneous: related to employees' environment; b) intrinsic: such as individual socio-demographic characteristics and personality traits of an employee determining their professional activity; c) organizational: emerging in response to different aspects of an organization's HRM; d) affective: shaped by employees' work satisfaction, and e) influencing employees' performance. Das (2012) observed that studies examining the causes of employees' departures focus on a relationship between their feelings and attitudes (such as work satisfaction and engagement in the organization) and the intention to quit.

With the knowledge accumulated so far, it is still important to establish and understand the role of the psychological contract as a predictor (a prognostic variable) of employees' voluntary decisions to leave the organization (Guchait/Seonghee 2010).

2.3. The psychological contract and the intention to quit

According to Fiske (2006), the successful interaction between the employer and an employee requires that both parties understand situations in a similar. This suggests that understanding by an employee and the employer of their reciprocal obligations determines the adequacy of their behaviours and that such behaviours can come with rewards for both parties. Numerous studies explaining the influence of the psychological contract on employees' attitudes show that the perceived compliance of the organization with the psychological contract strongly and positively correlates with employees' increasing loyalty and attachment to the employer (e.g. Dabos/Rousseau 2004; Lester et al. 2007), while its failure to meet its contractual obligations encourages employees to consider the reduction of their obligations (Coyle-Shapiro/Kessler 2002, Robinson et al. 1994; Shore/Tetrick 1994), reduces their work satisfaction work, makes them less trustful, and decreases their organizational engagement (Robinson et al. 1994).

Rousseau and Sheperling (2003) noted that because employees view all express or tacit promises made by their superior to be actually made by the organization, they tend to place the blame on it each time they are broken. Tekleab and Taylor (2003) concluded from the empirical data that the parties' agreement on their reciprocal obligations does not protect the psychological contract from being breached or broken, because having different sets of beliefs an employee and the employer may still fall into conflicts over issues such low quality of cooperation, causing the employee to consider a job change (Dulac et al. 2008; Chen et al. 2008). When an employee and the employer have different understanding of the content of their psychological contract, misunderstandings are almost unavoidable (Wellin 2013). It is important to note here that that they are not caused

by the ill-will of the parties or their exaggerated claims, but by their inability to understand the nature of their relations because of different sets of beliefs affecting their perception of see each other's obligations (Adamska/Grabus 2012).

There is rich empirical literature on employees' reactions to the perceived infringements of the psychological contract. Many authors studying organizational practices and labour market characteristics in different industries point to a relationship between psychological contract infringements and negative emotional reactions from employees (Hamilton/Treuer 2012). There are also studies presenting the consequences of such infringements (Aselage/Eisenberger 2003; Macko 2009). Some authors report a relationship between the psychological contract and employees developing attitudes and feelings such as a wish to quit the organization (Rousseau 1990), work satisfaction (Okabe 2018), engagement in the organization (Bal/Smit 2012; Conway/Briner 2005) and citizenship behaviour in the workplace (Robinson/Morrison 1995).

According to Robinson and Rousseau (1994), the infringement of the psychological contract and an employee's intention to quit are directly related to each other. The authors also concluded that in response to a perceived breach of the psychological contract by the employer employees tend to downplay their obligations. Turnley and Feldman (2000) found procedural justice to be important for diminishing the negative impact of the perceived breach of the psychological contract on an employee's intention to leave the organization. The findings have been confirmed by the results of several other studies (Bunderson 2001; Coyle-Shapiro/Conway 2005).

On the other hand, there are studies showing that the perceived fulfilment of the psychological contract has a bearing on employees' engagement in the organization, work satisfaction and reluctance to seek another job (Conway/Briner 2002; Turnley/Feldman 2000). Because of the foregoing studies, the fulfilment of the psychological contract can be expected to be negatively correlated to employees' intention quit.

2.4. Work satisfaction

Work satisfaction and its relationship with other variables determining organizational successes and failures (within the HR sphere and the economic domain) continue to be an important field of research (Judge et al. 2001; Juchnowicz 2013; Wołowska 2013; Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2014) because the role of work satisfaction and its impacts have not been yet sufficiently explained. Some authors attribute the development of work satisfaction to the evaluation of the organization and of employee's performance together with the rewards it brings (a top-down approach) (Ilies/Judge 2003), while others indicate that it is the satisfaction with work done that influences organizational (Koys 2001) and individual performance (a bottom-up approach) (Redhman/Waheed 2011; Kmiotek

2016). There are research reports according to which the intensity of work satisfaction felt by employees depends on external factors such as being successful at work, as well as on their individual characteristics, for instance, genetic and personality traits, etc. (Ilies/Judge 2003). Among the latter, special attention is given to personal and social assets, e.g. a sense of coherence (Dudek et al. 2001); a sense of one's value, effectiveness, and life optimism (Hararia et al. 2018); or perceived support from other people (Wnuk 2018).

Work satisfaction is a feeling of pleasure, or discomfort, which develops in relation to the performance of tasks, functions and roles (Bańka,2000). This affective state is underpinned by the fulfilment of person's internal needs (for responsibility, achievement, etc.) and external needs (e.g. comfortable working conditions, good interpersonal relations, fair pay, etc.). In this sense, work satisfaction provides a measure of an employee's emotional attitude to their work, tasks, goals, values and workplace (Czarnota-Bojarska 2010; Nielsen et al. 2011; Yang 2012). There is evidence that if the psychological contract and the way it is carried out are consistent with what an employee expects and needs, then the feeling of work satisfaction is likely to develop (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2015). One conclusion of the metaanalysis by Kurtessis et al. (2015) was that when there is a perceived match between the expectations and obligations of employees and the organization employees view it as supportive and concerned for their welfare and so they are less inclined to leave it. By analogy, this seems to imply that there is also a mechanism based on work satisfaction through which the psychological contract influences an employee's intention to quit an organization.

Work satisfaction has been found to have a direct as well as an indirect effect on employees' motivation to leave the organization (Tett/Meyer 1993). In most studies it is presented as a predictor of whether or not an employee will seek another job (Anto´n 2009; Karatepe et al. 2007), but other authors consider it a mediator between the attachment to an organization and an employee's intention to quit (Trimble 2006; Tett/Meyer 1993; Wnuk 2017). In Xiang-Ju's study (2010) of employees representing different organizations scattered across China work satisfaction mediated between the perceived support from the organization and employees' intention to leave. All this shows that work satisfaction is an important construct that probably mediates between the employee's and the employer's understanding of the psychological aspects of the employment contract (Griffin/Moorhead 2007) and an employee's motivation for seeking another job (Wnuk 2018).

3. Material and methods

3.1. Research model

To comprehensively examine the relationships between employees, employers and the influence of the psychological contract on variables such as the intention

to quit and work satisfaction, a model is proposed (fig. 1) that shows how both types of the psychological contract (independent variables) and employees' work satisfaction (a mediating variable) are related to one another. The independent variables and the mediating variable influence the probability of an employee wishing to leave an organization (a dependent variable). The model was used as a framework for a survey of a three-level organization in the Polish public administration sector.

Figure 1.: The model of relationships between the selected variables
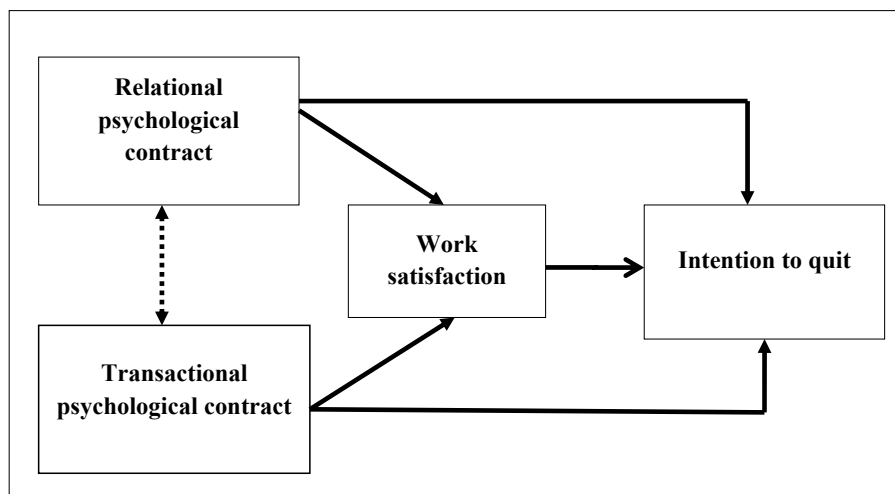
Source: created by the author

3.2. *Research tools and their reliability*

The above model was subjected to empirical testing in the framework of preliminary assumptions based on the findings of earlier qualitative research, namely:

- the selected organization is clearly committed to employment relations because it uses psychological contracts to shape workplace relations, particularly the relations between employees and their immediate superiors;
- the psychological contract is understood in the organization in terms of exchange. The main partner is its leadership that decides about wages, tasks, recognition, promotions, information, dismissals and penalties, and controls decision-making process. In return, employees contribute work of expected quantity and quality, engage in the life of the organization, show innovativeness and loyalty to the organization, and foster good relations with colleagues and customers;

- the surveyed employees view the psychological contract as a dynamic, changing process, where the expectations and obligations of the employer and employees may change with circumstances.
- changes to the psychological contract can disturb its internal balance and motivate an employee to quit the organization;
- employees' work satisfaction is particularly sensitive to two factors: employee identification with the organization and self-assessed engagement;
- the motivation to quit can be induced by factors such as low wages, few promotion opportunities and daily stress (caused by the organization of work, etc.);
- there are considerable differences between non-managerial and managerial employees regarding how the level of work satisfaction influences the intention to quit;
- a large part of the organization's personnel (its core) are long-standing employees who feel strong loyalty to their employer and high work satisfaction.

The purpose of the in-depth interviews (IDI) was to initiate discussions and to analyse the nature of relations between employers and employees by evaluating their work satisfaction. The outcomes of the analysis of the qualitative research results were used to design the quantitative research methodology.

The survey of the selected organization' personnel was carried out using a method called the „Employee motivation survey" which was developed by the Partner in Business Strategies as per the organization's Strategy of Development for the years 2013–2018. One of the Strategy's aims was to implement an HRM system based on a model of competencies and to increase employee satisfaction and retention rates.

The survey tool was the CAWI (Computer-Assisted Web Interviews) and questionnaires distributed via the intranet through the LimeSurvey application[1]. Respondents' answers were converted into a data matrix in real time. The studied variables were evaluated against items adapted from a tool used by the organization to carry out its annual surveys of factors influencing employees' attachment and work satisfaction. The item adaptation process was performed using quantitative research methods and invertible scales, the validation of scales and subscales, and a structure comprising operational models and a socio-demographic data module for rearranging the data according to the purpose of measurement.

The questionnaires contained 87 statements that were grouped into modules for the type of the psychological contract, overall work satisfaction and the intensity

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1 LimeSurvey is an online application with survey questionnaires that can be accessed via a web browser. It is written in the PHP language and uses databases such as MySQL, PostgreSQL or MSSQL. For more on this subject see the Web Survey Methodology at http://www.websm.org/index.php?fl=1&nt=2&m2w=Guides,%20codes,%20best%20practice&sid=1 (19 June 2018.).

of the intention to quit. All statements were evaluated using a 5-point Likert scale (where 1 denotes „I strongly disagree", 2 – „I disagree", 3 – „Neither agree nor disagree", 4 – „I agree", 5 – „I strongly agree").

The questionnaires were focused on the following themes:

■ the relational psychological contract (9 statements, e.g. „I think the organization reciprocates employees' efforts");
■ the transactional psychological contract (9 statements, e.g. „I come to work just to do my job");
■ overall work satisfaction (38 statements, e.g. „I am generally satisfied with working in the organization" or „The relations among employees are good");
■ task satisfaction (6 statements, e.g. „I carefully and professionally fulfil my duties");
■ identification with the organization (5 statements, e.g. „I work in a good organization");
■ self-assessed employee engagement (6 statements, e.g. „I am willing to work more than I am paid for");
■ intention to quit (14 statements, e.g. „I would quit immediately if I could even if the new pay was the same or lower".

To assess the reliability of the survey data, a Cronbach' α was calculated for each variable. Its values showed high internal consistency of the data for: the relational psychological contract $\alpha = 0.91$; overall work satisfaction $\alpha = 0.79$; work satisfaction components: self-assessed task satisfaction: $\alpha = 0.86$, self-assessed employee engagement $\alpha = 0.73$ and the identification with the organization $\alpha = 0.71$; employee intention to quit $\alpha = 0.83$. Because the Cronbach's α for the transactional psychological contract was significantly lower than the recommended level of 0.7 (Rószkiewicz 2011), the variable was removed from analysis. The probable reason why the contract's α was so low could be respondents' preference for long-term employment relations (involving security, trust and care) rather than for short-term or time-specific employment arrangements with competitive packages (Rogozińska-Pawełczyk 2016). It is also possible that the long years of service in the organization made them feel that their opportunities, abilities and skills were lower than they used be, so they adopted survival strategies focused on a narrow range of achievable targets ensuring workplace stability (Bal et al. 2015).

In the next step of analysis, the questionnaire form was standardised using Harman's single factor test. None of the 9 items describing the transactional psychological contract explained more than 50 % of its variance, thus providing grounds for rejecting this variable. As a result, the transactional psychological contract was removed from both analysis and the model. Then, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1. *The relational psychological contract is positively related to employees' work satisfaction.*

H2. *The relational psychological contract is negatively related to employees' intention to quit.*

H3. *Employees' work satisfaction is negatively related to employees' intention to quit.*

H4. *Employees' work satisfaction mediates between the relational psychological contract and an employee's intention to quit.*

In order to test the hypotheses, to determine correlations between the selected variables, and to evaluate the mediating effect of work satisfaction a correlation analysis and a multiple regressions analysis were performed. The differences between the variables were tested for statistical significance using the chi-square test and significance levels of $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$. Statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS PS Clementinei IBM SPSS PS Imago. The mediating effect of work satisfaction was evaluated by means of regression models and 5000-bootstrap sampling. Additionally, the structural equation modelling (SEM) technique contained in STATA v. SE was utilised (Preacher/Hayes 2004).

3.3. Description of the sample of respondents

The survey participants were employees of a social insurance institution in the public administration sector. Its Head Office, Shared Service Centre (SSC) and branches located in all parts of Poland employ a total of almost 46 000 people. The organization's leadership is faced with several challenges. Firstly, it has to ensure the smooth operation of an extensive, diverse and spatially-dispersed organism. Secondly, as a provider of socially sensitive services the organization is in the spotlight of public opinion. Thirdly, its special profile requires the use of up-to-date and effective HRM tools to boost employee engagement and work satisfaction and to keep them from leaving their jobs.

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 20,000 randomly selected employees, of whom 5,930 returned completed questionnaires.

The information on the survey participants' characteristics such as gender, age, position, the length of service and the employing unit is presented below (table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the survey respondents

Variable		Respondents (N = 5930)	
		n	%
gender	female	4852	84.4
	male	897	15.6
age	to 35 years	1084	18.8
	36−45 years	2374	41.2
	46−55 years	1447	25.2
	over 55 years	850	14.8
length of service	up to 5 years	807	13.9
	6−10 years	619	10.7
	11−15 years	810	14.0
	16−20 years	1232	21.2
	more than 20 years	2335	40.2
position	managerial	997	17.3
	non-managerial	4754	82.7
employing unit	Head Office	895	15.1
	branch	4 780	80.6
	Shared Services Centre	255	4.3

Source: prepared by the author based on the survey outcomes.

The majority of participants were female (84.4 %) as are most employees in the organization that is heavily feminised at all three levels. Many respondents were aged 45 and more (40 %) but the largest group was those aged between 36 and 45 years (41.2 %). The bulk of respondents had non-managerial jobs, only 17 % were managers. As far as the years of service are concerned, the proportion of employees who had been with the organization longer than 20 years slightly exceeded 40 % (40.2 %).

As for the employing units, as much as 80.6 % of respondents worked in branches, 4.3 % staffed the Shared Services Centre, and only 15.1 % worked in the Head Office. In this respect, too, the sample and the organization are similar.

4. Results and discussion

The first step of analysis involved the calculation of correlation coefficients between variables (table 2).

Table 2. Correlation coefficients between the selected variables (n=5930)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Relational psychological contract	1				
2. Overall work satisfaction	0.64**	1			
3. Task satisfaction	0.62**	0.51**	1		
4. Identification with the organization	0.59**	0.37**	0.38**	1	
5. Self-assessed employee engagement	0.75**	0.49**	0.46**	0.54**	1
6. Intention to quit	-0.47**	-0.76**	-0.69**	-0.74**	-0.75**

Source: created by the author
* $p \leq 0.05$;** $p \leq 0.01$;*** $p \leq 0.001$

All coefficients in the table are significant at $p=0.01$. As predicted by hypotheses H1 and H2, the relational contract positively correlates with overall work satisfaction ($r=0.64$; $p<0.01$) and with its components (task satisfaction ($r=0.62$, $p<0.01$); self-assessed employee engagement ($r=0.75$, $p<0.01$); and identification with the organization ($r=0.59$, $p<0.01$)). Its correlation with an employee's intention to quit is moderately negative ($r=-0.47$; $p<0.01$).

The components of work satisfaction (task satisfaction, self-assessed employee engagement and identification with the organization) are positively and moderately correlated with each other and with overall work satisfaction. The relational psychological contract strongly correlates with both overall work satisfaction and its components. The correlation between respondents' decreasing propensity to leave the organization and improving perception of the fulfilment of the relational contract by the employer is moderately strong. The correlations between overall work satisfaction and its components and the intention to quit are important for evaluating hypothesis H3. In all cases they are strong and negative: $r=-0.76$, $p<0.01$ for overall work satisfaction; $r=-0.69$, $p<0.01$ for task satisfaction; $r=-0.75$; $p<0.01$ for self-assessed employee engagement, and $r=-0.74$; $p<0.01$ for identification with the organization.

The study results are consistent with earlier findings which show that the relational psychological contract is associated with employees' intention to quit (Rousseau1990) and work satisfaction (Okabe 2018). They also confirm reports by other authors (e.g. Abyntoˊn 2009; Karatepe et al. 2007) that an employee's

work satisfaction is a predictor of their intention to quit. Thus, hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 have been supported theoretically and empirically.

The correlations identified between the relational psychological contract, work satisfaction and the intention were subject to a more detailed analysis. To determine the type of correlations between the intention to quit and the relational psychological contract, and to test the mediating effect of work satisfaction (H4), the SEM technique and the maximum likelihood method were applied. To test the possibility of work satisfaction being a mediator between the relational psychological contract and the intention to quit, a model for mediation was constructed.

Before investigating the variables of the theoretical model in terms of their capability to explain the intention to quit, the assumption about work satisfaction and its components mediating between the relational psychological contract and the intention to quit was tested by means of bootstrapping intervals (regression by the least squares method). The mediating effect of overall work satisfaction and its components was confirmed. Regarding overall work satisfaction, β = 0.09 and the results of the analysis of intervals (LLCI=0.042; ULCI=0.14) showed that its mediating effect was significant. The respective analytical values for the work satisfaction components were the following: task satisfaction: β=0.08, LLCI=0.002, ULCI=0.09; identification with the organization: β=0.15, LLCI=0.287, ULCI=0.35; self-assessed employee engagement: β =0.11 (LLCI=0.180; ULCI=0.21. The results prompted a more in-depth analysis of the correlations between the variables, which aimed to determine causalities between the relational psychological contract, work satisfaction and its components (mediators) and the intention to quit.

To test the correlations, a general model with six variables was constructed, from which other models were derived by appropriately removing and adding variables (Konarski 2009) in STATA v. SE. After the models were tested for goodness-of-fit and estimator significance, four models were accepted. The reliability of each model was evaluated for particular types of work satisfaction assuming that they were equal in importance, were experienced by employees with different intensity, and had different influence on their 'stay decisions'. The goodness-of-fit of the four models was evaluated using the following indicators: NFI, GFI, CFI, AGFI and RMSA. According to the literature, a model has good data-fit when its NFI >0.90, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.93, and AGFI=0.09 and RMSA <0.08 (Konarski 2009). Table 3 shows the values of the indicators for models relating to each type of satisfaction.

Table 3: The values of models' goodness-of-fit indicators

Model	Overall work satisfaction	Task satisfaction	Identification with organization	Employee engagement
NFI	0.99	0.98	0.99	0.99
GFI	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
CFI	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99
AGFI	0.97	0.96	0.98	0.98
RMSEA	0.043	0.057	0.027	0.037

Source: created by the author

The model for overall work satisfaction has a high goodness-of-fit and its variables significantly explain the relationships in question. This can be taken to mean that the intention to quit is directly influenced by the relational psychological contract (β = -0.41) and overall work satisfaction (β = 0.69). In less theoretical terms, a belief that the relational psychological contract is being fulfilled reduces an employee's intention to quit and increases their work satisfaction which has them same effect.

The goodness-of-fit of the other three models was also high (task satisfaction β = 0.43, identification with the organization β = 0.37 and self-assessed employee engagement β = 0.61). It was even higher after the models were adjusted to account for the mediating effect of overall work satisfaction (tab. 3).

From the above it follows that the relational psychological contract, overall work satisfaction and its three components (task satisfaction, identification with the organization and self-assed employee engagement) can function as predictors of employees' intention to quit. Moreover, the relational contract is directly associated with an employee' intention to seek another job. The results of this study confirm and extend findings by authors such as Jafri (2011) and Grimmer and Oddy (2007), who showed that work satisfaction mediates to some extent between occupational stress and the intention to quit.

5. Conclusions

This study has confirmed that the relational psychological contract significantly determines employees' work satisfaction and intention to quit. Its effect is both direct and indirect (largely mediated by work satisfaction).

According to the above, there are two mechanisms through which the psychological contract (offering secure, long-term employment in exchange for employees' loyalty and acceptance of the organizational hierarchy) affects employees' motivation to stay or quit the organization. The first of them is based on the superior and the employee fulfilling reciprocal expectations and obligations. If both parties are satisfied with what they receive and the employer keeps their

promises and shows concern for employee welfare, the gratitude felt by the latter makes them stay in the organization. The other mechanism is indirect and is also based on the exchange of expectations. In this case, however, the occurrence of the exchange depends on whether the employee is satisfied with how the employer looks after their welfare. This mechanism is unrelated to whether an employee feels overall work satisfaction or any of its components, meaning that all types of work satisfaction are important to the same degree. It is also noteworthy that their intensity is employee-specific and that they shape the preferred types of responses. Their occurrence is attributed to the individual's predispositions, life experiences, values and beliefs.

Work satisfaction and its components have been confirmed to directly influence the intention to quit and to mediate its development. A good data fit of the general model (accounting for direct influence) and of the model for mediation shows that work satisfaction can be used as a predictor of employees' propensity to leave the organization and that it mediates between the relational psychological contract and such intention.

Work satisfaction has also a direct relationship with employees' motivation to quit their organization. Its effect can be suppressed, though, by employees developing a negative perception of the working conditions, interpersonal relations or managerial style in the organization. In employees whose work satisfaction is based on their identification with the organization the intention to stay is a function of the organization's mission, vision, goals and values. They believe that staying with the employer is their moral duty and that a departure would amount to disloyalty and would put a question mark over their values and beliefs. There is, however, also a more practical aspect: the concern of being deprived of their present benefits and privileges. Task satisfaction and self-assessed engagement work in a similar manner: employees who believe that they help their organization achieve its goals are more satisfied with their work and consequently less willing to quit. The perceived fulfilment of the psychological contract is another, more direct reason why they choose to stay.

Because employees who intend to quit are a serious challenge for HRM departments, it is necessary for organizations to know what may lead to such decisions to effectively counteract them. The practical value of this study is that its results can help public administration organizations design HRM practices for harmonising the organization's and employees' values so to increase the retention rates. The results confirm that conflicts and disappointments are avoidable when managers understand the need to have strong psychological contracts with their subordinates. Managers should also design specific measures to ensure consistency between the axiological underpinnings of their values (as the representatives of the organization) and of employees' values by highlighting their similarity and correspondence. Furthermore, the focus of the organization's recruitment pro-

cess should be on managers capable of properly representing the interests of the organization and of creating workplace conditions enabling employees to meet their social and emotional needs (such as respect, belonging, recognition, etc.) and fostering their attachment to the organization and work satisfaction. In some situations it may be necessary to redefine the work requirements towards more interesting and meaningful to send a clear message that the organization is committed to long-term relationships with employees, which may have a positive effect on their attitudes and behaviours. The perceived benefits of social exchange between the organization and employees and between the superior and employees evoke a feeling of gratitude that motivates employees to stay with organization, support its goals and contribute to its performance.

Managers are key factor in employee retention and the quality of their interactions with employees is the main criterion the latter use when considering a change of the employer. Managers' awareness of the crucial importance of social exchange, of the need to create conditions supporting the personal and professional development of employees, and of taking care of employee well-being as the means of boosting their motivation to stay can be increased through coaching, workshops and training activities.

The purpose of the study was to demonstrate that work satisfaction mediates between the relational psychological contract and employee's intention to quit. It is based on a sample of employees in the Polish public administration which is characterised by a hierarchical and relatively inertial structure, standardised job descriptions and moderate wages, but also by higher employment security compared with private organizations (Strużyna/Marzec 2017). The study showed that the survey respondents considered the relational psychological contract an important factor in the development of strong employee-employer relations and that it decreased motivation to quit. This finding is consistent with the reports according to which the relational psychological contract mediates to some extent employees' propensity to consider other employment opportunities (DeMeuse et al. 2001; Tyagi/Agrawal 2010; Shwu-Ru/Ching-Yu 2010).

The study also found that work satisfaction is a mediator between the independent variable (the psychological contract) and the dependent variable (the intention to quit) and that compliance with the relational psychological contract can be a predictor of whether or not an employee will want to leave.

A limitation of the study is that its findings and conclusions are based on a sample of respondents representing the same organization from the public administration sector. Therefore, notwithstanding their solid scientific underpinning and reliability, they should not be understood as applying to other institutions in that sector.

It would certainly be interesting to compare the results of this study with the findings of studies on private organizations. The future research aimed to expand the present knowledge of the psychological contract should make sure that more independent variables are entered into the model proposed above, such as respondents' gender, age, education, position, the size of the organization, or other situational data.

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