

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND WELLBEING
OF THE UK HIGHER EDUCATION ACADEMICS
DURING THE COVID-19 PROMPTED
REMOTE WORKING**

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy by**

GULZHAN RYSBEKOVA

**Department of BUSINESS, ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
Brunel University London
January 2023**

Abstract

The main aim of the research is to examine the psychological contract of the remotely working Higher Education academics during the pandemic restrictions imposed in the UK. More specifically, the research revealed the psychological contract content for the educational context and expanded the concept by introducing the hypothesis of value-based relationships within the psychological contract construct under the study. In addition, the wellbeing implications during the enforced lockdown measures are also studied in conjunction with the PC concept. Thus, the research addresses an identified gap to study the impact of the enforced remote working on the academics' psychological contract. The unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 on accelerating the digital transition of the education substantiates the originality and novelty of the paper. The psychological contract theory offers a relevant and comprehensive framework for investigating the impact of this sudden and forced immersion with technology-enabled forms of working within a HE setting which has never been undertaken before.

The study adopted phenomenological approach and used 30 qualitative semi-structured interviews as the dominant method of data collection. This method has been enhanced by the Likert-scale questionnaires which allowed, among other things, to explore the topics in advance to facilitate deeper examination during the interviews. The methodological strategy utilised corresponds to the underlying phenomenon, which is also individual in nature, and therefore fits perfectly with the PC framework.

The research provides empirical insights into the remote working arrangements and the changes they can bring about in the psychological contract of the academic employees. The findings suggest that the academics' PC must be

considered through the expanded ideology-infused framework as the traditional transactional and relational approaches are not able to reflect the depth of the PC revealed which is being established to have an ideological nature. The other major conclusions can be summarised by the detailed PC content developed as a result of the qualitative inquiry and wellbeing implications for the PC.

Acknowledgements

All praise is due to Allah.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my main supervisor, Dr John Aston. I am forever grateful for your guidance and support, and you will always be remembered in my prayers.

I am also grateful to my second supervisor, Dr Weifeng Chen, as well as Research Development Advisor Dr Radha Shiwakoti and all the staff members at Brunel University. Your unparalleled guidance and support have been invaluable to me.

A special thank you goes out to all the brilliant academics who participated in this study. Your openness and honesty during the interviews made a tremendous contribution. I feel incredibly honoured to have had the opportunity to meet each of you.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my parents, Gulsim Rysbekova and Yersultan Rysbekov, who raised me when I was a child and supported me throughout my PhD journey.

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to my family – my husband and my three children – for their unwavering encouragement and support.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	9
DEFINITIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS	11
<u>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</u>	<u>13</u>
1.1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	13
CHRONOLOGY	17
QUARANTINE AND WELLBEING	19
1.2. AIM OF THE STUDY	21
1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	21
1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS	22
1.5. SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	22
ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTION	24
ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION	26
SOCIETAL CONTRIBUTION	28
RIPPLE EFFECT	29
1.6. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND SCOPE	31
1.7. PHILOSOPHICAL PARADIGM	35
ONTOLOGY, EPISTEMOLOGY AND AXIOLOGY	37
METHODOLOGY	39
1.8. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS	43
<u>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</u>	<u>45</u>
2.1. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT	47
THEORY AND ORIGINS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT	47
DEFINITIONS OF THE PC: BELIEFS, EXPECTATIONS AND PROMISES	51
PC ASSESSMENT	54
PCB AND PCF: ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOURAL OUTCOMES	59
CONDITIONS FOR CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS: RENEGING, INCONGRUENCE, AND DISRUPTION	63
DISRUPTION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PC AND WELLBEING	65
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.....	68

2.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT AND WORKPLACE WELLBEING	70
WELLBEING AS A DISCIPLINE: THE ORIGINS AND MAIN DIMENSIONS	71
PC AND WELLBEING OF THE ACADEMICS DURING THE LOCKDOWN	78
2.3. WELLBEING, PC AND REMOTE WORKING	83
PCF AND PCB: ASSOCIATED EMOTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WELLBEING	84
STRESSORS AND WELLBEING	85
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS.....	86
JOB SATISFACTION AND TRUST	89
WORK-LIFE BALANCE	91
2.4. ONTOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS FROM THE LITERATURE REVIEWED	93
<u>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>96</u>
3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN	97
3.2. METHODOLOGY	105
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS AND LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE: MULTI-METHOD STUDY	108
THE RESEARCHER'S ROLE.....	111
3.3. POPULATION SAMPLE AND RECRUITMENT	113
SAMPLING TECHNIQUE AND TARGET POPULATION	113
SAMPLE SIZE	116
3.4. PROCEDURES	118
RECRUITMENT	119
DATA COLLECTION	124
LIKERT SCALE OXFORD QUESTIONNAIRE: WELLBEING MEASUREMENT TOOL.....	127
PILOT STUDY.....	128
3.5. THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS	129
ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES	133
<u>CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS</u>	<u>135</u>
4.1. SAMPLE POPULATION DEMOGRAPHICS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION	137
LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS	144
4.2. HIGHER EDUCATION INDUSTRY OF THE UK	151
4.3. OBJECTIVE 1. CHANGES IN THE PC: BREACH OR FULFILMENT	153
4.4. OBJECTIVE 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT CONTENT	156
STEP 1. 1 ST CYCLE OF STRUCTURAL AND OPEN CODING.....	157
Support services	161

IT services support	162
Mental health and wellbeing support.....	163
Equipment / material support.....	165
Training support	166
Communication	167
University-wide communication level.....	168
Individual-level communication	169
Team-level collegial communication.....	171
Common communication issues during the RW	173
Workload and pay	177
Bereavement.....	180
Engagement in crisis response	181
Re-emerging from crisis	183
Flexibility	189
Measures offered.....	193
The strongest message revealed.....	195
STEP 2. 2 ND AND 3 RD CYCLES OF CODING	198
Complete PC model and the ABOs	216
STEP 3. TIME DIMENSIONS	227
STEP 4. CONCLUSIVE ANALYSIS.....	234
UNIQUE INSTANCES.....	238
4.5. OBJECTIVE 3. WELLBEING FACTOR	243
<u>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY.....</u>	<u>260</u>
5.1. MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	260
OBJECTIVE 1.....	260
OBJECTIVE 2.....	261
OBJECTIVE 3.....	264
5.2. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS	266
5.3. LIMITATIONS	277
5.4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS	279
<u>REFERENCES.....</u>	<u>287</u>
<u>APPENDIX A. LETTER OF ETHICAL APPROVAL</u>	<u>308</u>

APPENDIX B. DEMOGRAPHIC AND SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE.....310

APPENDIX C. LIKERT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE.....311

APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS314

APPENDIX E. PARTICIPANT RECRUITING LETTER.....315

APPENDIX F. PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET316

APPENDIX G. CONSENT FORM.....320

List of Tables and Figures

FIGURE 1. HEI PARTICIPANTS	30
FIGURE 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY	34
TABLE 1. TRANSACTIONAL AND RELATIONAL PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACTS	50
TABLE 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT CONTENT BY HERRIOT ET AL (1997)	55
TABLE 3. WORKPLACE WELLBEING DIMENSIONS	76
FIGURE 3. PC, REMOTE WORKING AND WELLBEING THEMES	83
FIGURE 4. CONTEXTUAL FACTORS, PC AND OUTCOMES	87
FIGURE 5. RESEARCH METHODS DECISION TREE	100
TABLE 4. PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH INQUIRY: DESCRIPTIVE AND INTERPRETIVE	101
FIGURE 6. SAMPLING FUNNEL	116
FIGURE 7. QUALITATIVE STUDY PROCESS	123
TABLE 5. PRIORITY-SEQUENCE MODEL	125
TABLE 6. PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION	137
FIGURE 8. COUNT OF INTERVIEWEES BY AGE	138
TABLE 7. PARTICIPANTS' AGE GROUPS AND EMPLOYER RELATED PERCEPTIONS	139
FIGURE 9. RW AND EMPLOYMENT DURATION (IN YEARS)	139
FIGURE 10. FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PARTICIPANTS	140
FIGURE 11. RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS	141
FIGURE 12. GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF THE PARTICIPANTS	142
FIGURE 13. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ACADEMICS' OWN FULFILMENT	145
FIGURE 14. PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EMPLOYERS (LIKERT SCALE FROM 1 TO 10, 1 = 'NOT AT ALL', 10 = 'EXTREMELY')	146
FIGURE 15. CORRELATION BETWEEN PC AND NEGATIVE EFFECT OF RW ON PC	147
FIGURE 16. NEGATIVE EFFECT OF RW ON PC AND SATISFACTION WITH RW (LIKERT SCALE FROM 1 TO 10, 1 = 'NOT AT ALL', 10 = 'EXTREMELY')	148
FIGURE 17. 'OXFORD WELLBEING' AVERAGE SCORES	149
TABLE 8. COMMUTE TIME, SATISFACTION WITH RW AND 'OXFORD WELLBEING' SCORES	150
TABLE 9. PERSONALITY, 'OXFORD WELLBEING' SCORES, PC PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION WITH RW	150
FIGURE 18. PCB, PCF AND 'NO CHANGE' WITHIN THE SAMPLE	154

FIGURE 19. PCB, PCF AND “NO CHANGE” FRACTIONS BY THE NUMBER OF ITEMS CODED	155
FIGURE 20. PC MODEL FROM AN EMPLOYEE’S PERSPECTIVE	158
FIGURE 21. CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONCEPTS TO NEW PC FORMATION	159
FIGURE 22. CONTRIBUTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS TO NEW PC FORMATION	159
FIGURE 23. CIRCUIT OF INFORMATION IN THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS	182
FIGURE 24. ‘EXPERIENCES’ NODE DEVELOPMENT	198
FIGURE 25. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EXPERIENCES COMPARED BY THE NUMBER OF ITEMS CODED	200
FIGURE 26. 2ND AND 3RD CYCLES OF NVIVO CODING ANALYSIS	203
TABLE 10. EXPANDED INTERPRETIVE PC FRAMEWORK	205
FIGURE 27. “NEW PC CONTENT” WORD CLOUD FROM NVIVO	210
TABLE 11. SUMMARY OF THE PC CONTENT AND THE UNDERLYING VALUES	211
FIGURE 28. COMMON VALUES	214
FIGURE 29. PC MODEL CODING DEVELOPED	216
TABLE 12. PC MODEL FORMULATED AND THE ASSOCIATED EXPRESSIONS	223
TABLE 13. CRISIS RELATED AND AFTER-CRISIS PC COMPONENTS	228
FIGURE 30. PCB-HIGH LEVEL OF WELLBEING-POSITIVE ABO	239
FIGURE 31. PCF-LOW LEVEL OF WELLBEING-POSITIVE ABO	241
FIGURE 32. LIKERT SCALE AVERAGE WELLBEING SCORES AND PC BASED ON THE OHQ	247
FIGURE 33. PC-WELLBEING RELATIONSHIP	248
FIGURE 34. INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING CHALLENGES AND PC EXPECTATIONS	254
FIGURE 35. PC LEVELS	269
FIGURE 36. PCS HIERARCHY WITH ABOS: THE PC ICEBERG DIAGRAM	270
TABLE 14. ACADEMICS’ IDEOLOGICAL, TRANSACTIONAL AND RELATIONAL PC CONTENT	271

Definitions and Abbreviations

This thesis uses the following concepts and terms as defined by the UK Government:

- Remote education: any learning that happens outside of the classroom, with the teacher not present in the same location as the students. This includes both digital and non-digital remote solutions.
- Digital remote education: remote learning delivered through digital technologies, often known as online learning.
- Blended learning: a mix of face-to-face and remote methods. An example would be the 'flipped classroom', where main input happens remotely (for example through video), while practice and tutoring happens in class.
- Synchronous education: this is live, typically a live lesson but also reflects other live practices such as chat groups, tutorials and one-to-one discussions that also happen in a live online setting.
- Asynchronous education is when the teacher prepares the material, and the pupil accesses it at a later date. Asynchronous can involve both digital (pre-recorded videos) and non-digital (textbooks) materials (GOV.UK report, 2021).
- Online learning (synonyms include e-learning, web-based learning, computer-assisted instruction, internet-based learning and online classes) is defined as a process that employs information and communications technology for delivering and/or supporting learning and education (Riaz, 2013).

- Hybrid learning is the education delivery that accommodates two cohorts of students at the same time: those who are present in the classroom and those who are present online.
- Remote work (RW) - the synonyms for the purposes of this research include “working from home” and “telework” – is the work arrangement that implies working outside of the normal office environment and is performed with the use of the digital and non-digital remote solutions.

The following is the list of abbreviations that are frequently used throughout the present work:

ABO – Attitudinal and Behavioural Outcome

HE[I] – Higher Education [Institution]

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

IM – Instant Messaging

OCB – Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

PC – Psychological Contract

PCB - Psychological Contract Breach

PCF - Psychological Contract Fulfilment

PCT - Psychological Contract Theory

RW – Remote Work

SET – Social Exchange Theory

TL[A] – Teaching, Learning [and Assessment]

WLB – Work-Life Balance

Chapter 1: Introduction

The unprecedented closure of universities worldwide due to COVID-19 has accelerated the migration of teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA) into online domains (Watermeyer et al., 2021). This has created a gap in the knowledge base, which can be attributed to the unique nature of the experience. The theoretical model of psychological contract (PC) has proven to be suitable for examining the psychological contracts of academics working remotely and their wellbeing during the crisis, based on the principles of Social Exchange Theory (SET). The research examined the PC of the remotely working academics and the impact of the changes on their wellbeing levels within the crisis-prompted circumstances by developing empirical insights into the perceptions and feelings of the HEI employees. By doing so it also developed a paradigm for understanding the PC and wellbeing during the enforced remote working arrangements in a higher education setting through the means of the concurrent embedded strategy which employs the qualitative tool of interviewing supported by the quantitative method.

1.1. Background of the Study

An employer and an employee once connected enter into two types of contractual relationships – written employment contract with agreed terms and conditions and the unwritten psychological contract which is defined as an individual's beliefs in a reciprocal obligation between the individual and the organisation (Rousseau, 1989). Unlike the formal contract, the psychological contract is inherently perceptual as it refers to an individual's beliefs and interpretations (Robinson, 1996). Some of the common examples of the psychological contract include recognition, inducements, safety, work-life-

balance, flexibility etc. in exchange to an employee's commitment, loyalty, efforts etc. According to the studies, psychological contract exerts larger influence on employee's behaviour, feelings and attitudes than the formal employment contract and is, therefore, at least of similar importance.

It is generally accepted in the psychological contract theory that the psychological contract fulfilment (PCF) positively affects the level of workplace wellbeing by maintaining the ongoing attitudes and behaviours (Conway and Briner, 2011) consequently psychological contract breach (PCB) decreases the level of wellbeing via exerting negative emotions. In case of a fulfilment, for instance, a greater level of wellbeing, in its turn, has positive impact on the organisational performance via greater employees' productivity, increased creativity levels, healthy atmosphere, higher quality of workplace relationships, motivation, satisfaction, and commitment (Katou and Budhwar, 2012). It is established that wellbeing of an employee plays decisive role in the longer-term organisational success (Danna and Griffin, 1999). Therefore, the questions and hypotheses that might be developed from wellbeing research programme are likely to be of clear and immediate interest to the organisations.

The COVID-19 impact on the way that the companies operate - including HEIs in the UK - represents perhaps the most extreme, pervasive, and urgent shift to the online tools ever observed. Based on the Office for National Statistics data, the UK government's guidance to work from home if possible has increased the proportion of the workforce that was working remotely to almost half of the total working population or 47% during the first lockdown in March 2020 (Office for National Statistics, 2020). The disruptions in economic activity resulting from COVID-19 have significantly been mitigated by digital tools such as Zoom, for instance, which increased from 10 million to 200 million users in the first three months of the pandemic (Gupta, 2020).

At the same time, according to the survey among 1148 academics working in the UK universities 'online migration is engendering significant dysfunctionality and disturbance to their pedagogical roles and their personal lives' (Watermeyer et al., 2021). The other survey study conducted during the pandemic supports this finding by stating that at least half of employees reported being unhappy with their current (remote) work-life balance and experienced more physical symptoms compared to their normal working conditions (Hernandez, 2020). So, it is easily observable from such studies that there is substantial degree of dissatisfaction left from remote working that can affect the psychological contracting perceptions between the employers and the employees especially given the rise in the RW trend. The recent nationwide university staff strike (as of November-December 2022) supports this proposition by revealing the unresolved tension accumulated between the staff members and the HEIs in the UK.

The forced shift into a digital working environment has brought about new challenges, including dealing with technology at home, often in isolation, the inability to socialize with co-workers as before the pandemic, distractions from family members, care responsibilities (if applicable), lack of supervision, and various other factors. These challenges were having a significant impact on the psychological contract of employees, by influencing its content and, consequently, their levels of wellbeing. There is some research evidence linking workplace wellbeing with PCF or PCB, however little research is available on these linkages for the remotely working educators and when the employers are not able to meet certain obligations and expectations due to the crisis circumstances. For example, the employers were not able to fulfil such important psychological contract obligations as providing safe 'Environment' or even proper 'Recognition' due to the uncontrollable objective reasons.

It is essential to gain greater clarity with regard to both the negative and potentially positive sides of the changes for remotely working academics as very little is known about the additional challenges faced during RW (Hernandez, 2020). This is especially true for the education practitioners as the shift in pedagogy from traditional methods to the technology based approach of teaching-learning even in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis is deemed to persist (Mishra et al., 2020) so that it is no longer a crisis-response (Bergdahl and Nouri, 2021) but rather a gradual shift into a blended learning environment (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report, 2020). This leaves the consequent changes in the PC of the educators as an unexplored domain.

In addition, this research examines the content of psychological contract of the remotely working education professionals and their workplace wellbeing during the crisis-prompted circumstances. In fact, working from home contributes to work intensification and the erosion of work-life balance according to the above-mentioned survey on impact of online migration among 1148 UK academics. Furthermore, the wellbeing of academics is also affected by the expectations, primarily from employers, of being digitally present and accessible to students around the clock. This constant expectation can lead to frustration and even resentment as academics may feel unable to adequately fulfil these newly emerged demands (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

In general, the COVID-19 lockdown situation has forced almost 100% of the HEIs and their academic staff (Kernohan, 2020) to take part into an unforeseen experiment of remote working. Given its prolonged nature and vast impact not to scientifically learn from this would be missing this unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. The opportunity to advance the academic strategic planning, HR management practices and decision making that would maintain high PC standards despite and during any crises.

Whilst the psychological contract, its content, consequences of psychological contract breach or fulfilment are the topics that have relatively decent research exposure, the areas related to the linkages with workplace wellbeing within the distance education setting during disruptive periods constitute a clear gap from the theoretical and empirical perspectives primarily due to the novelty of the area. Thus, the proposed research is dedicated to fill the gap and contribute to a greater wellbeing level and better PCs of the remotely working academics in the UK.

Chronology

Pandemic flues have become a recurring threat to everyday life in the 21st century (Bergdahl and Nouri, 2021). The outbreak of the novel coronavirus (previously 2019-nCoV), with epicentre in Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China in December 2019, has spread to many other countries. On January 30th, 2020, the WHO Emergency Committee declared a global health emergency based on growing case notification rates at Chinese and international locations (Velavan and Meyer, 2020).

This virus has been "baptized" as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 or SARS-CoV-2 and the relative disease has been called as coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by the World Health Organisation (Landi et al., 2020). Due to the highly infectious nature of the virus the governments around the world have introduced emergency measures to prevent vast spreading of the disease, manage the pressure on the healthcare systems and protect the population. These measures among many other things included imposing lockdown regimes and working remotely from home where possible, face covering and social distancing requirements which affected the health,

safety, and wellbeing of both individuals (causing, for example, insecurity, confusion, emotional isolation, and stigma) and communities (owing to economic loss, work and school closures, inadequate resources for medical response, and deficient distribution of necessities) (Pfefferbaum and North, 2020).

The immediate impact of COVID-19 for the educators has been lockdown and the enforced closure of schools, colleges and universities causing TLA in many instances to be urgently transitioned into virtual domains. Thus the academic staff, irrespective of their previous experience, skills or home and family settings, have been enforced, as many other professions, to work from home and exclusively via digital interface (Kernohan, 2020; Watermeyer et al., 2021). For all the HEIs the COVID crisis involved two distinct phases:

1st phase – incorporated emergency actions taken immediately before or at the onset of lockdown to implement business continuity plans, conduct risk analysis, close campuses, ensure the safety of students and staff, and identify how teaching and assessment could continue for the remainder of the academic year 2019 - 2020;

2nd phase – incorporated more forward-looking actions, generally from Easter 2020 onwards, to develop blended delivery variants, commence space planning for an eventual return to campus and resume some in-person teaching and learning in the context of physical distancing (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report, 2020).

During the spring and summer 2020 terms teaching and learning was largely remote (Howard et al., 2021). There was a short “come back” when the new academic year started, and schools and colleges reopened. But this then

followed by the second rise in COVID cases during December 2020 and another national lockdown In January 2021 that lasted up until Spring 2021. During the Summer and Autumn 2021 most of the legal limits on social contacts were removed. However, by the end of the year new Omicron variant appeared causing new wave of cases.

Thus, based on the above chronology there is at least one-year long experience of the enforced remote TLA which is an unprecedented and unique case in the history of education.

Quarantine and wellbeing

Whilst it is a necessary preventive measure, quarantine is often associated with a negative psychological effect which can be long-lasting (Brooks et al., 2020). According to the affective events theory (AET), the affective reactions triggered by an individual's event cognition are the decisive force of his or her subsequent affective reactions, attitude and behaviours. The COVID-19 pandemic defined as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) can have two dimensions of its public cognition according to the AET:

- emergency relevance (ER) refers to whether and to what extent an individual thinks an emergency is relevant to his or her wellbeing.
- and emergency coping (EC) refers to an individual's cognition of whether he or she has enough ability and resources to deal and cope with the pandemic circumstances (Mi et al., 2021).

Pandemic control measures, such as stay-at-home orders, maintaining social distance, and closure of public places issued by government, have made the public realize that COVID-19 is closely related to everyone and, therefore, the

above described cognition based on the AET represents antecedent of certain reactions, such as anxiety and burnout among remote workers (Chong et al., 2020; Mi et al., 2021). According to the research by Royal Society for Public Health (2021) people who switched to working from home as a result of COVID-19 had experienced health and wellbeing impacts, with the most common being feeling less connected to colleagues (67%), taking less exercise (46%), developing musculoskeletal problems (39%) and disturbed sleep (37%). In addition, home working is having an impact on people's mental health, with 67% saying they felt less connected to their colleagues and 56% saying they found it harder to switch off. However only a third of respondents had been offered support with their mental health (34%) from their employer ("RSPH Survey," 2021).

In contrast to the pre-pandemic remote working, which is predominantly associated with beneficial outcomes, the studied remote working arrangements have been imposed abruptly as a mandatory precautionary responsive measure to tackle the crisis of COVID-19. This is unique form of remote working which contains potential difficulties and detriments that employees face due to unforeseen and unfamiliar daily tasks while being confined to working from home, physically distantly from their workplaces and live interactions.

Given the uniqueness and novelty of the area the need for further research is apparent. This is especially relevant both during and after the pandemic because some organisations, including universities, have expressed their interest in extending remote working arrangements after the COVID-19 circumstances (see e.g. Mishra et al., 2020; Chong et al., 2020; Watermeyer et al., 2021). Therefore, the shift happened during the crisis plays detrimental role for the whole sector. Thus a better understanding of the conjugate changes would assist institutions and their employees to transition smoothly and

efficiently to remote working without compromising on wellbeing and performance (Chong et al., 2020). The psychological contract theory offers a relevant and comprehensive framework for investigating the impact of this sudden and forced immersion with technology-enabled forms of working within a HE setting which has never been undertaken before.

1.2. Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine the psychological contract of the academics and their workplace wellbeing during the crisis-prompted remote working.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The following 3 objectives have been identified to pursue this aim:

- Identify if there were any changes in the psychological contract due to the disruption and the subsequent remote working, determine if any PCB / PCF has occurred.
- Establish and analyse the resulting psychological contract content of the remotely working academics.
- Examine how the above along with disruption and remote working arrangements impacted on the academics' workplace wellbeing.

1.4. Research Questions

Based on the aims and objectives the present research addresses 3 key research questions regarding the psychological contract and wellbeing of the remotely working academics during the COVID-19 crisis in the UK:

- Changes in PC: How did the psychological contract of academics change as a result of the disruption and enforced remote working arrangements? To what extent did employees feel that their psychological contract had been fulfilled or breached?
- Psychological contract content: What was the resulting psychological contract content that remote employees held with respect to their employers during the disruption?
- Wellbeing factor: What role did wellbeing play in the psychological contract during this period of remote working?

These are the questions that are followed by this research that empirically explores the crisis-prompted remote working across the UK higher education sector, and which provides, a fuller and deeper analysis of PC and wellbeing affected by digital transitions.

The next section explores significance as well as academic and practical implications of the study.

1.5. Significance and Implications of the Study

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted personal, societal, and professional lives in a variety of ways which include changes in work settings such as switching from physical office spaces to home and other remote settings

(Swain et al., 2020). RW has been largely adopted as an emergency response by private and public organisations including HE settings and continuance and increment in its implementation is expected in the future (Molino et al., 2020).

Most observers of the corporate world believed even long before the pandemic back in 2000 that the traditional relationship between employer and employee is gone as the pressures from markets increased and the organisations realised the economic benefits of transforming the labour costs from fixed to variable (Cappelli, 2000). Although flexible working arrangements, such as remote working or homeworking, are increasingly being utilised by both public and private sector employers, little is known about how remote working impacts upon the employment relationship and specifically the PC between the remote employees and their employers (Collins et al., 2013).

The importance of the subject is now more highlighted by the pandemic accelerated transformation of the labour market. As the remote working policies are being increasingly adopted by many organisations after COVID-19 it is evident that “remote work styles may become more of a norm than a temporary arrangement to accommodate abnormal circumstances”, hence, in this shifting landscape, it is important to understand the changing work paradigm to facilitate better employee wellbeing (Swain et al., 2020). The employer-employee relationships have been operating under drastically different conditions during the imposed lockdown measures and because of that and due to alleged continuance of the RW practices this has potential to affect the overall organisational performance in the medium to long run.

The competitive global environment sets high standards for an organisation for this reason it is inevitable that caring for the wellbeing of employees is a necessary measure to enhance performance, and thereby

sustainability of the businesses and institutions (Currie cited in Baptiste, 2008). This view is reinforced by Schuster (1998) who purports that a significant relationship exists between attention to employees and superior organisational performance. In the light of the recent health crisis it becomes evident that introducing wellbeing at work is likely to introduce a change in the organisational climate that promotes positive organisational outcomes (Baptiste, 2008).

The PC concept is crucial to develop better understanding of the meaning and dynamics of the employers' relationships with employees. Once it is formed the PC provides clarity and the basis for comprehending the mutual obligations, both written and unwritten, as well as non-promissory beliefs and expectations that the parties are holding in respect of each other. So, it can be used as the guiding signal in the decision-making. Such clarity eases the managerial challenges associated with "false assumptions about job duties, extra-role behaviours and relational expectations". By doing so the PC management has a high potential to increase the satisfaction experienced by the employees which, in its turn, leads to enhanced performance and engagement, lower turnover, lower absenteeism and other positives for the overall organisational success (DelCampo, 2007).

Considering the above propositions, the practical contribution this research is seeking to make is threefold – academic, economic and societal - as described in the following paragraphs.

Academic contribution

At present, research on the independent concept of the psychological contract is deemed to be abundant. However, there is little research on

influences of the external and contextual factors on PC - such as crisis or digitalisation of the labour market - and the relationships with such outcome variable as wellbeing. Moreover, no research has been found to date on psychological contract and wellbeing within such prolonged and uncontrollable disruption as COVID-19 in the UK which led to a number of enforced measures including remote working arrangements. This disruption represented the emergency circumstances and resulted in the employers' inability to fulfil several essential psychological contract obligations.

In addition to the above, the context of RW of the UK academics with regard to their psychological contract and its linkages with wellbeing also represents a clear gap which this research is filling. According to the previous studies, whilst there are certain key dimensions at the heart of the psychological contract (e.g. high pay, promotion, security etc.), some psychological contract aspects are of particular importance to specific groups of employees such as remotely working professionals (Collins et al., 2013) or academia that have to be addressed especially given the rising trends of distance education and greater importance being placed on wellbeing. Most of the previous research on this topic has focused on employee attitudinal or behavioural intentions as the major consequences of PCF or PCB. Here, the focus is expanded to present empirical evidence on the remotely working academics' disrupted psychological contract from the individual wellbeing related perspective.

Hence, the study contributes to the current knowledge in three major ways. First, the study explores whether the disruption caused any changes in the PC of the remotely working academics and more specifically if the employees' perceptions of the changes were more about breach or fulfilment. Secondly, the research established the content of the PC within the crisis-prompted remote working arrangements. And thirdly, the study examined the impact of the

determined changes in the PC on the wellbeing of the HE academic staff. Thus, this research extends prior research on psychological contract by looking at the context of crisis remote working in a distance HE setting and exploring its impact on the academic staff. In addition, it studies the perceived peculiarities of the working environment at home and its impact on the disrupted PC and wellbeing thus contributing to the literature.

Furthermore, by utilising phenomenological approach and in-depth interviews to gather the data, the current research also advances the knowledge in terms of the methodology used. This is because the majority of studies on PC – about 90% - was using quantitative methods and only 10% adopted qualitative tools (Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008) hence the field of PC is dominated by the positivist approach (Khan, 2014). These prevailing positivist quantitative methodologies tend to understate the individual-level perceptions and experiences, so the current research's approach contributes by addressing this methodological neglect. The research design of this study allowed for more individual, perception-based approach which is also in line with the underlying term. Thus, the study addresses the critique that in spite of the subjectivity of the PC term there is lack of qualitative empirical research focusing on the individual based perceptions.

Economic contribution

The universities across the UK generated £95 billion in gross output for the economy in 2014–15, contributed £21.5 billion to GDP, representing 1.2% of the UK's GDP and also supported more than 940,000 jobs in the UK (UUK Report, 2021). The rising trend of the remote working mentioned indicates the

unprecedented shift in the employment relationships within this major sector. A considerable group of researchers (e.g. Cappelli, 2000; Mishra et al., 2020) are unanimous in asserting that the new working arrangements, heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, are no longer temporary emergency measures but rather the new normality standard which the employers have to comply with in order to stay competitive and up to date. In most organisations, according to the Flex Study, flexible work was a negotiated benefit — something addressed on a case-by-case basis and often directly with managers. But now, 3 in 5 employees or 75% demand flexible work without taking a pay cut, demotion, or loss of benefits to get it (The Flex Study by Fuze, 2021). Such context of rapid technological innovation and labour market transformation actualize the need to re-evaluate the way the HE system works (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

In addition, wellbeing at work is increasingly being recognised as an important factor in determining organisational success (Baptiste, 2008). The current research aims to provide higher education organisations in the UK with a greater understanding of how to effectively manage the wellbeing issues of remote employees in an informed and evidence-based manner. This can be achieved by introducing the psychological contract variable which ensures gaining an additional important tool and contextuality to aid the organisational quest for success.

The mechanisms revealed in this research can be incorporated into HR policies and practices by first being utilized at the organisational strategic planning level. The results of this study can provide practical assistance to HR services in strategically managing and promoting workplace wellbeing through the management of remote employees' psychological contracts based on scientifically derived insights into their beliefs, expectations, promises, and existing relationships. By fostering a healthy psychological contract,

employment relationships can be improved, resulting in a greater sense of wellbeing and a reduced likelihood of costly and undesirable experiences for employers, such as tardiness and other negative behaviours (Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014) and decrease the likelihood of student dissatisfaction with the ultimate quality of teaching. Such effective management of a company's human resources reinforced by better understandings helps to avoid breaches and violations and may serve as an additional competitive advantage for ultimate organisational performance (Bellou, 2006).

Societal contribution

Unprecedented fraction of the UK working population has been working remotely for unprecedented period of time during 2020-2022. Almost 100% of the HEI in the UK were delivering the TLA remotely (Kernohan, 2020) . Given this vast coverage of those who are concerned and the importance of wellbeing for organisational success it is difficult to overestimate the societal impact the research is aiming to reach should such disruptions happen again in the future but also during normal circumstances. The latter is because the trend of distance education and remote working is steadily increasing nowadays.

Due to its societal impact the area of workplace wellbeing has always attracted Government's attention as it ensures a broader vision of healthier, happier and more productive society members. Moreover, the implications of the "new deal" in the employment relationships and gig economy are accelerated under the pressure of globalisation and technological disruptions and represented by such companies e.g., as Uber, Airbnb or TaskRabbit (Kost et al., 2020). This trend heightened by COVID-19 has renewed the interest in the PC and the policymakers start paying greater attention to 'change the deal' in

response to increased pressures to adapt to changing circumstances (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000). So it is apparent that the new frameworks are needed that can analyse the changing employment arrangements and the effects for both the employers and the employees (Guest, 2004).

Ripple effect

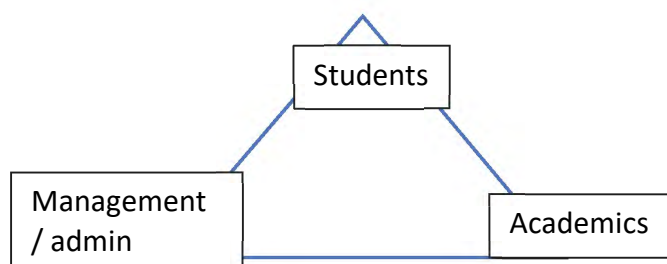
The reputation of UK higher education is globally renowned and is expected to be maintained at a high level regardless of the mode of learning. The potential transformation of distance education into regular distance education highlights the need for UK HEIs and the government to re-evaluate employer-employee relationships in the sector from this newly emerged perspective. It has been established that a majority of UK universities are considering a shift to blended learning due to the flexibility it offers. This approach can effectively cater to students' needs while also ensuring compliance with public health requirements (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report, 2020).

Hence, as the quality of education delivery can be assured through a better work attitude, which is influenced by a good psychological contract (Lee and Liu, 2009), the previously unexplored domain of remote working enabled by the newest technologies naturally becomes the primary focus of research interest. According to Watermeyer et al (2021) "...mapping this terrain is vital. We cannot just wait to see what happens... To do so would be a neglect of responsibility in not only guiding but also claiming agency over the next steps of change, where such steps already are profoundly affecting not only the role and identity of academics as higher educators but also their welfare and livelihood". Thus, the present research provides evidence and greater clarity regarding employees' expectations, supporting HEI management decisions in the post-

pandemic circumstances. In the medium to long run, the research can inform the higher education sector about crisis response measures that consider the psychological contract and wellbeing dimensions of employer-employee relationships. The importance of such preparedness is highlighted by the re-emergence of infectious diseases like the plague in the 21st century (Grácio and Grácio, 2017; Nikiforuk, 2008 cited in Bergdahl and Nouri, 2021). However, beyond plague-related risks, this preparedness is also essential for any kind of crisis or emergency that may require global or UK-wide distance education. Particularly, if educational excellence is considered a priority across the UK, it is crucial to study and understand the individual faculty experiences within these newly emerging market configurations.

So far, the UK higher education sector had no prior experience to draw from when it comes to dealing with such invasive and unparalleled crisis effects and the shift to remote working. The COVID-19 circumstances have highlighted the crucial need for crisis response plans to ensure the delivery of quality education during rapid transitions. By capturing the lived experiences of academic staff, the research sheds light on an important aspect of the HE participants' triangle (Figure 1). This, in turn, benefits the management and administration of a HEI by providing clarity on expectations and therefore enabling more effective management strategies and greater cohesion among faculty members.

Figure 1. HEI participants



As a result, the wider ripple effect of the study then reached by impacting the students, families, and wider societies. In addition, the

digital transition of the sector - whether as a crisis response or new era of digital TLA requirements response – highlights the importance of building resilience of the UK educational system further. Among other things, such greater resilience can be achieved by understanding the PC of those who use those digital technologies for the benefit of the national economy and individual society members.

1.6. Conceptual Framework and Scope

This study is based on the theoretical guidance outlined by the conceptual framework. The main theoretical framework used for this study is derived from the Social Exchange Theory which is one of the most widely used concepts for understanding employee behaviour. This theory can be traced back to at least the 1920-ties e.g., Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1925, bridging such disciplines as anthropology e.g., Firth, 1967; Sahlins, 1972, social psychology e.g., Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958; Thibault & Kelley, 1959, and sociology e.g., Blau, 1964 (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). It is one of the most influential conceptual paradigms in organisational behaviour (Riaz, 2013). Social exchange theory establishes that the parties enter relationships with each other to maximize their benefits (Blau, 1964) by exchanging their impersonal, socioemotional or other resources. The norm of reciprocity that governs such relationships obligates the parties to reciprocate the treatment provided (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). Social behaviour largely depends on exchange of tangible and intangible materials and therefore all human relationships are formed by considering the cost-benefit analysis. In economic terms, individuals pay some cost (time, money, energies etc) to gain something in return (e.g.,

acceptance, affection, assistance etc) and the relationships are formed and sustained when rewards are adequate enough to dominate cost (Riaz, 2013).

Psychological Contract Theory (PCT) originating from the Social Exchange Theory serves as a narrower, more focused theoretical basis for this study. According to this theory, the employees develop certain beliefs and expectations based on their own perceptions and the promises - explicit or implicit - made by their employers about specific resources they are obligated to provide due to the above-mentioned norm of reciprocity (Rousseau et al., 1996; Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Psychological contract theory emphasizes that employees' negative attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (ABOs) such as poor performance or disengagement follow the perceived failure of the employer to fulfil its promises, i.e. when the principle of reciprocity is not observed (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003).

This theoretical approach fits the current research as the main aim is to understand how the COVID-19 circumstances and remote working have impacted on the employee – employer relationships reflected in PC and the workplace wellbeing. According to PCT such relationships are shaped not only by the formal contracts but also by the unwritten contractual perceptions and beliefs about reciprocal obligations that have been significantly affected by the digital transition. Subsequently, the degree of the PC breach or fulfilment is then evaluated by the employees to reconsider their contracts in order to reflect the ongoing changes (Bellou, 2006).

The changes this research is addressing – the COVID-19 pandemic arrangements in the UK - whilst represent a very unique and novel experience still can be classified based on the psychological contract theory. The theory states that changing circumstances make transformation of individual

psychological contracts inevitable (Bellou, 2006). Such changes in circumstances that most probably may lead to a breach or violation can be classified into 3 groups: (1) reneging, (2) incongruence and (3) disruption. The latter condition is suitable for describing the recent COVID-19 pandemic as it is characterised by external and uncontrollable nature of the changes which is emphasised by the enforced or Government imposed measures.

Thus, the conceptual framework of the PC served as a useful foundation to reach research aims and objectives. The psychological contract - first observed by Argyris in 1960, developed further by Levinson et al in 1962 and considerably enhanced by Rousseau in 1989 - provided sound theoretical basis to understand and interpret the rich data collected from the participants. The psychological contract theory is considered as a mental model with which employees assess events happening at work and as a main influencer of employee's attitudes and behaviours in response to changes at work (Barbieri et al, 2018). Therefore, it provides useful foundation for evaluating workplace relationships and wellbeing during transformational periods. Moreover, the theoretical framework utilised helped in understanding the major relationships existent among the variables studied (Figure 2) and therefore proved to be useful and important for the stages of data collection and analysis.

The variables studied in this research and their relationships are visualised by the following diagram:

The "Psychological Contract Model" utilised for this research and represented by the "Causes", "Content" and "Consequences" is the model developed by Guest (1998) to reflect the employee's perspectives. The diagram above also indicates that the issue of wellbeing at work is examined through the prism of psychological contract which is influenced by the conditions of disruption and remote working. Hence the study develops empirical insights into the remote employees' wellbeing by investigating their PC during the periods of disruptive changes. By doing so it also develops the paradigm for understanding

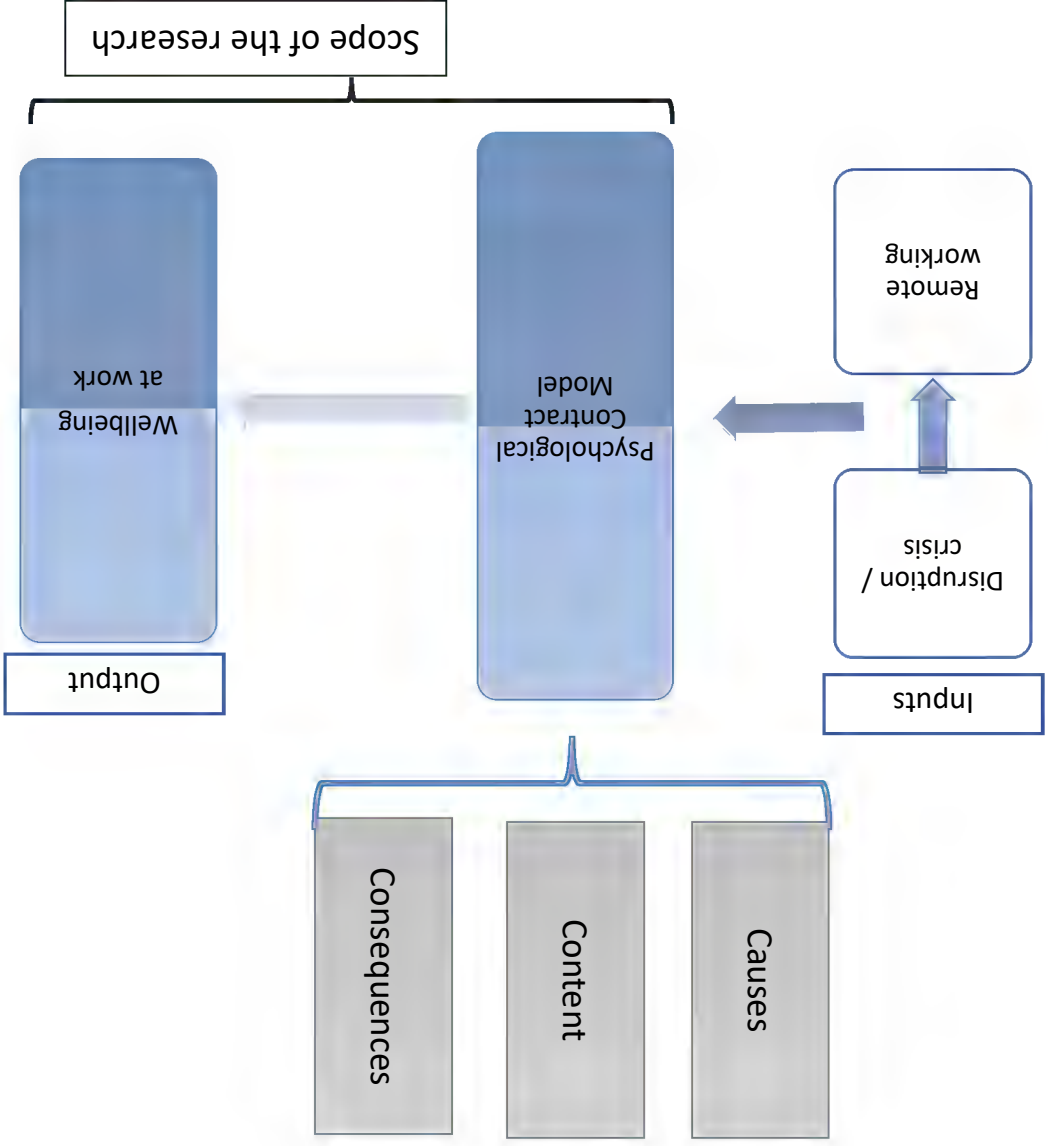


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework and Scope of the Study

the enforced remote working arrangements for the academics and generates greater clarity about their psychological contracts through the means of in-depth phenomenological study. The next section explains this philosophical stance of the study and its implications for the methodology used to reach the research aim and objectives.

1.7. Philosophical Paradigm

A philosophy, derived from the ancient Greek term "love of wisdom," refers to the rational, abstract, and methodical examination of reality as a whole or fundamental aspects of human existence and experience (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2021). Research philosophy, on the other hand, pertains to a set of beliefs and assumptions concerning the generation of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2015). A philosophical paradigm represents the collective worldview held by a community of scholars, encompassing shared beliefs, values, and methodologies (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Consequently, the research paradigm chosen by a researcher provides guidance by shaping their assumptions and beliefs regarding data collection and analysis methods for a particular phenomenon. In essence, a research paradigm can be described as a fundamental set of beliefs that governs actions, addressing foundational principles, ultimate truths, or the researcher's worldview (Denzin et al cited in Groenewald, 2004).

There are two major philosophical paradigms in research: the interpretivist and positivist paradigms. The positivist paradigm views the world as objective, where behaviour and cause-and-effect relationships can be measured, human activity can be predicted, and the focus is on understanding the mechanisms of the world through scientific methods. It emphasizes

calculation and estimation of events in the world. On the other hand, the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges the subjective nature of human values and recognizes that individuals construct their own reality of the world through interactions and experiences in various contexts. In an interpretivist paradigm, researchers seek to understand the real world through the perspectives and feelings of individuals, as they believe they have no direct access to an objective reality (Carson et al., 2001). It is widely accepted in the interpretivist paradigm that individual perceptions of reality can vary significantly due to unique experiences and contexts. Both paradigms have their strengths and weaknesses, and the choice between them depends on the nature of the research, the specific subject under investigation, and the ultimate goals of the study (Khan, 2014). Researchers should consider these factors when selecting the appropriate paradigm for their research.

The aim and objectives of the current research suggest an examination of reality from various individual perspectives, aligning with the researcher's belief that reality is multifaceted and dependent on individual perceptions. This personal belief in multiple realities, as described by Saunders et al. (2015) , influences the research philosophy and design, as the development of a research philosophy is a reflexive process. Consequently, based on the research requirements, aim and objectives and the researcher's own beliefs and assumptions the current research utilises the interpretivist inductive approach which is more appropriate in allowing the participants to express their own feelings and perceptions about the phenomenon studied as the purpose of interpretivist research is to create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the interpretive framework used in qualitative research is based on its key assumptions according to Denzin and Lincoln (2011): ontology,

epistemology, axiology and methodology (Creswell, 2012) which must be carefully considered in light of the adoption of a paradigm. The following sections discuss these assumptions in more details.

Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology

Ontology refers to assumptions about the nature of reality (Saunders et al., 2015). Interpretive qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of what they see, hear, and understand (Creswell, 2009). The individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences which are varied and multiple, hence the goal of research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation (Creswell, 2012). For this reason, the current research is focused on the academics' personal experiences and perceptions about their PC and wellbeing affected by the emergency RW. The ontological questions posed require diving deep into the nature and reality of the disrupted PC phenomenon. These questions are of the following meanings: 'What are the academics' personal perceptions and feelings about the disrupted PC?'; 'What are the perceived changes?'; 'How do these perceptions influence the level of their wellbeing?'

Epistemology concerns assumptions about knowledge, what constitutes acceptable, valid and legitimate knowledge, and how we can communicate knowledge to others (Burrell and Morgan 1979 cited in Saunders et al., 2015). It answers the question 'how we know what we know?' (Creswell, 2012). A researcher's epistemology according to Holloway (1997), Mason (1996) and Creswell (1994) is literally the theory of knowledge, which serves to decide how the social phenomena will be studied (Groenewald, 2004). According to Saunders et al. (2015) there are two types of epistemologies: objective and

subjective. The assumption of the objective epistemology is that there is only one – in the most extreme case - external to us and others, independent reality experienced by all social actors. Therefore, an objectivist researcher seeks to discover the truth about the world through the medium of observable, measurable facts, from which law-like generalisations can be drawn about the universal social reality according to Saunders et al (2015). Subjectivists, in contrast, assert that social reality is made from the perceptions and consequent actions of people which are different and therefore it makes more sense to talk about multiple realities. Hence the subjectivist researcher is interested in different opinions and narratives that can help to account for different social realities of different social actors (Saunders et al., 2015).

In accordance with the above definitions and given the purpose of the research which is to gain deeper understanding of the disrupted PC phenomenon through exploring the participants' subjective perceptions, the current research adopts subjectivist epistemology. For this reason, the data must be gathered from a deeper interaction with the people who engaged with the phenomenon of interest, i.e., crisis RW in a HE setting. The epistemological questions relevant for this research can be formulated as follows: 'How can we know what disrupted PC is?'; 'What are the ways of examining the impact of the phenomenon on the employees' wellbeing?'; 'How the changes in the PC can be distinguished?'.

The next set of assumptions - *axiological* – considers the values and ethics in the study design. Heron (1996) – as cited by Saunders et al. (2015) - argues that researchers demonstrate their axiological skills by being able to articulate their values as a basis for making judgements about what research they are conducting and how they go about doing it. The authors continue by stating that the choice of the topic, philosophy as well the data collection techniques

are all reflections of the values a researcher has therefore it is very useful to have greater clarity about them from the very outset of the research. By adopting the interpretivist individual-level approach, the researcher reveals her values of respecting every individual's feeling and perception, as well as valuing live personal interactions. The approach also aligns with the values represented by major human rights principles such as justice, freedom, voice, and equality. Furthermore, the researcher's values of quality education, individual wellbeing, and societal prosperity can be traced from the topic studied.

Methodology

Methodology refers to the methods, procedures and processes that aid a researcher in his or her knowledge acquisition or examination of the subject (Creswell, 2009). Philosophical stance and assumptions that provide foundation for the study's methodology correspond to the phenomenological philosophy. Phenomenology is often considered central to the interpretive paradigm (Clark, Denzin & Lincoln, Koch cited in Wojnar and Swanson, 2007) and is listed among the five qualitative research methods most frequently encountered in the social, behavioural and health science literature as stated by Creswell and Poth (2016).

According to the definition by Saunders et al. (2015) phenomenology is a strand of interpretivism that focuses on participants' lived experience, that is the participants' recollections and interpretations of those experiences, being particularly concerned with generating meanings and gaining insights into those phenomena. So, this definition alone can provide sound grounds for choosing the phenomenological approach to study the subject as this approach

is able to provide relevant framework to study the academics' lived experience of enforced remote work and the associated shifts in the underlying PCs.

The phenomenology can be traced back to the philosophical studies of Kant and Hegel and predominantly to the works of the founder of phenomenological philosophy, the German philosopher and mathematician, Edmund Husserl (1859 - 1938) who radically changed the nature of philosophy itself by focussing on the perception of the 'things in their appearing' or the way the world appears to people (Langdrige, 2008). He established that the real world is reflected in the people's consciousness and therefore people can be confident in how the outer world appears, so the reality on these grounds can be treated as pure "phenomena". As it can be inferred, phenomenology is both a philosophy and a research approach based on that philosophy which explores the meaning of individuals' lived experiences through their own descriptions (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). It is not thinking but perception that is paradigmatic of our lived but never fully conscious experiences. Rather than taking self (perceiver) or world (perceived) as given, one must begin with perceptions themselves, i.e., with phenomena (Davidson, 2000). Thus, by applying phenomenology this study is concerned with the unique perceptions of the multiple individuals who have actually experienced the phenomenon (Creswell and Poth, 2016) which is being researched.

Based on the phenomenological approach the researcher can utilise the following assumptions:

- The phenomenon is examined from the perspectives and based on the views of the participants;
- The uniqueness of each of the experiences studied is important for developing the overall phenomenological understanding;

- The understanding of the phenomenon examined must be based on the given data, i.e. clear from preconceptions (Lopez and Willis, 2004).

Thus, the phenomenological methodology is identified as the most suitable approach for this type of study since the phenomenon of disrupted psychological contract is experienced on an individual level according to the theoretical framework. Therefore, an approach that best captures the underlying individuality would be most relevant. Indeed, perceptions of the psychological contract are inherently individual in nature. Similarly, the conditions that affect an employee's behaviour are also experienced on an individual level, as similar experiences within the same organisation can be perceived quite differently by different employees, as confirmed by the psychological contract literature (see for example Cassar et al., 2013).

In order to investigate the disrupted psychological contract of the remotely working academics, it is important to access the interpretations, experiences and perceptions of each individual participant, therefore, qualitative semi-structured interviews are seen as appropriate tool because the focus of the study is 'on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants' (King cited in Collins et al., 2013). This approach enables to collect deep and expressive data that would not be as easily accessible otherwise - via quantitative or any other qualitative methods that do not allow the same degree of intensity when exploring one's individual perceptions. As such interviewing was used to gain an understanding of the participants' world consistent with the epistemological stance of this study (Collins et al., 2013).

A phenomenological researcher studies phenomena, their nature and meaning according to Howitt (2016). The major strategy is to obtain rich data which are detailed and provide the texture of experiences. Therefore, the goal

is to get as close to the lived experiences of the participants as it would be possible. Interviews and written descriptions are possibly the most frequently used in phenomenological research (Howitt, 2016).

This methodological approach is also in line with the recommendations proposed by Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) who addressed each assessment type of PC (content, feature and evaluation) with the relevant research tools and techniques that considered suitable depending on the circumstances. According to the authors content related studies - as this study is - might find it appropriate to use interviews and observations as well as focus groups to assess content-oriented PC whereas structured questionnaires can be suggested for feature related research and comparative or correlation analysis for evaluation-oriented research. In addition, the individualised interviewing approach serves the unilateral or individual view on the perceptions about the employee-employer obligations which is deemed to be preferable due to the psychological i.e. individual nature of the contract (Barbieri, 2018). Moreover, it facilitates the study because of the nature of the COVID-19 circumstances which put both the employees and their employers, represented by their agents, into the similar, i.e., emergency RW conditions and thus enables the researcher to distinguish deeper nuances that might be existent within the data to be gathered.

Thus, phenomenological approach is able to accommodate perception-based study because it focuses on the personal experiences and consciousness expressed by feelings and opinions that translate the outer reality. According to Merleau-Ponty all the efforts of phenomenology 'are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world and endowing that contact with a philosophical status' (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). Therefore, 'phenomenon-driven research is data-driven, problem-oriented research that focuses on capturing, documenting, and conceptualizing organisational and

managerial phenomena of interest in order to facilitate knowledge creation and advancement' (Schwarz & Stensaker cited in Van de Ven, 2016). It is about unique perceptions of different people and can represent any subject selected for scientific examination (Van de Ven, 2016).

What is being aimed at in a good phenomenological study is knowledge of the lived experience of individuals which then leads to an understanding of the structure of a phenomenon itself. It is this focus on how things are experienced which sets phenomenology aside from other qualitative methods. So, this is a qualitative methodology with a particular subject matter for its focus – it is not a broad strategy for doing qualitative analysis as thematic analysis or grounded theory are. Since phenomenology is essentially the study of people's experiences in their lifeworld, then it should be considered as a possible approach whenever we wish to study people's experiences (Howitt, 2016).

1.8. Structure of the Thesis

The current thesis is comprised of 5 main chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and background of the study. Chapter 2 critically analyses the literature and develops an understanding of the theoretical and methodological approaches prevalent in the related fields. Chapter 3 presents a discussion on the methodology and the underlying research design. Chapter 4 focuses on the analysis and findings of the research. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions, implications, limitations, and recommendations.

The details of the outlined structure are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter presents the study's main aim and objectives along with the underlying research questions. It also discusses the conceptual framework of the research with a visual representation of the main

variables studied and their relationships with each other. In addition, significance, practical implications, and philosophical paradigm with implications for methodology and research design are also covered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter demonstrates how research in psychological contract theory and wellbeing is typically conducted, what perspectives and approaches dominate, and which approaches have been given lesser attention so far. It also explains the main terminology and concepts relevant to this study. In this part, the field and the gap are delineated, and after defining the framework of the psychological contract and wellbeing, the analysis of the literature is performed to critically discuss the ontological and epistemological implications as well as key areas for the research subject.

Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter presents the study's research design and methodology. It clarifies the sampling strategies utilized, the tools used to gather data, and considers ethical issues. In addition, the data analysis and interpretation techniques are outlined.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis. This chapter establishes and discusses the results of the study based on the data analysis performed.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications of the Study. This section summarizes the main research outcomes and findings. It also explores the practical and theoretical contributions of the research, presents its recommendations, and discusses limitations and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides review of the existing literature pertinent to the research theme. After briefly explaining the process utilised to review the literature it proceeds with subsection 2.1. which examines the concept of PC, more specifically:

- its theoretical framework and origins including classification of various PCs;
- existing approaches to define psychological contracts based on beliefs, expectations and/or promises;
- the questions related to PC assessment studies with a more detailed explanation given to the content-oriented PC research;
- the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes of the contract breach and fulfilment.
- theoretical view on disruption and implication of disruptive circumstances for the affected PCs and wellbeing.

The next subsection 2.2. gives deeper insights and some interesting findings from the literature on the wellbeing aspect of the PC studied. It covers the concept of wellbeing as a discipline, its origins and some main dimensions relevant to the study. The researcher also paid closer attention to the profession-specific wellbeing aspect of academic work during the lockdown.

The final subsection of this chapter 2.3. is devoted to all three areas that represent the subject of this study: wellbeing, PC and remote working. It starts by highlighting the topics relevant to the areas studied and then devotes the discussion to each of the subjects that have been identified as important for understanding the phenomenon., i.e.:

- emotions;

- stressors;
- contextual factors;
- job satisfaction and trust, and
- work-life balance.

The chapter is then concluded by examining the ontological and epistemological implications from the literature reviewed.

As it can be seen from the above outline, overall, the literature reviewed can be divided into two broad categories. One category includes the concept of psychological contract, development of the theory of PC, definitions, domains and directions. Given the research aim and objectives outlined above more attention has been paid to the content of the PC theme and its relationship and relevance when determining workplace wellbeing levels. In addition, the literature on the PC and wellbeing of those who work remotely was also included in the review. The other category of the literature reviewed embraces the concept of “wellbeing”. The search touched upon the classic theories and focused more on the later developments with the most recent works on the wellbeing during the pandemic.

The literature reviewed is mostly sourced from the peer-reviewed journal articles. The search has been performed through the Brunel University’s library access to the Scopus and ScienceDirect multidisciplinary database which are the most prominent databases of peer-reviewed knowledge base and for this reason there is high degree of confidence that the literature on psychological contract and wellbeing within the remotely working context will be obtained. In addition, other sources such as Google Scholar and Brunel University Library were used to gather knowledge essential for this research. The selection of the literature was based on the importance and relevance of the data to this research

established by screening the titles and abstracts, full-text availability including availability in English language.

2.1. Psychological contract

Theory and origins of psychological contract

Literature review revealed that Chris Argyris (1960), a Harvard Business School professor is considered to be the founder of the PC concept. According to Anderson & Schalk (1998) Argyris while observing work relationships between the foreman and employees at the industrial plant identified that passive leadership encourages optimal production and low grievances from the side of employees. Whilst he was the first who introduced the “psychological work contract” term there was no definition of the term provided in the Argyris’s work. It was the contribution of Levinson et al. (1962) that the concept received its first definition and developed further. Levinson et al. (1962) described the psychological contract as the unwritten contract, the sum of mutual expectations between the organisation and the employee. The psychological contract, according to Levinson et al., is the sum of mutual expectations between the organisation and the employees (Anderson et al., 2015).

Psychological contract theory is one of the major contemporary social exchange theories which assumes according to Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) that employees increase their efforts carried out on behalf of the employer to the degree that the employee is perceived to be willing to reciprocate with impersonal and socioemotional resources that he or she possesses. According to the SET it is therefore important to understand the worker’s reasons and incentives behind the attainment of organisational goals because the norm of reciprocity is central to the psychological contract (Abdalla et al., 2021). Such

approach takes into account the employees' motives "to carry out specific activities within the mutual obligations between employees and employers" (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). According to Peter Blau (1964) one of the SET founders, when employees' efforts are fairly rewarded within their employment arrangements they are becoming more willing to reciprocate (Botha and Steyn, 2020). So those workers who are given highly valued resources such as increased salaries, professional development opportunities and other would feel obligated, based on the reciprocity norm, to repay the employer by greater engagement and loyalty expressed via enhanced in-role and extra-role performance and lessened negative behaviours such as absenteeism (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003).

Most of the early researchers including above mentioned Argyris and Levinson defined the PC as the perceptions of mutual obligations of the parties in the employment relationships. Such perceptions may result from both the formal employment contracts and communicated expectations which each hold of the other. This approach suggests that the perceptions of the obligations may differ among the parties (Herriot et al., 1997). Furthermore, Levinson et al. (1962) saw the PC as 'a series of mutual expectations of which the parties to the relationship may not themselves be dimly aware but which nonetheless govern their relationship to each other'. According to Schein (1978), these expectations cover not only explicit terms of workload and remuneration, but also a full set of implicit psychological obligations, privileges and rights (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006).

The literature on the psychological contract has expanded further primarily under the influence of Denise Rousseau, a University Professor at Carnegie Mellon University, USA (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006). Rousseau in her own works and in co-authorship with other authors distinguished between two

forms of psychological contract: transactional PC linked with the economic exchange and relational obligations PC linked with the social exchange (Braganza et al., 2020). According to Emerson (1981) economic exchange implies independent events, i.e. not long-term or ongoing (unlike employment relationships) and therefore “obligations, trust, interpersonal attachment, or commitment to specific exchange partners” (Emerson cited in Shore and Tetrick, 1994) are not incorporated into the transactional PCs. A contract at the transactional end of the continuum is composed of specific, short-term, and monetizable obligations entailing limited involvement of the parties (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

In contrast, social exchange involves trust since the fulfilment of unspecified obligations cannot be enforced otherwise, i.e. in the absence of a formal contract (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Thus, a contract at the relational end of the continuum, entails broad, open-ended, and long-term obligations, and it is based on the exchange of not only monetizable elements (e.g., pay for service) but also socioemotional elements such as support, growth opportunities, security (Rousseau cited in Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

Furthermore, relational PC is evolving gradually and therefore it is improbable that it will be explicitly negotiated as it is based on mutual trust and closer relationships that require longer time. However such type of PC increases commitment and performance of the employees and for this reason is considered most desirable by many organisations (Tietze and Nadin, 2011). It is also believed based on Tietze and Nadin (2011) that strong relational contracts are reflective of the employees’ identification with the organisation and its goals while transactional PC tend to have lesser impact on attitudinal and behavioural outcomes.

The table below summarises the differences between these two types of psychological contracts:

Table 1. Transactional and Relational Psychological Contracts

Dimensions	Transactional Psychological Contract	Relational Psychological Contract	Source
Focus	Specific	Open-ended	Rousseau (1990), Rousseau and McLean Parks (1993), Shore and Tetrick (1994), Aggarwal and Bhargava (2009), Jensen, Oplan and Ryan (2010), Blau (2017)
Scope	Economically oriented	Socially oriented	
Time-period	Specific	Long-term / Ongoing	
Underpinning theory	Economic Exchange	Social Exchange	
Breach / Violation causes	Cohesion	Civic virtue / Trust	
Practices	Wages, monitoring employee performance	Employee training and development, job security, allocation of responsibility and power to employees	

SOURCE: BRAGANZA ET AL. (2020)

Thus, when the employment is based on the exchange of economic currency, for example pay and has narrow focus the PC is transactional in nature: short-term, monetizable, with limited involvement, self- interested. If, on the other hand, the employment is based on the exchange of socioemotional currency, for example loyalty, support, personal development, the PC is considered to be relational in nature: reciprocal, general, longer-term (Rousseau and McLean, 1993).

This relational versus transactional focus has been expanded further by Thompson and Bunderson in 2003 and by O'Donohue and Nelson in 2009 by including ideology dimension which reflects the employees' belief that an organisation should act in accordance with its principles and values or ideology. In fact, Blau's (1964) concept of "ideological rewards" that are based on the notion that "helping to advance cherished ideals is intrinsically rewarding" (Blau, 1964) served as a basis for this theoretical development. Hence, ideological contributions and rewards constitute a third "currency" that can be exchanged in an employment relationship. Within this ideological domain breach can happen not only based on the perceptions of direct personal mistreatment by an organisation, as implied in most PC research, but also from a perception that 'the organisation has abandoned an espoused principle or cause' (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). However, existing literature does not elaborate further empirically on how ideology-based PC is different from its economic or socioemotional counterparts that are given considerably greater attention and weight. This major critique aligns with Coyle-Shapiro et al.'s (2019) findings, as revealed through the literature review conducted in this study. The author of this thesis shares the similar critique and perspective with Coyle-Shapiro et al. regarding the identified weakness in the body of the knowledge.

Definitions of the PC: beliefs, expectations and promises

One of the most widely accepted definitions of the PC today described in the Rousseau (1990, 1995) studies (DelCampo, 2007) originates from accepting the Kotter's (1973) critique of the anthropomorphizing of the organisations by insisting that the perceptions cannot be held by organisations but rather by the

people within those organisations (Herriot et al, 1997). The authors defined the PC as ‘the individual’s beliefs about mutual obligations, in the context of the relationship between employer and employee thus putting the concept within a unilateral, individual level of analysis (DelCampo, 2007). This approach is supported by a considerable number of the PC researchers such as Coyle-Shapiro and Neuman (2004), Hallier and James (1997), Ho, Weingart and Rousseau (2004), Raja, Johns and Ntalianis (2004) who envision personal interpretations and perceptions of the contracts and individual characteristics as the central dimension of the construct (Bellou, 2006).

In addition, the above definition puts the “belief” concept into the centre of the PC and the debate among the PC researchers has developed further with one of the recent focuses being about ‘whether employee beliefs regarding the reciprocal exchanges are shaped by what has been promised by the organisation or by what is expected by the employee’ (Chaudhry and Tekleab, 2013). In this context the promises are given more weight by some researchers than the beliefs or expectations as the former represent factual actions undertaken. Measures of ‘expectations’, in this context, are not direct operationalizations because they are contaminated by content unrelated to promissory interpretation (Cullinane and Dundon, 2006).

Moreover, the literature review revealed that the perceived promises construct has been recognised as the foundation of the PC because the PC concept is used to explain behaviour through considering the extent to which the employee believes that the employer has kept its promises – explicit or implicit (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998; Tietze and Nadin, 2011) - as perceived by the employee: “if promises are kept, then satisfaction and a desire to stay in the relationship are likely consequences” and if the promises are perceived to

be broken, “negative emotions and the urge to withdraw may follow” (Conway and Briner, 2011).

Having highlighted the importance of promises in the PCT, it is worth mentioning that expectation is a far broader and more comprehensive concept which entails not only beliefs based upon promises but also other expectations arising from causal reasoning or descriptive beliefs as found in the research on organisational climate by Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998). Casual reasoning example may include when an employee expects that X cause Y, for instance, changed circumstances in the working conditions may cause increased organisational support. Descriptive belief example is “my employer is very responsive to my needs” (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998). In this context met expectations refer to an employee’s assessment and belief that his or her expectations have been satisfied through their work experience (Rousseau, 1990) and when employees feel valued and respected by their employers, they are likely to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviours (Botha and Steyn, 2020).

Given the importance of the promise-based framework in the psychological contract theory and the comprehensive nature of the expectations both approaches – promise-based and expectations-based - are deemed to be useful for the purposes and in the context of the current research. Moreover, Turney and Feldman (1999) by emphasizing two main sources for the individuals’ PC development - (1) their interactions with organisational representatives and (2) their perceptions of the organisation’s culture - are giving equal weight to both frameworks in the context of change. While the former source specifically relates to the promises made by the organisational agents, the latter refers to the perceptions of the organisation’s culture, standard operating procedures, social cues from peers etc. (Turnley and

Feldman, 1999) i.e., expectations formulated via observations, experience, communication and other involvement in various job aspects. Consequently, by focusing on both the promissory and non-promissory psychological contracts the research increases the degree of inclusivity and diverseness of the experiences studied and thus deepens its scope.

PC assessment

As the theory of PC developed further the problem of assessing PC emerged and gained its greater weight especially with publishing the work by Rousseau and Tijoriwala in 1998. The authors highlighted three types of the PC measurement: (1) content, (2) feature and (3) evaluation oriented.

Content-oriented research examines the content of the PC, its terms and core components. There are 3 ways in which the PC content can be operationalised: (1) specific terms, focusing on individual contract elements such as 'job security'; (2) composites (where groups of items are combined to create scales or indices characterizing broad content of the PC); and (3) nominal classifications, assessing such contract types as 'relational' or 'transactional'. The current research encompasses and examines all 3 aspects of the PC content studied. This approach refers to the explicit and implicit topics about which both parties made promises in their exchange agreement, they can be related to employer inducements (such as opportunities for promotions, good atmosphere at work, opportunities for flexible working) and on the other hand to the employee contributions (such as work fast, do volunteer tasks, follow organisational policies) (De Vos et al cited in Barbieri, 2018).

Feature-oriented research provides description and comparison of some contract attribute or characteristic (Barbieri, 2018), for instance, implicit/explicit

or stable/unstable over time. While the contract content can be thought of as comprising nouns (e.g., 'job security' or 'career development'), its features are adjectives that characterize summary features of the contract and the ways in which it was conveyed or interpreted (e.g., 'explicit', 'unwritten') according to the founders of the PC assessment Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998).

Evaluation-oriented research assesses the perceived degree of PCF or PCB, i.e., the change experienced by an employee in relation to his or her PC. This assessment explores how the individuals evaluate their experiences with their particular employers against their PCs (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998).

Along with the above typology of measurement Rousseau and Tijoriwala (1998) addressed each assessment type with the relevant research tools and techniques that might be suitable depending on the circumstances. For example, content related studies might find it appropriate to use interviews and observations as well as focus groups to assess content-oriented PC; structured questionnaires can be suggested for feature related research and comparative or correlation analysis for evaluation-oriented research.

The current research based on its aim and objectives is content oriented. One of the most recognised research projects on the PC content has been performed by Herriot et al in 1997. The researchers have established 12 organisational and 7 employee obligations of the PC as listed below:

Table 2. Psychological Contract Content by Herriot et al (1997)

Organisational PC obligations	Employee PC obligations
Training. Providing adequate induction and training.	Hours. To work the contracted hours.

<p>Fairness. Ensuring fairness of selection, appraisal, promotion and redundancy procedures.</p>	<p>Work. To do a good job in terms of quality and quantity.</p>
<p>Needs. Allowing time off to meet personal or family needs.</p>	<p>Honesty. To deal honestly with clients and with the organisation.</p>
<p>Consult. Consulting and communicating with employees on matters which affect them.</p>	<p>Loyalty. Staying with the organisation, guarding its reputation and putting its interests first.</p>
<p>Discretion. Minimal interference with employees in terms of how they do their job.</p>	<p>Property. Treating the organisation's property in a careful way.</p>
<p>Humanity. To act in a personally and socially responsible and supportive way towards employees.</p>	<p>Self-presentation. Dressing and behaving correctly with customers and colleagues.</p>

<p>Recognition. Recognition of or reward for special contribution or long service.</p> <p>Environment. Provision of a safe and congenial work environment.</p> <p>Justice. Fairness and consistency in the application of rules and disciplinary procedures.</p> <p>Pay. Equitable with respect to market values and consistently awarded across the organisation.</p> <p>Benefits. Fairness and consistency in the administration of the benefit systems.</p> <p>Security. Organisations trying hard to provide what job security they can.</p>	<p>Flexibility. Being willing to go beyond one's own job description, especially in emergency.</p>
--	--

SOURCE: HERRIOT ET AL (1997)

The other content-oriented research by Turnley and Feldman (1998) on psychological contract of the managers in organisations undergoing structural changes has put forward 16 job factors important for the PC of such employees:

1. Job security
2. Input into decisions
3. Opportunities for advancement

4. Health care benefits
5. Responsibility and power
6. Base salary
7. Feedback
8. Overall benefits
9. Organisational support (personal problems)
10. Regularity of pay raises
11. Job challenge and excitement
12. Supervisor support (work problems)
13. Career development
14. Training
15. Retirement benefits
16. Bonuses for exceptional work.

In addition to the above beliefs and expectations listed, given the technological intensity of the remote working during the pandemic there are certain prerequisites for this working arrangement to take place according to the UK Office for National Statistics (2020). The researcher believes that such prerequisites exert certain influence on the PC content studied:

- Accessibility means that the employers must provide some access to the technology to enable the employers to work remotely.
- Usage implies the use of technological services such as IT support for business purposes that facilitate RW.

- Skills or technological capacity of the employees to deal with the technology while being physically away from the workplaces – this prerequisite can be enhanced through training and ICT use (Office for National Statistics, 2020).

Hence the questions of relevant and timely IT support, equipment and software availability, as well as homeworking overhead expenses (Internet, electricity) are becoming the potential themes that might expand the above lists of employee psychological contract.

Taking into account the conceptual framework of this research which adopts unilateral or perceptual view based on the notion that psychological contract is literally psychological (Freese and Schalk, 2008) and individual by nature (Barbieri, 2018) the study is focused on the perceptions of the organisational obligations from the employee perspectives. This can also be justified by the sweeping nature of the COVID-19 pandemic which has put both the employees and the employers represented by their agents into similar remote working conditions with no separate employers “out there” per se as they were represented by the individual employees with similar remote working arrangements and their own specific psychological contracts. Thus, the focus of the study with regard to the content of PC lies within the employees’ perceptions as this group represents the entire HEI staff under the circumstances studied.

PCB and PCF: Attitudinal and Behavioural Outcomes

With the advancement of the PC research the scientists established that the psychological contract can be broken down into the distinct components of PCB and PCF (Rodwell et al., 2015). The area of PCB was given greater attention

by the researchers and the area of PCF is relatively under researched (Chaudhry and Tekleab, 2013).

PC fulfilment arises when an employee perceives that a specific promise or set of promises given to him or to her by the employer has been fulfilled (Rousseau and Tijoriwala, 1998). Contrary to that, PC breach occurs when an employee perceives that the employer fails to keep its promises (Robinson, 1996; Rodwell et al, 2015) that can be reflected in both beliefs and expectations. In addition to actual fulfilment, PCF is also defined as promissory understandings and beliefs of an employee about the chances of fulfilment of the promises given by their employers (Rousseau, 1995). It is based on the PC construct, which relates to the perception of trust and justice of individual outcomes and encompasses not only obligations established via a formal or an implied contract, but also via more implicit means (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Fulfilment increases trust in the employee-employer relationships which in turn leads to more successful social exchanges (Rodwell et al, 2015). Henderson et al. (2008), for instance, refer to PCF as a perceived balance in exchange relationship between a worker and the employer (Botha and Steyn, 2020). The PC basis in social exchange explains how and why the employees maintain a balance between inputs and outputs as part of an ongoing process of exchange (e.g., Homans, 1958 cited in Rodwell et al, 2015). Hence, when fulfilled, the PC would be expected to have positive effects on employee performance based on the norm of reciprocity (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003).

PCB on the other hand is more often viewed through the lenses of emotions and feelings related to the breach (Morrison et al, 1997) and is deemed to have greater effect on an employee than the fulfilment (Conway and Briner, 2011). This is mainly due to the fact that the feelings of violation and mistrust play a significant role in the construct of PCB (Zhao et al., 2007) as well

as the notion that the perceptions of a loss are more long-lasting in their negative affect (Morrison and Robinson, 1997) and deeper than perceptions of gain. For this reason, breaches are of more detrimental effect on the employees' PCs and outcomes (Tversky & Kahneman cited in Rodwell et al 2015).

According to the Robinson and Rousseau (1994) and Robinson (1996) conceptualisation of a breach takes place when one party perceives another to have broken their promise. So, for instance if an employee perceives that his or her employer have failed to fulfil promises or obligations then PCB is understood to have occurred. Conceptualisations by Robinson and Rousseau (1994) state that the individual perceptions of the degree of negative changes in PC, i.e. PCB refer to the situations where the employer fail to live up to some aspect of their obligations and the employee, in turn, believes less is owed to their employer (Botha and Steyn, 2020). Contract breaches based on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) produce cognitive reappraisal of the terms of the contract (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000), and decreases in performance (Zhao et al., 2007): the greater the failure of the employer to fulfil existent obligations to its workers, the more the workers would lower his or her perceived obligations to the employer (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003).

Even though both breach and violation are of similar negative nature and therefore can be viewed as identical concepts there are certain aspects that distinguish them according to Morrison and Robinson (1997). The authors state that perceived PCB refers to the cognitive assessment based on an employee's perception that the organisation fails to meet the obligations within the PC in a manner corresponding to his or her contributions. In contrast, violation is more about emotional response (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994) and refers to the feelings of anger and betrayal experienced by an employee in response to the perceived breach (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014).

Thus, breach is based on the cognitive assessment and the response is, therefore, more proportionate to the degree of unfulfillment while violation is more serious and unproportionate due to the stronger emotions involved. Similarly, ideological breach is defined as an employee's cognition that the organisation has deviated from a perceived ideological obligation and ideological violation is the negative emotional reaction that may originate from ideological PCB (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003).

Both concepts considered – PCB and violation - equally result in a range of withdrawal behaviours up to sabotage or exit and a shift to a more transactional attitude towards their organisation mostly due to eroded trust and undermined loyalty which lies at the heart of relational PCs (Tietze and Nadin, 2011). For this reason, most of the PCB focused research examine the employees' attitudes and behaviours (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). However, further attention needs to be directed towards post-breach or violation behavioural research, as some employees may choose to continue their relationship with their employer and seek to re-establish the PC which is aligned with the concepts of self-regulation theory (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). This critique can be substantiated by the current shift in the employment landscape which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 prompted dynamics.

Lambert et al. (2003), nevertheless, argue that PCF has greater influence on the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes even despite the stronger feeling associated with PCB as is described above. The reason behind is that repeated reciprocal fulfilment gradually enhances trust between the two parties and confidence that increased investment in the relationship will be reciprocated (Conway and Briner, 2011). According to SET, if an employee perceives that he or she is valued and the efforts put are fairly rewarded and recompensed then the greater trust is developed which leads as a consequence to positive ABOs

(Whitener, 1997; Baptiste, 2008). It is worth noting that aspects of PCF and PCB, such as trust, perceived justice, as well as attitudinal and behavioural outcomes (e.g., productivity or loyalty), have strong implications for workplace wellbeing, which is also the subject of this research.

Conditions for changes in perceptions: renegeing, incongruence, and disruption

In addition to understanding the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes and their implications for wellbeing it is also essential to identify the underlying conditions that could lead to a perceived breach of a PC. As it was discussed above perceptions of psychological contract are individual by nature similarly the conditions are also affecting an employee's behaviour on an individual level because similar experiences within the same organisation can be perceived quite differently by different employees (Cassar et al., 2013). There are three such conditions identified during the literature review:

- (1) renegeing occurs when an employee perceives that the employer renegeed meaning deliberately failed to fulfil its promise or obligation,
- (2) incongruence is about misunderstanding or discrepancies in interpretations and perceptions with regard to fulfilment of promises between the employer and the employee, for instance, the employer thinks it has fulfilled its obligations whereas the employee thinks otherwise (Morrison and Robinson, 1997) and
- (3) disruption happens when the employer cannot satisfy the PC conditions due to external factors that are outside its realm of control (Cassar et al., 2013).

There is some research coverage on the empirical examination of renegeing and incongruence, for example, Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) study of British civil servants' perceptions of renegeing and Porter, Pearce, Tripoli, and

Lewis (1998) research on incongruence or misunderstanding within the aerospace company in the USA. However, no empirical study to date has been found on the PC during the crisis prompted disruption within a HE setting. This is due to the novelty and uniqueness of the experience the industry has been through. Being a deadly pandemic, COVID-19 was matchless with regard to the disruptions it caused to the organisational operations and the employees involved (Chong et al., 2020).

It is worth noting that the researcher observed significant confusion among the reviewed researchers regarding the definitions and usage of the terms 'reneging' and 'disruption' which is one of the critiques developed by the researcher. For example, Turnley and Feldman (1998) defined significant downsizing, reorganisation, or merger of a company as a reneging condition, while Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) referred to it as disruption. Since there is no existing research to date on PC and remote employees' wellbeing during prolonged and negative conditions like COVID-19, the review also includes existing PC studies on organisational change, as the latter has been identified as disruption (e.g., by Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003) and therefore, some of the implications can be applicable to the current research questions.

Another word for disruption can be "Inability" as suggested by Morrison and Robinson (1997). According to the authors, this classification of PCB conditions includes the cases in which organisational agents find it impossible to fulfil promises that they made at earlier points. An organisation may be unable to fulfil its obligations because of unexpected circumstances even when promises are made in good faith also because of a changing internal or external environment or an unanticipated decrease in the availability of resources that may preclude the organisation from keeping the promises. The authors included this "Inability" conditions into the "Reneging" group (Morrison and Robinson,

1997). However, the above classification is rather problematic because an “Inability” does not correspond to the definition of “Reneging” as it implies uncontrollable circumstances (Cassar et al., 2013) while renegeing, in contrast, refers to intentional, deliberate or purposeful unfulfillment.

The above difference is important to note especially when examining ABOS and wellbeing as the resulting emotions and outcomes are dependent on the extent to which the conditions are controllable (or uncontrollable) by an employer. An employee may experience more intense negative emotions if the perceived PCB is attributed to purposeful renegeing rather than “Inability” or uncontrollable disruption (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Cassar et al., 2013). Since the current research is focusing on the COVID-19 case classified as disruption due to its uncontrollable nature the overview below is focusing on the disruptive conditions within the PC context and associated wellbeing outcomes in more detail.

Disruption and implications for PC and wellbeing

Cassar et al (2013) highlights “Disruption” classification which is designated for the conditions ‘when the organisation is unable to comply with its contract terms due to external factors beyond its control’. The researcher agrees that this definition is more specific and relevant as it classifies disruption by dimensions that are external to the person and uncontrollable by the organisation (Cassar et al., 2013). Since an employee assesses not only the breach itself, but also why the situation occurred (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Cassar et al., 2013) classifying disruptive circumstances separately increases the degree of clarity with regard to probable attitudinal and behavioural outcomes and the resulting wellbeing. Therefore, it is crucial to avoid any delays or

explaining those delays in delivering what employees have been promised, whether it be explicit or implicit, to prevent a perception of breach in the psychological contract (Arunachalam, 2020).

In fact, change cannot be legitimated if people don't understand the reasons for it, nor can they effectively participate in crafting appropriate updated terms (Rousseau et al., 1996). Therefore, an individual in seeking an explanation for success or failure starts the process of causal search. By doing so he or she focuses on the source or locus of causality - whether the cause resides within the person or in the external world - and then shifts to the controllability of the cause - whether it is subject to personal influence. (Wong and Weiner, 1981).

Social psychological theory indicates that the assignment of responsibility is based on an analysis of the following factors: causality, control, foreseeability, and intentionality (Heider cited in Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 2013). After identifying the causes, depending on the input the outcome differs according to the law of situational meaning, in other words "input some event with its particular kind of meaning; out comes an emotion of a particular kind" (Frijda, 1988). Thus, the intensity of the resulting emotions and outcomes of an employee is dependent on the identified causes of the PCB or PCF.

The meaning of disruption implies a perception that deviates the responsibility of the cause away from the organisation. Such a perception is less likely to trigger negative reactions, and employees are more likely to remain patient and respond by choosing to remain loyal. This is because they believe that their organisation is not in a position to keep its obligations due to forces beyond its control. Therefore, they are more likely to associate themselves with the company and show understanding towards its hardships. By externalizing

the cause, employees tend to minimize the uncertainties and anxieties associated with breach (Cassar et al., 2013).

In addition, the amount and the quality of the justifications provided by the organisation during such circumstances are positively related to the degree of loyalty of an employee (Turnley and Feldman, 1999). This is because justifications or excuses if presented by management in the majority of cases reduce the negative effects of such force majeure and therefore reduce the assignment of blame (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

It is also worth mentioning that disruption and similar situations that cannot be ignored make individuals become more open to new contract information which is referred to as "discontinuous information processing" by the phenomenon psychologists. Normally, people often see what they expect to see, gather information only when they think they need it, and ignore a significant amount of the rest of the data (Rousseau et al., 1996). Such notion is important when considering the PC and wellbeing within the context of the disruptive changes as the perceptions of the PC during such circumstances can therefore be more receptive for new adjustments within the population. Given the fact that the psychological contract is a never-ending evolving process (Coyle-Shapiro, 2002) it can be concluded from the literature that such external uncontrollable situations as COVID-19 are able to bring significant changes in the PC of the employees affected.

In fact, the question on whether the COVID-19 pandemic can be considered as a 'force majeure', i.e. whether it represents such uncontrollable circumstance that frees parties from performing their obligations, is an open question (Hansen, 2020). But since the subject of the current research is not a legal but rather psychological contract the answer is very much dependent on

the individual perceptions. In the COVID-19 context when the external circumstances – the Government, disease outbreak, the degree of its contingency, ventilation in the university premises etc. - dictated most of the organisational measures it is useful to understand the attribution of responsibilities. This is because such attribution plays important role for a PCB or PCF to be perceived as the norm of reciprocity holds parties more responsible for favourable or unfavourable treatment when such treatment is discretionary as opposed to being accidental or due to uncontrollable or force majeure factors (Gouldner, 1960). That means that involuntary mistreatment is less likely to cause a PCB and the negative consequences in the attitude and behaviours. Turnley and Feldman (1999) suggest that attributing the breach to external circumstances served to decrease the negative relationship between breach and turnover intentions (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). Indeed, when taking the ABOs into consideration it becomes more evident that the PC concept is highly reciprocal in nature. According to Tietze and Nadin (2011) the periods of change normally expose this reciprocal dynamics to being challenged and reconsidered and therefore the periods of change increase the probability of PCBs. Renegotiations of the psychological contracting terms are also normal during or after the periods of change (Tietze and Nadin, 2011).

The next section aims to provide an overview of the psychological contract concept over time and discuss its implications for the future of work.

Psychological Contract: past, present and future

As it can be inferred from the previous section, the concept of psychological contract has gained significant attention in the field of organisational psychology and human resource management since the early

1960-s. Rooted in social exchange theory, the term offered a comprehensive framework for researchers and management practitioners to explain and examine employment relationships based on the understanding that the PC represents "individual beliefs, shaped by the organisation, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organisation" (Rousseau, 1989). Over the years, research has highlighted the dynamic nature of the psychological contract which is influenced by societal, economic, and organisational factors. In 1994, Robinson and Rousseau identified two main categories of psychological contract obligations which influence employee attitudes, behaviours, and job performance. However "the idea that employees' psychological contracts may include ideological rewards has been broadly overlooked" (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

Contemporary research has expanded the understanding of the psychological contract, exploring its dimensions, content, and outcomes. More and more authors are now contributing to the ideological PC development significantly reinforced by such researchers as Thompson and Bunderson (2003), O'Donohue and Nelson (2009), Vantilborgh et al. (2012) Furthermore, recent studies have emphasized the role of psychological contract breach and fulfilment in employee engagement, turnover intentions based on considerations about health and wellbeing. This aspect of employment relationship, particularly after the pandemic, is gaining greater importance and representation in the PC knowledge literature (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

As work environments continue to evolve, the psychological contract faces new challenges and opportunities. Technological advancements and digitalisation of the workplaces, flexible / temporary work arrangements, safety considerations and gig economy dynamics have reshaped employment relationships. Therefore, scholars have called for further research on the effects

of the above developments on the psychological contract. Additionally, cross-cultural perspectives, gender differences, and generational variations in the psychological contract warrant exploration to understand their implications for organisational effectiveness and employee satisfaction (e.g. Pereira et al., 2022; López Peláez et al., 2021; Lopez and Fuiks, 2021). As the world of work continues to evolve, continuous research and empirical investigations are necessary to unravel the complexities of the PC and guide organisations in creating thriving workplaces.

Thus, the propositions about the psychological contract and its characteristics as explained in the present section informed the research. The next section 2.2. covers the literature on the workplace wellbeing, which is one of the outcome variables dependent on the psychological contract equilibrium.

2.2. Psychological Contract and Workplace Wellbeing

There are various variables capable of influencing workplace wellbeing (Oliveira et al., 2020) which can be defined as a 'bio-psycho-social construct that includes physical, mental and social health' (Wallace, 2022).

First and foremost, the psychological contract construct is recognized as one of the influential factors that impact wellbeing, as supported by existing literature. However, the relationship between these two variables, i.e., workplace wellbeing levels and the PC is still an under-researched area. Some of the studies reviewed which examine these relationships include the works by Ahmad et al., 2018 on PCF and wellbeing; Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014 on PCB and emotional wellbeing; and Duran et al., 2019 - an interview study on PC and wellbeing among police officers discussed in more details in this section.

Secondly, the remote working context should also be taken into account. Such essential studies as Tietze and Nadin (2011), and Gracia et al. (2007) cover this area by looking at the psychological contract of those who work from home. However, the pre-pandemic remote working is essentially different from the recent RW arrangements due to the emergency nature of the pandemic.

And thirdly, the disruptive circumstances to the extent experienced during the recent pandemic have no research coverage to date with the view of psychological contract of the remotely working academics and their wellbeing. The studies analysed predominantly classified organisational changes as disruption for the purposes of researching psychological contract, for example Bellou, 2006 and Lindorff et al., 2011. For this reason, the approaches adopted by these studies and their conclusions can be applicable to a limited extent to build this research on as the COVID-19 experience and the HE context represent unprecedented and novel tandem.

The literature review has accumulated the findings from the previous research related to all the above-mentioned aspects of the research theme, i.e., the PC, wellbeing, remote working of the academics and disruption, with the intention of developing new conceptual understanding useful for reaching the research aims and objectives. The next section analyses the wellbeing literature with the main purpose of determining relevant wellbeing dimensions and measurements to be evaluated via the disrupted PC lenses.

Wellbeing as a discipline: the origins and main dimensions

The academic concept of wellbeing can be dated back at least 2,000 years to Aristotle's concept of eudaemonia which is now normally translated as 'wellbeing' or 'human flourishing' (Slade et al., 2017). One of the earliest

attempts to define wellbeing was Bradburn's (1969) classic research on psychological wellbeing linked this to Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia where "Aristotle believed this to be the overarching goal of all human actions" (Dodge et al., 2012). The author mostly was giving his attention to researching the differences between positive and negative affect. This work has set a direction to the so called subjective wellbeing (SWB) research stream represented also by such authors as Diener and Emmons (1984), Kahneman, Diener and Schwarz (1999), Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) (Dodge et al., 2012).

Another research stream considers Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia as an objective concept, in contrast to the concept of 'happiness' or 'feelings', since it is based on what it means to live a human life well, 'doing well', thriving and flourishing. This direction is represented by the following scientists: Rogers (1961), Ryff (1989), Waterman (1993), Keyes (2002, 2005, 2009), Bellou (2006) and Seligman (2011) (Anstiss and Passmore, 2017).

The term flourishing has been put into a scientific context by the work of Keyes (2002) which introduced 13 indicators of a flourishing or languishing life thus ceasing viewing these terms as purely philosophical concepts. The researcher used the following dimensions to measure the degree of wellbeing of an individual's life:

- Mental health,
- Emotional wellbeing with six symptoms of positive affect (1) cheerful, (2) in good spirits, (3) extremely happy, (4) calm and peaceful, (5) satisfied, and (6) full of life,
- Psychological wellbeing which operationalises how much individuals see themselves thriving in their personal life, and

- Social wellbeing represented by (1) social acceptance, (2) social actualization, (3) social contribution, (4) social coherence and (5) social integration (Keyes, 2002).

Similarly, one of the prominent leaders of the positive psychology movement Martin Seligman argues that the concept of wellbeing is a construct and is based on PERMA which is an acronym that stands for what is called '5 pillars of wellbeing': Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA). He emphasises in his book (2011) that the central topic of positive psychology is wellbeing and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing or wellbeing levels of individuals (Seligman, 2011).

Based on the fundamental studies on wellbeing the workplace wellbeing can be explained by both the concept of happiness, regarding wellbeing as a subjective observation, and by the concept of realizing human potential regarding personal achievements (Morsch et al., 2020). Hence in order for employers to assist employees with their personal wellbeing at work they will need to create an environment to promote a state of contentment, which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation (Baptiste, 2008).

For instance, Bellou (2006) study on psychological contract during organisational changes also supports the proposition of wellbeing as a positive functioning and by doing so demonstrates 6 dimensions of psychological wellbeing:

1. Self-Acceptance - positive evaluations of oneself and one's past life,
2. Personal growth - a sense of continued growth and development as a person,
3. Purpose in life - the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful,

4. Positive relations with others - the possession of quality relations with others,
5. Environmental mastery - the capacity to effectively manage one's life and surrounding world, and
6. Autonomy - a sense of self-determination.

The same comprehensive approach is also reflected in the Fisher's work (2014) which takes into account both subjective and objective wellbeing levels and in addition considers the social wellbeing. The researcher defines the three angles of the concept by the following associations: (1) subjective wellbeing - job satisfaction and similar positive attitudes, positive affect, and negative affect; (2) eudaimonic wellbeing e.g., engagement, meaning, growth, intrinsic motivation, calling, and (3) social wellbeing e.g., quality connections, satisfaction with co-workers, high-quality exchange relationships with leaders, social support, etc.

With regard to the workplace wellbeing Fisher (2014) proposes several dimensions by depicting them in circles: (1) the inner circle - happiness - is the 'experience of pleasant moods and emotions while working', (2) the second circle – subjective wellbeing which also includes 'negative moods and emotions at work and cognitive judgments of work satisfaction and similar attitudes', (3) 'the higher-level construct of overall wellbeing at work - eudaimonic and social wellbeing components'. Emotional wellbeing, in its broader sense, is referred to as happiness (Wright and Doherty, 1998) and from this perspective, therefore, represents the central or key domains of the Fisher's workplace wellbeing model. Emotional wellbeing, indeed, plays a crucial role in meeting psychological needs of an employee (Armitage and Keeble-Ramsay, 2015) and

the feeling of happiness is emphasised by a number of researchers when defining workplace wellbeing.

Acknowledging the importance of emotions in the PCT, the work by Cassar and Buttigieg (2014) evaluated the emotional wellbeing through the lenses of PC. The researcher used the Warr's scale developed in 1990 which consists of 2 separate dimensions of emotional wellbeing: anxiety-comfort and depression-enthusiasm (Sevastos and Smith, 1992). Subsequently the scale has been expanded to include 3 additional items to measure other aspects of wellbeing: bored-enthusiastic, tiredness-vigour and angry-placid (Daniels, 2000). However, Cassar and Buttigieg (2014) have limited the scale by utilising the initial two scale measurement where anxiety-comfort consisted of six items - calm, comfortable, relaxed, uneasy, worried and tense; and depression-enthusiasm consisted of another six items - enthusiastic, cheerful, optimistic, gloomy, depressed and miserable. Apart from positive emotions and happiness in a broader sense, people have same basic physical and mental needs when it concerns their workplace such as needs for social support, physical safety, health and a feeling that they are able to cope with life according to Baptiste (2008). The author further adds that the 'employers are certainly able to create such positive environment where employees can flourish and increase their feelings of wellbeing at work' so that they are displayed through positive attitudes and behaviour. So, this proposition emphasises the importance of attitudes and behaviours when evaluating wellbeing.

Ahmad et al (2018) - the most recent researchers on PC and wellbeing – have also utilised this attitudinal and behavioural approach to evaluate wellbeing. They looked at the concept through the prism of a fulfilled PC and included the following variables to determine workplace wellbeing:

Attitudinal consequences:

- organisational commitment
- work-life balance
- job security
- job satisfaction.

The behavioural effects:

- motivation
- effort
- organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and
- intention to quit.

The table below summarises the dimensions and measurements of the workplace wellbeing applicable to the PC concept as revealed based on the literature review.

Table 3. Workplace Wellbeing Dimensions

Author and year (Chronological order)	Research context	Workplace Wellbeing Dimensions
Warr, 1990 and Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014	Emotional wellbeing at work and PCB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anxiety-comfort (calm, comfortable, relaxed, uneasy, worried and tense); • depression– enthusiasm (enthusiastic, cheerful, optimistic, gloomy, depressed and miserable)
Baptiste, 2008	Employee wellbeing and performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employee commitment, • job satisfaction and

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work-life balance satisfaction
Lindorff et al, 2011	Wellbeing and Organisational change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • satisfaction with the organisation, • trust in senior management, • job satisfaction, • physical and psychological symptoms
Fisher, 2014	Wellbeing at work measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • happiness; • subjective wellbeing – job satisfaction and similar positive attitudes, positive affect, and negative affect; • eudaimonic wellbeing e.g., engagement, meaning, growth, intrinsic motivation, calling, and • social wellbeing e.g., quality connections, satisfaction with co-workers, high-quality exchange relationships with leaders, social support, etc.
Ahmad et al, 2018	PCF perspective	<p>Attitudinal consequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational commitment • work-life balance • job security • job satisfaction. <p>The behavioural effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation • effort • organisational citizenship behaviour • intention to quit.

PCB normally leads to reduced worker's engagement and contribution, and it also worsens the relationships. There is also decisive impact on

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour, i.e. willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty (Turnley et al., 2003) which is proved to be important for organisational success. Atabay surveyed 122 employees and found that the greater the degree of psychological contract breach reported by employees, the less likely they are to engage in organisational citizenship behaviour (Yang and Chao, 2016).

In addition, the study by Yang and Chao (2016) which equivalented the OCB to the extra-role contributions revealed that psychological contract breach is the damage factor of the employees' extra-role contribution and suggested that managers should be sensitive to the change of psychological contract and realize its importance as the employees' extra-role contribution is of immense importance for both employees and employers (Yang and Chao, 2016). Indeed, employees found to be more committed to the organisation and exhibit high organisational citizenship behaviour when their PCs are fulfilled (Arunachalam, 2020).

PC and Wellbeing of the academics during the lockdown

Wellbeing of the academics under the quarantine measures certainly should have its own peculiarities - to a greater or lesser extent - different from the mainstream workplace wellbeing concept. The literature reviewed shows that the main concern with this respect so far relates to the challenges of teaching online. So, this subsection is devoted to outlining the major challenges or benefits discovered that are relevant to this specific profession within the area of PC during the remote work.

To start with, it is important to mention with this regard, that the shift happened unexpectedly as an emergency measure leaving the HEIs no time to

prepare for the complete transition to the online delivery. As a first response, according to The Quality Assurance Agency for HE all providers, irrespective of size, established a senior COVID steering group that were known by a variety of names, such as 'Business Continuity Planning Group', 'COVID-19 Group', 'Crisis Management Group', 'Gold Group', and most met on a daily basis at the outset of lockdown. They appointed operational groups and sub-groups for key activities such as learning and teaching, professional services, health and safety, and estates (The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report, 2020).

The guidance was to ensure distance education due to the public health concerns. Because of the nature of the distance TLA which implies physical serratedness (Bergdahl and Nouri, 2021), the shift has increased focus towards the use of ICTs in providing education to the learners that can be spread around the world (Riaz, 2013). No previous experience with the distance delivery could be matched with such a profound shift which coupled with the increased urgency of the situation allowed no time for preparatory training programmes aimed at technological upskilling of the academic staff. This led to the feelings of ill-preparedness and also to one of the work intensification factors for the overwhelming majority of the respondents – according to the survey study by Watermeyer et al. (2021) among 1148 academics in the UK. According to the results of the survey a move to online TLA was viewed negatively as ‘their (academics’) pedagogical praxis had been reduced to the fulfilment of rudimentary technical functions that might easily be automated’ (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

The major conclusion reached by the above-mentioned survey research says that online migration is engendering significant dysfunctionality and

disturbance to the pedagogical roles of the academics and their personal lives.

The other challenges revealed by Watermayer et al (2021) include:

- Work intensification due to online rerouting of TLA and of reduced opportunities for one-on-one discussions in online contexts, resulting in additional and extended student consultations.
- Significant extension of the pastoral role: a considerable number of the respondents spoke of how the pastoral side of their job had rapidly and substantially increased, and that they were now committing considerable time in a counselling capacity. This is due to increased need to address the issue of social isolation among students, feeling overwhelmed due to inability to access their friends, and the issues of workload (Alomyan, 2021) that puts some pressure on the academics' PC and wellbeing. Another research by Neuwirth et al (2020) also confirms this role expansion: 'Many faculty are being sought out by students to discuss the life circumstances and challenges that they are facing, while both the faculty member and the student are simultaneously trying to accomplish their educational goals. Equally, many faculty may be going through challenges similar to students but may not have the same ability to seek out someone to discuss their own issues' (Neuwirth et al., 2020).
- Increased job security concerns because of inescapable diversion from producing research outputs, de-professionalisation as pedagogues and the collapse of responsible work-allocation.
- Erosion of work-life balance.
- 'Hyper-professionality' and perfectionism as traits common to academics that heighten the work-related stress levels.

The survey has also revealed some optimistic opinions about the online migration, more specifically the respondents greeted the technology mediated approaches in HE due to increased social connectivity and inclusivity (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

Among other challenges mentioned by the researchers in this field are inattentive behaviours (Neuwirth et al., 2020) and lack of scope for meaningful interaction (Mishra et al., 2020) which can be attributed to the absence of adequate visual feedback from the students (Neuwirth et al., 2020). This further leads to a lack of motivation and difficulty to change the teaching pattern, pedagogy and pacing because of inability to read the face and mood of students (Mishra et al., 2020; Neuwirth et al., 2020). The faculty was challenged to preserve quality of the education given the constraints the virtual setting puts on the students' engagement and participation (Neuwirth et al., 2020). As such some educators were confused about 'whether the students switched on the computer for the namesake or actively present at the moment or sitting somewhere; no clue about the participation' (Mishra et al., 2020).

Also, the other group of researchers have investigated the impact of the switch from physical learning to online learning among learners. For example, Alomyan (2021) advanced this topic and wanted to understand the wellbeing of students during the pandemic and remote learning. The researcher leveraged an online survey to gather data from 401 university students. The results showed that learners who did not have advanced computer skills suffered mental instability while learning from their homes. The author determined that there were increased levels of anxiety, nervousness, and boredom among the learners. Further, these learners faced the issue of laziness, a lack of focus, and morale to continue with the learning activities

(Alomyan, 2021). These outcomes paint a negative impact of distant learning on the learners and their performance. Aristeidou and Cross (2021) reported similar findings showing the learning habits of students during the online education. Through a survey of UK university students, the researchers determined that most of the students were negatively impacted by remote learning. The negative impacts were attributed to increased workload and isolation from their friends. Thus, the factors affecting the recipients of the TLA must be considered while examining the workplace wellbeing and the PC of the academics.

There was also urgent requirement put on the academics to re-envision and re-design the teaching materials, including the outcomes and the assessment which 'has also been a real added burden on faculty, who are already struggling to adapt to learning the new and unfamiliar technologies associated with distance learning' (Neuwirth et al., 2020). Unstable network connection, inability to perform laboratory activities as well as detrimental impact of the online interaction 'to the health of the eyes and general body health too' were among the challenges mentioned by the researchers (Mishra et al., 2020).

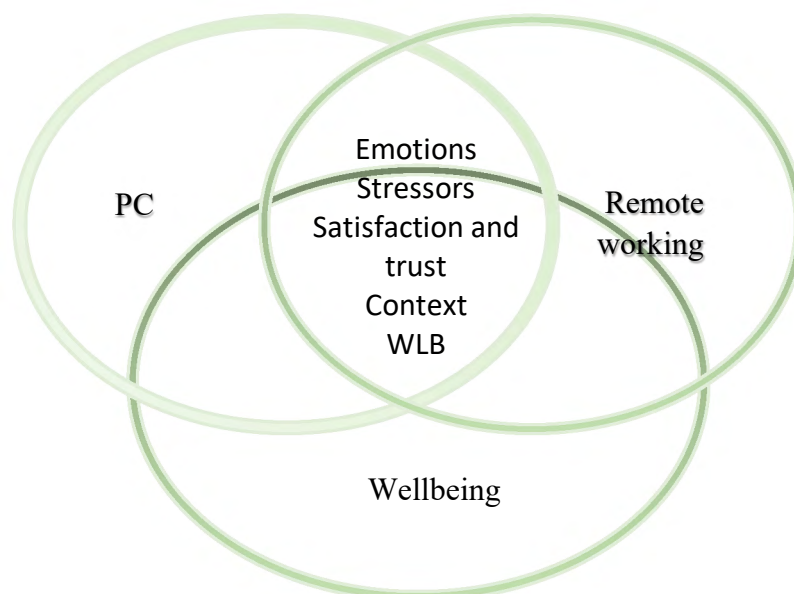
With regard to the PC area, these and other constraints as well as expansions in the roles and responsibilities were beyond the agreed contractual and legal obligations of the academics which puts additional pressure on their PCs. Moreover, some of the areas such as dealing with the students' welfare and mental health issues or designing virtually delivered courses require special expertise and training (Watermeyer et al., 2021). 'What do academics expect from their employers to keep their PC fulfilled in the remote teaching circumstances?' is the questions that this research is addressing, in general terms. So, we are at the very starting point of researching and grasping the impacts of global shift to virtual education.

2.3. Wellbeing, PC and remote working

The literature reviewed relates to both PC and workplace wellbeing, it also includes the studies with the remote working scheme context. The factors and dimensions identified and discussed below represent the intersection or overlapping areas between these subjects of interest.

Most of the research on PC has explored attitudes and behavioural outcomes, but very little has looked at the wellbeing of employees (Ahmad et al., 2018). Regardless the lack of the literature coverage, it is admitted that PC is a relevant construct in understanding employee and employer relationships and psychological wellbeing at work (Duran et al., 2019). By implication, the researchers assume the psychological contract contributes to the explanation of levels of wellbeing among workers (Gracia et al., 2007) mainly depending on whether breach or fulfilment is involved. The figure 3 below summarises the findings of the literature review with regard to the areas common to PC, wellbeing and remote working.

Figure 3. PC, Remote Working and Wellbeing Themes



The following subsections discuss each of the common elements in more details.

PCF and PCB: associated emotions and implications for wellbeing

The most common finding of the research around PC and wellbeing states that fulfilment increases positive emotions and decreases negative ABOs such as intention to quit or disengagement (Rodwell et al., 2015). Predictably enough, PCB is associated with emotionally negative reactions (Rousseau, 1995) and negative behaviours.

In case of PCF, the positive relationships may be due to the mechanism of perceptions regarding predictability and control, which suggests that fulfilled promises reduces emotional exhaustion and employee uncertainty, in turn leading to reduced psychological strain and increased wellbeing (Gakovic cited in Rodwell et al., 2015). Conversely, it is noted that in case of a breach an employee may be exposed to a range of negative emotions such as anger, disappointment and betrayal (Robinson et al., 1994) which may lead to his or her lower level of wellbeing (Rodwell et al., 2015). Such reported breach is argued to have greater effects on emotional wellbeing than increases in fulfilment (Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014). Likewise, Conway et al. (2011) also proved that breach relates significantly to emotional wellbeing, the most important aspect of psychological wellbeing (Daniels, 2000).

It can be concluded from above that the literature treats emotions as a subset of wellbeing (Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014) and recognises its key role for the PC perceptions especially in the case of a breach (Rousseau (2011)). As such the above-mentioned work by Cassar and Buttigieg (2014) examines the emotional wellbeing through the lenses of PC by utilising two scale measurement to evaluate emotional wellbeing at work as it was described above.

Stressors and Wellbeing

Emotions are linked with the other factor that has been identified to play a vital role in defining the employees' wellbeing level from the PC perspective, it is the stress levels an employee is exposed to. Studies show that job conditions correlate and even predict in-role performance and affective or emotional workplace wellbeing (Daniels, 2000). The job-related stressors can be of two major types according to the work on PC and wellbeing by Duran et al (2019): operational (incident-related stressors) and organisational stressors (work-place-related stressors). The interviewees in this study named several stressors and identified a link between PC, stressors and their wellbeing.

In addition to the above stressors there are certain personal stressors (Duran et al., 2019) (e.g., family circumstances, care responsibilities covered below as the contextual factors) and what is called technostress which is now being more and more relevant according to the study by Molino et al. (2020) because technostress is stress experienced as a result of massive use of the information and communication technologies and its negative consequences. This type of stress is established to have vastly occurred for the remote employees during the recent COVID-19 pandemic since remote working is recognized to be an antecedent of technostress creator. The researchers identify three types of techno-stressors: techno-overload, techno-invasion and techno-complexity that are positively related with such wellbeing related outcomes as work–family conflict and behavioural stress (Molino et al., 2020). Furthermore the study by Karani et al. (2021) emphasises that COVID-19 prevented the employers to fulfil their employees' expectations which has also increased stress levels leading to reduced innovative behaviour and wellbeing (Karani et al., 2021).

Likewise, the stress examination approach has been adopted to develop the DRIVE (Demands-Resources-Individual Effects) model by Mark and Smith (2008) which includes negative and positive job characteristics, individual experiences, and subjective appraisals of perceived stress and job satisfaction. The above-mentioned research by Ahmad et al (2018) has utilised this framework model to incorporate the attitudinal and behavioural variables related to Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) to evaluate wellbeing. The authors established by their study that wellbeing predictors such as job characteristics, work resources, coping styles and personality are playing crucial role in defining relationships between psychological contract and wellbeing. Such predictors or contextual factors are able to make the associations between PCF, job attitudes, work behaviours and wellbeing insignificant if such wellbeing predictors are included into the analysis (Ahmad et al., 2018).

This conclusion is also supported by another study where the interviewees' described how relationships between PC, wellbeing and stress are influenced by their social context, e.g., their relationships with colleagues and superiors and their external social context (marital status, family responsibilities) (Duran et al., 2019). Thus, the PC and wellbeing perceptions of an employee must be understood within their specific social and personal contexts.

Contextual factors

In fact, personal wellbeing does not exist on its own or in the workplace but within a specific context (Baptiste, 2008). The background personal issues such as work-life balance or development are important in affecting the ongoing employment interaction (Guest and Conway, 2002). For example,

Guest (2004) emphasises the context as it helps not only to shape the content of the exchange that forms the psychological contract but also the responses to it. Moreover, he distinguishes individual and organisational contextual factors that affect PC which, in its turn, affect attitudinal and behavioural consequences (Figure 4):

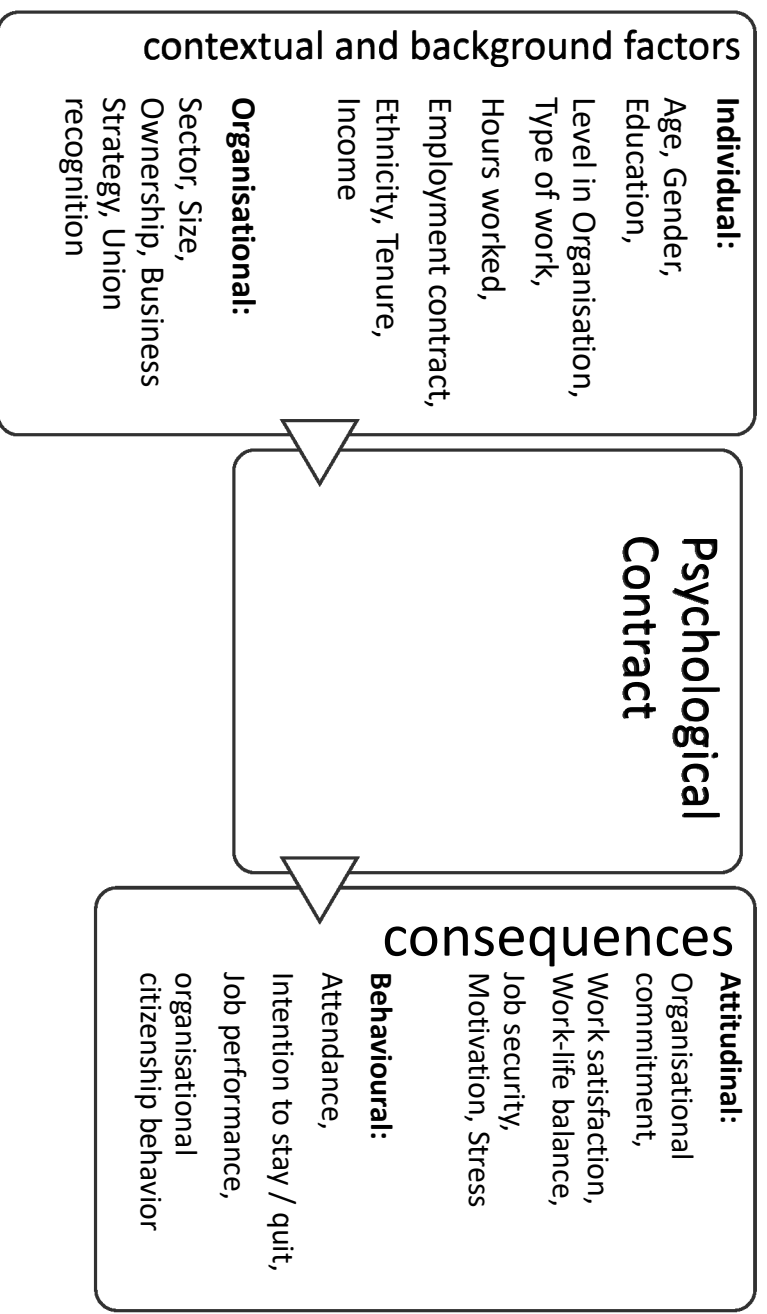


Figure 4. Contextual Factors, PC and Outcomes

Apart from demographic and factual individual level characteristics, the literature reviewed has revealed a number of additional contextual factors relevant to this research's aims and objectives, i.e., remote working during the disruption. With respect to the individual level contextual factors Rodwell et al (2015) among other factors emphasises the calls for PC research to examine underlying psychological health conditions as relatively few studies explore this relationship (Robbins et al., 2012). The studies that do actually investigate

SOURCE: ADAPTED FROM GUEST, 2004

psychological health have linked psychological contract breach not only to emotionally negative reactions (Rousseau, 1995) but also to underlying personal health conditions (Robbins et al. cited in Rodwell et al., 2015).

Among other personal contextual factors is personality with social connectedness outside the workplace and a person's openness having greater influence on the level of workplace wellbeing. It is stated that being engaged in social relationships outside of work can further enhance the relationship between wellbeing and remote working because those outside connections are able to compensate the lack of live interactions of a remote worker (Anderson et al., 2015). The other factor that increases the wellbeing during RW is the freedom to meet up with non-work friends at any time during the day (Tietze and Nadin, 2011) which, in fact, was restricted during the lockdown measures unless people are from the same 'social bubble'. Thus, given the lockdown conditions this factor is becoming of lesser importance. However, even outside of the lockdown restrictions, before the pandemic remote working arrangements have been resulting in such psychological states as feelings of isolation and disconnectedness (Anderson et al., 2015). Many participants cited how contact with fellow homeworkers helped prevent feelings of isolation (Tietze and Nadin, 2011). In addition, such individual features as the inclination to procrastinate and ability to be self-disciplined are also shaping the RW experiences (Wang et al., 2021) and the resulting wellbeing.

Personality context alone does not entirely explain worker outcomes (Swain et al., 2020). Work location as a context is also emphasized by some of the studies as being one of the principal factors that affect remote employees' satisfaction: the further the distance to the physical work places the greater an

employer is satisfied with the homeworking arrangements as he or she saves time and other resources that otherwise would have been spent on commuting (Anderson et al., 2015). This is mainly because “commuting is among the daily activities associated with the highest levels of negative affect” (Kahneman et al cited in Anderson et al., 2015).

Likewise, childcare or other care responsibilities also affect the workplace and wellbeing perceptions. In the pre-pandemic world both men and women requested flexible working arrangements because of some care responsibilities (Collins et al., 2013). However during the pandemic the childcare at home became an imposed duty because of schools and nursery closure and it has further compounded the challenge of the academics’ remote work who, on top of that, were also servicing ‘the escalated and seemingly endless pastoral needs of students’ (Watermeyer et al., 2021).

The other contextual factors include such situational differences as technology accessibility and proficiency (Molino et al., 2020), preferences with regard to reduced mobility and an employee’s dynamic activities within the home setting (Swain et al., 2020) which might be related with physical health needs and adaptability to unstructured work routines (Anderson et al., 2015). In addition, physically working alone may be associated with decreased job satisfaction levels and trust because of decreased interaction, lack of supervision and stimulation which has a potential to negatively affect employer-employee relationships.

Job Satisfaction and Trust

The literature on PC establishes a clear relationship between PC and such emotional outcomes as job satisfaction and trust (Robinson and

Rousseau, 1994; Lambert et al., 2003; Gracia et al., 2007). They are useful indicators in PC studies because of the strong connections with other ABOs (Zhao et al., 2007). As such, job satisfaction has strong connections with PCF (Lambert et al., 2003) which represents PCF's key role for job satisfaction (Rodwell et al., 2015). Likewise, when employees distrust the organisation, they will not enjoy working with the same organisation for a long-term career (Abdalla et al., 2021). Moreover, the more trustworthy is the employer with regard to the fulfilment, the more satisfying is the perception of the underlying psychological contract (Gracia et al., 2007).

The study on the managers' wellbeing by Lindorff et al (2011) has embraced both of the concepts important from the PC perspective, i.e., satisfaction with the organisation and job and trust. In addition, this study has measured such personal contextual factors as an employee's physical and psychological conditions (Lindorff et al., 2011). The other study on wellbeing and performance by Baptiste (2008) established positive relationship between trust in management and employee workplace wellbeing level which has further positive effect on commitment and loyalty (Baptiste, 2008). This study highlights three variables that constitute employee wellbeing at work - job satisfaction, employee commitment, and work-life balance satisfaction (Baptiste, 2008). It is found that these three variables have important effects on such ABOs as levels of engagement, performance and intention to quit. It can be concluded, therefore, that organisational commitment is conditioned by the PC factor (Herrera and De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021). At the same time, the organisational policy may not always be relevant to examine the underlying PCs as different types of psychological contracts can co-exist within the same organisation (Soares and Mosquera, 2019) which is an appropriate condition given the aim and objectives of the current study.

Work-Life Balance

In view of the nature of the remote working environment the work-life balance must be given greater attention when examining PC and wellbeing as COVID-19 disruptions have a potential to only reinforce complexities related to work-life balance (Swain et al., 2020). In the pre-pandemic circumstances the research by Collins et al. (2013) identified 2 main work–life balance reasons for employees to work at home: (1) the ability to manage work and family commitments and (2) increased flexibility of working hours (Collins et al., 2013). Herewith the ability to achieve a better work–life balance was important regardless of childcare responsibilities, i.e. important to both categories: homeworkers without dependent children and the homeworkers with childcare responsibilities (Collins et al., 2013).

However, the research on working during lockdown has revealed the potential to blur boundaries between work, the family and leisure (Wood, 2021). Furthermore, continuous and forced overlap between work and home can disrupt performance (Swain et al., 2020) and therefore such transition to RW often ‘necessitates and prompts a renegotiation of obligations and expectations characterising relationships with family members as it impacts upon exchange relationships with other family members’ (Tietze and Nadin, 2011). This originates from the proposition that PC can be in place in any relationships that involve some kind of exchange – for example between wife and husband, parents and children, teacher and student etc. (Conway and Briner, 2005). Nevertheless, the most attention the PC concept has been given in the area of work relationships and empirical studies of PCs outside this domain are virtually non-existent (Tietze and Nadin, 2011).

Palumbo et al. (2020) advanced the discussion on the work-life balance due to remote working and the pandemic disruptions by leveraging a

qualitative study to understand this phenomenon. Contrary to the perception that working from home would increase work-life balance, the research showed that work-life conflicts increased affecting their capacity to have time for themselves (Palumbo, 2020). The employees reported that telecommuting from home affected their work-life balance leading to increased fatigue and lack of time for rest. In addition, such attributes of the remote workers as lesser visibility and therefore lesser chances for promotion, decreased participation in decision-making processes add to the overall negative effects from the enforced remote working arrangements.

Irawanto et al. (2021) have also investigated the concept using a quantitative approach where 472 employees responded on their experience of work-life balance while working from home and the impact on stress levels. Unlike Palumbo et al. (2020), Irawanto et al. (2021) determined that working from home increased work satisfaction among most employees who responded to the study. The employees indicated that working from home mitigated stress as the employees had social support from their families in the home. The researchers concluded that working remotely had a positive impact on work and this needed to be pursued further.

Thus, the findings about the impact of working remotely and work-life balance and wellbeing are of mixed nature. In general, it was established during the review that the essential factors leading to workplace and personal wellbeing involve such variables as open communication, team working and co-operation, flexibility, support, and a balance between work and personal life (Kraybill cited in Baptiste, 2008). At the same time, the literature reviewed demonstrates that prioritizing the wellbeing of educators who work from home during the lockdown, and thus face challenges related to work-life balance, is directly correlated with increased effectiveness and improved

student performance (Guoyan et al., 2021). In any case, it is useful to note 4 general misfits between desirable expectations and the undesirable realities of RW when examining work-life balance of the remote workers according to the study by Shirmohammadi et al.(2022): (1) flexitime vs. work intensity, (2) flexplace vs. space limitation, (3) technologically-feasible work arrangement vs. technostress and isolation, and (4) family-friendly work arrangement vs. housework and care intensity (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022).

The next subsection concludes the present chapter by clarifying the ontological and epistemological implications of the literature for the present study.

2.4. Ontological and epistemological implications and the gap revealed during the literature review

One of the definitions of philosophical paradigm states that it is the worldview which is held by a community of scholars which consists of shared beliefs, values and techniques (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). According to the literature reviewed the choice of the research paradigms in the field of PCT for a researcher is typically reduced to two basic research paradigms: positivist and interpretivist. Depending on the worldview a researcher holds, the research ontology and epistemology differ which influence on the research design and methods to be adopted.

The dominant paradigm revealed from the literature on PCT is positivist approach – e.g., Ahmad et al, 2018, Cassar and Buttigieg, 2014 - which is mostly about the quantitative methods with statistical sampling and such data collection techniques as questionnaires and surveys. On the other hand, the interpretivist research reviewed, such as Duran et al. (2019), has utilized

qualitative research methodology and employed interviews as a typical data collection technique for this approach.

Thus, based on the literature review performed, the researcher's conclusion is that positivist and quantitative contributions outweigh interpretivist studies and, therefore, the substantial depth and true perspectives on the phenomena of PC are largely missing. This is also supported by the mentioned statistics in the field which states that the majority of the studies – about 90% - was using quantitative methods to study psychological contract and only 10% adopted qualitative tools (Conway and Briner, 2005; Coyle-Shapiro and Parzefall, 2008).

Whilst the contribution of the quantitative studies is evident, the fact of their overwhelming prevalence becomes unacceptable, from a researcher's point of view, given the high degree of individualistic nature of the area, i.e., "psychological" literally is associated with individual, perceptual or personal issues and, as such, must be given the relevant more differentiated treatment. Most of the founders of the PCT, including Argyris and Levinston, define the PC as the *perceptions* of mutual obligations of the parties in the employment relationship. Such perceptions may result from both the formal employment contracts and communicated expectations which each hold of the other (Herriot et al., 1997). Therefore, the current research undertaken is dedicated to shift the existent prevailing paradigm to a more in-depth examination and focus on underlying perceptual dimensions which is in line with the generally accepted definition of the term of PC. Thus, while most of the studies which focused on employee's PC adopted a positivist / quantitative approach, the current research examined disrupted PC from employees' own perspectives by utilising an interpretive qualitative approach.

In addition to the aforementioned methodological gap identified in the literature, there is a lack of empirical research examining the impact of a crisis on the psychological contract of academics, specifically during the enforced remote work arrangements. While numerous studies exist that offer a comprehensive understanding of the psychological contract, RW and wellbeing in general, there is a scarcity of qualitative research on how a crisis-induced remote work scenario affects academics' psychological contract and wellbeing. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge by investigating the direct effects of the crisis-induced remote work on the psychological contract and wellbeing of academics, particularly within the context of delivering virtual TLA.

The next chapter discusses in more details the rationale behind the choice of research methodology and techniques utilised for the purposes of this research. It also explains how the research is designed and implemented so that the aims and objectives are met in an ethically correct way (Saunders et al., 2015).

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The comprehensive literature review described in the previous chapter laid the foundation for identifying the knowledge gap and for setting the corresponding aim and objectives that this research is devoted to reach. This chapter presents the research design and methodology to answer the research questions to achieve the aim and objectives. As such the chapter includes the description of the underlying philosophy, the study's main methods and tools, population and sampling issues, assumptions, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

The main aim of this study is to understand the disrupted psychological contract and its influences on the wellbeing level of the remotely working academic employees within the HEI setting in the UK. More specifically, the study is investigating the changes that an employee perceives have taken place in his or her psychological contract because of the enforced remote working scheme due to the pandemic. In addition, the researcher also examines whether such changes in the PC had any impact on the employees' wellbeing level while working from home and if so, what are the perceptions of the employees about that. Based on this aim and the objectives the following are the research questions:

- Changes in PC: How did the psychological contract of academics change as a result of the disruption and enforced remote working arrangements? To what extent did employees feel that their psychological contract had been fulfilled or breached?
- Psychological contract content: What was the resulting psychological contract content that remote employees held with respect to their employers during the disruption?

- Wellbeing factor: What role did wellbeing play in the psychological contract during this period of remote working?

To answer these research questions the researcher adopted qualitative research strategy. The current methodological choice is associated with the interpretivist worldview utilised (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) and the nature of the underlying concepts. By utilising semi structured interviews as the dominant method and Likert scale questionnaires as an additional tool the study acquires multi strategy qualitative approach which pursues to examine the phenomenon of a disrupted PC from the individual-level perspectives. The next section describes in more details these and other questions of the research design and strategy that help to address the current void in the literature and answer the above research questions.

3.1. Research Design

The interpretive research makes sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied and researchers need to operate within research context, in order to establish trust, participation, access to meanings and in-depth understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This is due to the fact that qualitative research studies participants' meanings and the relationships between them. A variety of data collection techniques and analytical procedures can be used for this purpose to develop a conceptual framework and theoretical contribution (Saunders et al., 2015).

The nature of the research is exploratory, and it also describes the PC phenomenon studied with more emphasis of description being placed on the content. The goal of an exploratory research is to explore an un-explored and

un-interpreted, i.e., new phenomenon (Khan, 2014) by providing in-depth, rich data and descriptions. The most common two forms of exploratory research are: (1) a topic that has never been studied before and (2) more relevant for this study, already existing concept which is studied with the aim of producing new ideas and hypotheses, 'but without being able to properly verify these' (Swedberg, 2020). Descriptive research has the purpose to describe systematically and accurately the area of interest which can be, among other things, some psychological or psychosocial phenomena experienced by individuals or groups of individuals (Dulock, 1993).

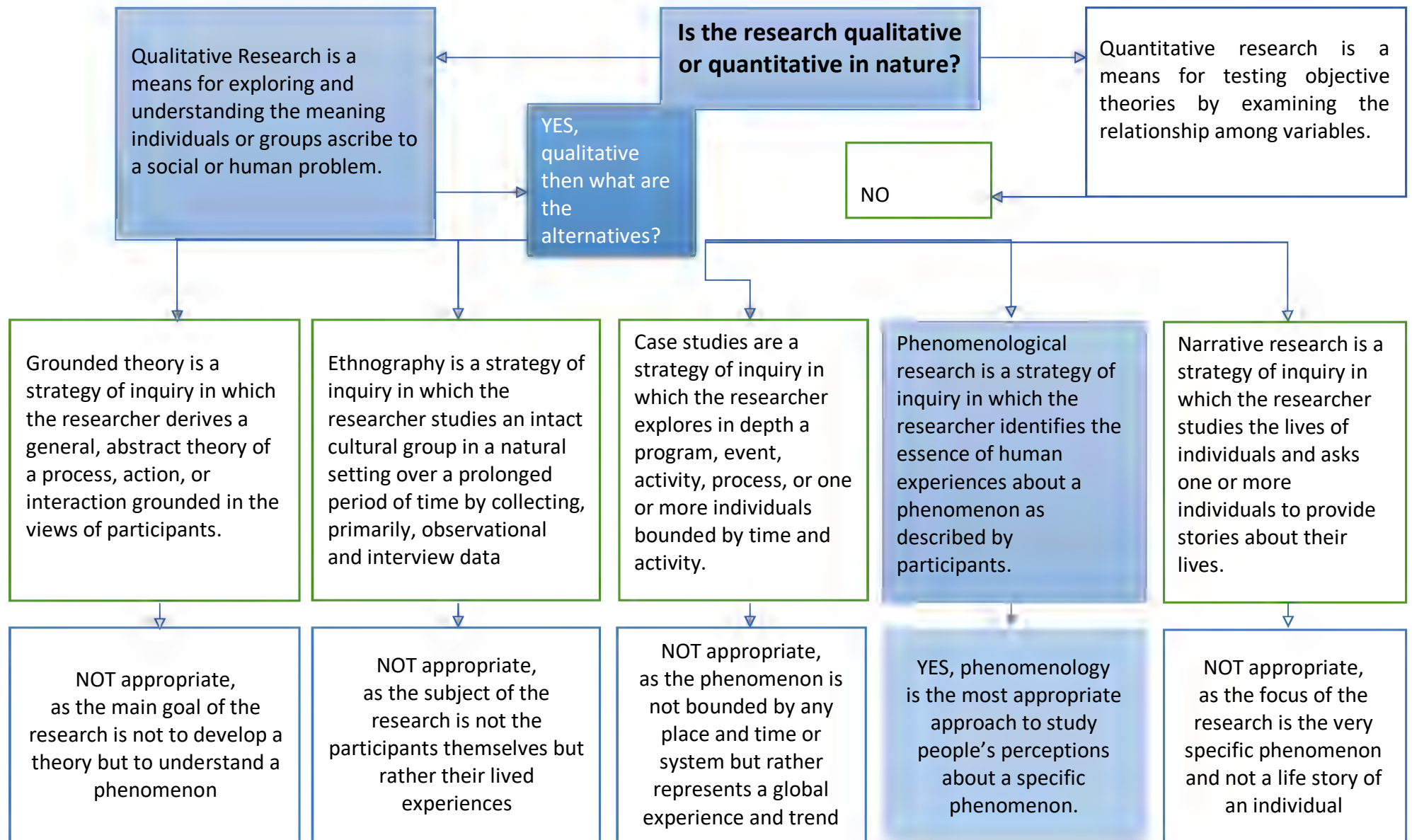
The current study pursues to examine the phenomenon of a disrupted PC, its content and influences from the employees' perspective. As such philosophically the research applies an interpretivist approach and is phenomenological in nature meaning that the researcher studied each respondent's perceptions about experiencing the phenomenon of a disrupted PC to better understand this phenomenon. The adopted phenomenological methodology is identified as the best approach for this type of research because the phenomenon under investigation is experienced on an individual level, as suggested by the theoretical framework. This approach is well-suited to capture the unique individual experiences and perspectives associated with the phenomenon (Davidson, 2000; Jones, 2001).

Phenomenology is a philosophic attitude and research approach. Phenomenologists according to Saunders et al (2015) focus on participants' lived experience; that is, the participants' recollections and interpretations of those experiences. Their primary position is that the most basic human truths are accessible only through inner subjectivity, and that the person is integral to the environment (Flood, 2010).

Indeed, perceptions of psychological contract are individual by nature. Likewise, the conditions are also affecting an employee's behaviour on an individual level as similar experiences within the same organisation can be perceived quite differently by different employees (Cassar et al., 2013). Furthermore, by utilising phenomenological approach, the current research contributes to the knowledge methodologically as it allows for more perception-based study and by doing so addresses the critique on the lack of qualitative empirical research focusing on the individual characteristics of PC despite the subjectivity of the term.

The following diagram depicts the methods the researcher considered and the process of deciding on the right approach by excluding inappropriate methods based on their definitions as provided in the book on Research Design written by John W. Creswell (2009):

Figure 5. Research Methods Decision Tree



Thus, the use of the phenomenological approach was appropriate for the purposes of this research as this approach allowed to explore the perceptions and lived experiences of the individuals to understand the phenomenon. No other method could satisfy the requirements of the study as fully as did the phenomenological approach which allowed to gather rich and meaningful data about the specific lived phenomenon.

There are two main phenomenological approaches that can be used in research inquiry: descriptive phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology (IP). The knowledge base developed so far suggests that the descriptive phenomenology should be utilised to address lack of research in respect to various aspects of phenomena. In contrast, the 'interpretive/hermeneutic approach' is used to examine contextual features of an experience in relation to other influences such as culture, gender, employment or wellbeing of people or groups experiencing the phenomenon (Matua and Van Der Wal, 2015). The following Table 4 summarises the two phenomenological research inquiry approaches based on the study on descriptive and interpretive phenomenology by Lopez and Willis (2004):

Table 4. Phenomenological Research Inquiry: Descriptive and Interpretive

Descriptive phenomenology	Interpretive phenomenology
Founder / tradition: Husserl / Eidetic	Heidegger / Hermeneutic
Underlying belief: Subjective information should be important to scientists seeking to understand human motivation	The relation of the individual to his lifeworld should be the focus of phenomenological inquiry. Heidegger used the term lifeworld to express the

because human actions are influenced by what people perceive to be real

idea that individuals' realities are invariably influenced by the world in which they live. What the individual's narratives imply about his or her experiences matter.

Assumptions:

There are features to any lived experience that are common to all persons who have the experience. The essences are considered to represent the true nature of the phenomenon being studied. In this view, reality is considered objective and independent of history and context. The belief that essences can be abstracted from lived experiences without a consideration was articulated the idea of radical autonomy by Husserl which is opposite to situational freedom of the hermeneutic approach. The impact of culture, society, and politics on the individual's freedom to choose are not central to Husserl's thought.

An individual is an integral part of his or her world to such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked with social, cultural, and political contexts which is called situated freedom. It is an existential phenomenological concept that means that individuals are free to make choices, but their freedom is not absolute; it is circumscribed by the specific conditions of their daily lives. The concept of situated freedom is in direct opposition to Husserl's concept of radical autonomy. The hermeneutic phenomenologist will focus on describing the meanings of the individuals' being-in-the world.

Researcher's Role:

<p>All prior researcher's consciousness of all prior expert knowledge must be refrained from to exclude the possibility of biases. Some researchers even advocate that the descriptive phenomenologist should not conduct a detailed literature review prior to initiating the study and not have specific research questions other than the desire to describe the lived experience of the participants. One of the techniques that would enable a researcher to abandon all the ideas, assumptions, knowledge that he or she might possess is to perform bracketing prior to approaching the participants and listening to their narratives about the subject of interest.</p>	<p>Presuppositions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable guides to inquiry and, in fact, make the inquiry a meaningful undertaking. Heidegger emphasized that it is impossible to rid the mind of the background of understandings that has led the researcher to consider a topic worthy of research. It is the researcher's knowledge base that leads to specific ideas about how the inquiry needs to proceed to produce useful knowledge. So, the IP approach does admit the usefulness and indispensability of a researcher's background for study. Therefore, the bracketing procedure is not compliant with this philosophy. At the same time, the researchers must clearly state all the biases they may have.</p>
--	---

Theory use:

<p>Descriptive phenomenological approach opposes the use of a theoretical orientation or conceptual framework as a component of inquiry to ensure unbiased approach.</p>	<p>Theoretical approach can be used to focus the inquiry where research is needed and is used to make decisions about sample, subjects, and research questions to be addressed.</p>
--	---

SOURCE: LOPEZ AND WILLIS, 2004

Having understood the major features of the phenomenological approaches it is more evident that the current research by being interested in the lived experiences of the individuals influenced by the world around and the personal views should adopt interpretive phenomenological approach, and the following reasons justify this selection further:

- The nature of the research subject implies considering the COVID-19 and wellbeing related contextual factors. Therefore, the concept of situational freedom from interpretive phenomenology is more applicable when implementing the research inquiry. At the same time, this situational freedom implies such type of freedom that is not absolute and subordinated to the uncontrollable circumstances or by “the world in which we live” according to Heidegger.
- In addition, the researcher views her personal and expert knowledge including the knowledge base generated while performing literature review as well as the theoretical foundation as a valuable and indispensable asset that can be beneficially utilised to reach the research aim and objectives. This is also in line with the interpretive phenomenological approach and not recommended under the descriptive phenomenology.

Thus, by adopting this theoretical approach, according to Howitt (2016), the research “has more than just an edge over research of purely empirical intent” since the framework of a theory provides support to research which is not merely interesting but makes issues clearer. Phenomenology allows explaining things based on the deeper understanding of what those things are.

Furthermore, for anyone interested in people’s lived experiences, phenomenology provides a challenging framework on which to build research into some fascinating topics (Howitt, 2016).

3.2. Methodology

According to the above presented philosophical paradigm of the research the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions mean, that the researcher embraces the idea of multiple realities and therefore tries to get as close as possible to the participants being studied (Creswell, 2012) to gather the evidence based on the individual perceptions and views. Since an interpretive approach is the qualitative process of understanding the phenomena resulted from individual interpretations (Creswell, 2012) this approach served the goal of the study to understand the lived experiences of individuals whose PC was disrupted.

The focus was placed on the perceptions and feelings about disrupted PC from the employees' own perspectives, therefore, this guides the methodological choice to a qualitative, interpretivist approach carried out through semi-structured interviews as the dominant tool of data collection. In addition, the Likert scale questionnaire was also used to confirm and enhance the data gathered via this dominant method.

The phenomenon-driven research is data-driven, 'problem-oriented research that focuses on capturing, documenting, and conceptualizing organisational and managerial phenomena of interest in order to facilitate knowledge creation and advancement' (Van de Ven, 2016). It covers unique individual perceptions about any phenomenon or area that represents the subject of an investigation. Because of its perceptual nature knowing whose perspective is being addressed and engaging them in describing the phenomenon is necessary to frame the focus, level, and scope of a research study (Van de Ven, 2016). This is because the participants' subjective experiences and perspectives about these experiences are the main sources of

data and therefore the researcher must closely interact with the participants to be able to gather the data.

Thus, given the ontological stance of the research, the epistemological position implies that the perspectives of individuals are the sources of information, these individuals must have experienced the phenomenon and the researcher must engage with them to gather the evidence about the phenomenon.

Hence, the qualitative methods were adopted to investigate the phenomenon of disrupted psychological contract of the remotely working academics. As it is important to access the interpretations, experiences and perceptions of each individual participant, qualitative semi-structured interviews are seen as appropriate research technique since the focus of the study is 'on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants' (King cited in Collins et al., 2013). The interviewing was used to gain an understanding of the participants' world consistent with the epistemological stance of this study (Collins et al., 2013). It also allowed the interviewees to talk at length and in their own terms, if necessary while the interviewer was prompting and directing the narratives by asking questions.

As is the case with qualitative research the current research seeks believability based on coherence and tightness of the arguments presented (Eisner, 2017) and trustworthiness (Nowell et al., 2017) through the process of verification rather than through traditional validity and reliability measures applicable to quantitative studies (Creswell, 2009). The following strategies as advised by Creswell (2009) were employed to enhance believability and trustworthiness of the current study:

1. Triangulation of data – data collected through various sources - interview and Likert scale questionnaire - were checked against each other to ensure accuracy and coherence.
2. Peer consultations and examination of the research tools with a doctoral researcher from the Psychology department.
3. Clarification of researcher bias in writing under the heading “The Researcher’s Role”.
4. In addition, provision of rich and detailed descriptions so that anyone interested in transferability will have a solid framework (Merriam, 1988) which ensures external validity.
5. Three techniques to ensure reliability have been employed in this study.
 - a. First, the researcher provides a detailed account of the focus of the study, the researcher’s role, the informant’s position and basis for selection, and the context from which data was gathered (LeCompte & Goetz, 1984).
 - b. Second, triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis were used, which strengthens reliability as well as internal validity (Merriam, 1988).
 - c. Finally, data collection and analysis strategies are reported in detail in order to provide a clear and accurate picture of the methods used in this study (Creswell, 2009) to ensure that the process can be replicated.

A qualitative research design can use a single data collection technique and thus be a mono method qualitative study or, as is mentioned, can use more than one technique to gather the data which is known as a multi-method qualitative study (Saunders et al., 2015). The use of multiple techniques allows for triangulation, ensuring data verification and reliability. However, the

benefits of a multi-method approach go beyond triangulation and reliability. It enables the researcher to gather richer data by incorporating different approaches. In this study, the dominant qualitative approach was supported by the use of a Likert-scale questionnaire, which provided quantifiable data to enhance objectivity. This approach is referred to as a concurrent embedded strategy, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections. Before delving into the strategy, the subsequent subsections will provide a more detailed description of the tools and procedures used for the two methods employed and the recruitment strategies for the study population.

Semi-structured interviews and Likert scale questionnaire: multi-method study

There are three basic classes of interviews: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. According to Longhurst (2016) a semi-structured interview is “a verbal interchange where one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information from another person by asking questions”. The author further explains that whilst there is a set of predetermined questions prepared by the interviewer, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important (Longhurst, 2016). Each interviewing process is a unique experience and represents an effective tool to gain rich and relevant insights into the area studied through the narrations and discussions with an individual (Khan, 2014).

Howitt (2016) recommends interview as the preferred mode of data collection for phenomenology research. It is essential that the questions posed encourage the rich detailed descriptions of the phenomena which phenomenology requires. Although the focus of the data collected will be on the phenomenon as experienced, data collection usually stretches wider than this. That is, anything which may be helpful in understanding the experiences

may be part of the data collected. Specific, detailed examples should feature strongly in the data. The focus, of course, in phenomenology is on the content of the interview, the meanings behind the words rather than the way language is used in relation to this content (Howitt, 2016).

The personalised interviewing approach is the one of the best tools for obtaining rich and in-depth data in qualitative studies. However, it is important to acknowledge that this approach is subjective in nature, as it relies on the perspectives and interpretations of the participants. To avoid or, at least, to mitigate the risk of this Likert scale questions were introduced as a research technique to complement the data gathered through the dominant method of interviewing. The Likert scale provides a more structured and quantifiable way of capturing participants' responses, offering a degree of objectivity to the data analysis process. Given the basic principles of geometry, multiple viewpoints allow for greater accuracy, similarly, organisational researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgments by collecting diverse kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon (Jick, 1979).

The scale was developed by Rensis Likert (1931), who described and then developed this psychometric measurement tool (Croasmun and Ostrom, 2011) with multiple categories from which respondents choose to indicate their opinions, attitudes, or feelings about a particular issue (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014). The variables the research is collecting data about are subjective variables – perceptions, beliefs, expectations etc. that form one's psychological contract – and they are not directly detectible. The Likert scale is one of the popular instruments to measure such latent traits that would help to eliminate or, at least, reduce the subjectivity degree while examining such features as

perceptions or beliefs because the Likert scale offers the various ranges to capture the intensity of feelings (Barua, 2013).

By introducing the additional methodology - Likert scale methodology - to derive the data from the same population the researcher achieves the goal of confirming and enhancing the data collected via the dominant collection method. The purpose is not to explain the outcomes of the interviews, but rather to provide a clearer representation of the subject matter and to reveal visual patterns with scaled properties that cannot be achieved through interviews alone (Barua, 2013). This multi-method approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the research topic and provides valuable insights that go beyond the qualitative data. The inclusion of Likert scale data adds a quantitative dimension to the research, enabling the researcher to analyse and interpret the data from multiple perspectives.

The advantages of Likert-scale questionnaires utilised are that (a) data was gathered in a more effective and efficient way (b) the scales supplied the reliable estimates of some abstract aspects important for understanding the PC, and (c) the data the scales provide can be profitably compared, contrasted, and combined with qualitative data-gathering techniques, such as interviews (Nemoto and Beglar, 2014). The current research used 10-point scaling which is comparable analytical tool to other widely used scales of 5- and 7-points Likert scale questions. However, 10-point scale has an advantage of being simpler, more visual and more familiar to people because of the notion of rating “out of 10” according to Dawes (2008). The Likert scale used for this study assigns the value of '1' to indicate 'Not at all' and the value of '10' to indicate 'Extremely'.

Thus, given the multi-method approach the research questionnaire developed by the researcher was comprised of the following respective three

major parts: demographic and screening questions (Appendix B), Likert scale questions (Appendix C) and open-ended interview questions (Appendix D). The next section describes the researcher's role as per the recommendations given for a phenomenological study and to increase trustworthiness of this study according to Creswell (2009).

The Researcher's role

As is described above the hermeneutic or interpretive approach of phenomenology does admit the usefulness of a researcher's background and it requires that the researchers clearly state all the biases they may have. So, it is strongly recommended to delineate the assumptions and experiences that might be relevant and any aspects of self that might influence the hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry.

The reflexivity is undertaken to cover the area of the researcher's own position and experiences with regard to the phenomenon studied which also includes the reasons behind choosing this topic. This is done to monitor and reduce any possible misconceptions. Because this section is reflexive in nature and represents the researcher's own view on her role in conducting this study and on the phenomenon studied this part is written in first person.

I am a mid-aged female who was born and raised in Kazakhstan. I have had the opportunity to travel and live in various countries, which has allowed me to become fluent in multiple languages and has shaped my worldview through exposure to different cultures. This multicultural background has also deepened my appreciation for the unique and rich cultural heritage of my Kazakh ancestors.

Before coming to the UK, I was involved in academia in Kazakhstan. Seeking personal and professional growth, I made the decision to pursue a PhD degree, which led me to focus my research interest on the higher education sector. My PhD journey began in January 2020, coinciding with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown measures in the UK.

During this time, my two younger children were also affected by the closure of nurseries, requiring me to balance online learning with the responsibilities of being a mother. Despite the challenges, I found the remote working arrangements to be quite satisfying, as they allowed me to continue my studies while taking care of my children. During the initial months of my PhD program, I had the opportunity to witness the remarkable efforts undertaken by academics and staff members at Brunel University to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of education. This experience had a profound impact on me, and as the lockdown began, my research focus naturally shifted towards the ongoing dynamics of studying and working from home that became prevalent in society. The personal experience of remote working during this time became the driving force behind my research, and the context of higher education emerged as a result of my genuine interest in pursuing an academic career. The unique circumstances of studying and working remotely in the higher education setting intrigued me and became the subject of my research inquiry.

Based on the above my role can be defined as both emic and etic (or emic-etic) according to the classification provided by Davidson et al. (1976) where emic means view from within the population studied and etic – from outside (Davidson et al., 1976): (1) it is emic because I have experienced the same enforced RW, and (2) it is etic because I was not working as an academic so there was no employee psychological contract.

My competence in developing the interviewing method has been evolving since 2014 when I was first certified as a life-coach by the Ericson University (Vancouver, Canada). Interviewing, using open-ended questions, prompting, active listening and building rapport were among the main skills that I was trained while working towards this certification. In addition, I have been trained to hold an unbiased approach and have respect to any feelings and views expressed. These skills were further enhanced through my experiences working with individuals and companies as a professional life coach which allowed me to develop a high degree of empathy and emotional intelligence. As a result, I thoroughly enjoyed the process of interacting with academics during the arrangement and conduct of interviews, as it resonated with my previous experiences. Undoubtedly, these aspects of myself and my experiences have played a significant role in gathering and analysing the data.

3.3. Population Sample and Recruitment

Sampling technique and target population

Sampling techniques can broadly be divided into two large subgroups: probability sampling which requires statistical representativeness of the target population and non-probability sampling which is mostly associated with information-rich studies (Saunders et al., 2015). Some of the scientists, e.g., Teddlie and Yu, 2007; Sandelowski, 2000; Palinkas et al., 2015, also refer to the latter group as purposeful sampling as the participants are not selected randomly and representativeness is not as important (Hasson et al., 2000). Palinkas et al (2015) define purposeful sampling as a widely used technique in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest.

Statistical generalisation of the findings is not the aim of this kind of research therefore probability sampling is not a relevant option. However, by bringing the deep subjective perceptions of the PCs into the realm of objective theoretical classifications this research is seeking to add theoretical generalization to the present body of PC knowledge. Howitt (2016) also confirms that probability sampling will almost certainly be inappropriate in a phenomenological study whereas some form of purposive sampling is likely. Thus, the selection of the framework sampling technique for this research is dictated by the underlying research philosophy and design adopted to reach the aim and objectives (Saunders et al., 2019) for this study which imply gathering rich and meaningful data.

Purposive sampling is based on 'the assumptions that a researcher's knowledge about the population can be used to handpick the cases to be included in the sample' (Polit & Hungler, 1997 cited in Hasson et al., 2000). Hence the selection is made for a purpose, to apply the participants' knowledge to a certain problem on the basis of criteria, which are developed from the nature of the problem under investigation (Hasson et al., 2000). In fact, the sampling in phenomenology represents criterion sample (Creswell and Poth, 2016), therefore, in order to be included the participants need to satisfy 3 fixed sampling criteria discussed further below:

- According to the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) there are two groups of higher education staff in the UK: academic and non-academic. "Academic staff contracts are for planning, directing and undertaking academic teaching and research. This includes lecturers and researchers, but also Vice Chancellors, and medical professionals who undertake research. Non-academic staff contracts include managers,

professionals in non-academic jobs, student welfare workers, secretaries, caretakers and cleaners” (HESA report, 2019). To receive deeper insights into the population views and perceptions given the scope of the research the homogeneous purposeful sampling utilised is focused on the academic staff.

Most importantly, the researcher needs to seek out individuals who have experienced the phenomenon in question (Howitt, 2016) which represents the key criteria for the current study. Therefore, the other 2 fixed participation criteria for a person to be eligible to participate are as follows:

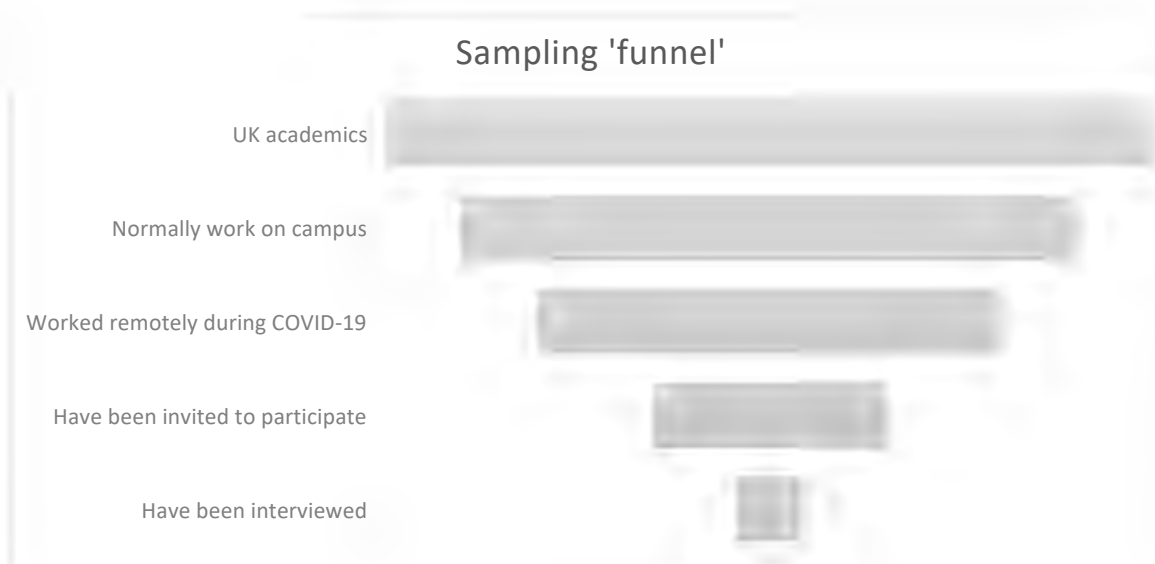
he or she must (1) normally work on campus (2) worked remotely during the COVID-19 restrictions in the UK.

Hence the purposive sampling technique utilised by the current research represents homogeneous sampling technique meaning the participants represent one particular subgroup in which all the sample members are similar (Saunders et al., 2015). It focuses on one particular subgroup such as a particular occupation (Saunders et al., 2019) in this case academics. This strategy is used to narrow the range of variation and focus on similarities (Palinkas et al., 2015) so that greater depth of examination is achieved (Saunders et al., 2015).

Thus, the target population for this study was the academic staff who worked in an UK higher education setting. They normally work on campus, and they have worked remotely because of the enforced measures during the pandemic. Because of the latter criterion, the academics within such disciplines as music and the performing arts, subjects heavily allied to applied medicine, laboratory experiments, sports science etc. i.e., those disciplines where the

activities were postponed according to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report (2020) – were not recruited. To verify this condition, the questionnaire asked about the discipline the participants were teaching in addition to setting out the criteria of remote working experience. In contrast, such factors as gender, age, position etc. have not been chosen as criteria because the main focus was on reaching the population who had experienced the specific phenomenon. Based on the specific criteria for selecting the participants the sampling procedure can be depicted as a funnel as per the picture below (Figure 6):

Figure 6. Sampling Funnel



Sample size

When considering how large a sample can be the researchers are normally faced with 3 constraints according to Saunders et al. (2019), the first is about impracticability of recruiting the entire population, the second is the budget constraints and the third is refers to time constraints. With these natural constraints in mind, the researcher explored different academic views on how large a sample can be for this particular type of study.

According to Saunders et al (2019) the issue of sample size for non-probability sampling techniques is ambiguous with no rules defined. The logical relationship between the sample selection technique and the purpose and focus of the research become important whereby generalisations can be made to theory rather than about a population. In addressing this issue, many research textbooks simply recommend continuing to collect qualitative data, such as by conducting additional interviews, until data saturation is reached: in other words, until the additional data collected provide little, if any, new information or suggest new themes. However, this notion still leaves the question about particular number of a sample size unanswered according to Saunders et al. (2015). The authors further state that it is, nevertheless, possible to offer guidance as to the sample size to ensure a researcher has conducted sufficient interviews or undertaken sufficient observations. Mark Saunders's more recent research on practices in published organisation and workplace research provides guidance on credible sample sizes for qualitative interviews. According to his research, a sample size of 30 participants is considered sufficient for research where the data will be analysed as a single group (Saunders et al., 2019).

Guest et al. (2006) suggest that for research aimed at understanding commonalities within a fairly homogenous group, conducting 12 in-depth interviews should be sufficient. They argue that data saturation, where no new information or themes emerge, typically occurs between 6 and 12 interviews in qualitative studies of this nature (Guest et al. 2006). They also note that 12 interviews are unlikely to be sufficient where the sample is drawn from a heterogeneous population, or the focus of the research question is wide ranging.

Some other opinions suggest that the sample size of 2 to 10 participants or research subjects according to Boyd (2001) are sufficient to reach saturation (Groenewald, 2004) i.e., as is mentioned earlier the point at which no added information or themes are observed in the data (Guest et al., 2006). Creswell (1998) recommends “long interviews with up to 10 people” for a phenomenological study he also recommends to work with relatively small samples (Groenewald, 2004). Howitt (2016), though, argues that a researcher should not regard “a sample of 10 as the upper limit since more may be needed in particular studies”.

To enhance the methodological robustness and rigour of the study as is advised by the credible academic sources and in line with the phenomenological approach the sample size for this research equals to 30 participants. The saturation of data has been achieved by the 30th participant. In addition, 2 participants have been interviewed for the pilot study. This sample size is big enough as the comparable qualitative interview study of the profession specific - in this case police officers’ - PC and wellbeing recruited 18 participants by Duran et al. (2019).

Identifying an appropriate sample is a key determinant of the feasibility of gaining the access to conduct research with the individuals (Saunders et al., 2019). The next section gives detailed explanation of the strategies used to recruit 30 participants for this research.

3.4. Procedures

The procedures adopted must be in line with the philosophical paradigm and with ontological and epistemological stance to ensure reaching the aim and objectives. Therefore, careful planning of the procedures in advance is

important for any research study. In addition, a researcher must take into account various aspects of the study and reflect them before reaching out to the potential participants to avoid unnecessary waste of time and resources. This section provides explanation of such steps as recruitment, sequencing and developing the data collection tools utilised, data collection strategy and the logic behind as well as steps undertaken to address the ethical issues.

Recruitment

A researcher's ability to collect data is dependent on gaining access to an appropriate source or sources and this access can be of three types according to Saunders et al. (2019):

- traditional access, which involves face-to-face, telephone interactions;
- technology-mediated access and
- hybrid access with the elements of both of the above.

It can also be:

- single-organisation access and
- multi-organisation access.

In addition, Singh and Wassenaar (2016) distinguish between formal and informal types of access depending on the process of gaining entry into an organisation.

The present research required internet-mediated access which was due to the pandemic restrictions that were in place at the time of applying for the ethical approval. The access sought for was multiple organisational access as the data had to be collected directly from the individuals of the defined

profession and organisational affiliation was not important based on the aim and objectives of the study. In addition, the access gained procedurally was of both types: formal and informal as is discussed in more details below.

In total 32 participants were recruited. 2 of the 32 interviews were the pilot study interviews which were aimed at “testing” the interview schedule. They also allowed to hone the interviewing style of the researcher and to formulate the major themes important for the remotely working professionals.

The researcher accessed the potential participants via the publicly available institutional e-mails by sending the recruitment letter with the main information about the research (Appendix E) which was the formal way of gaining access. The email the researcher sent to the organisations prior to the attempt to collect data was to influence their decision positively about whether to take part. For this reason, as is recommended by Saunders et al. (2019) careful attention was given to well construction of this email which explained the purpose, use and nature of the research and the requirements of taking part. Any lack of preparation at this stage was likely to reduce the possibility of gaining access or to lower response rates. According to the responses that the researcher was getting the interested organisations then decided to advertise the research either by circulating the call to the staff e-mails or by including the recruitment letter into their electronic bulletins or newsletters.

To mitigate the risk of recruiting only those who are interested in the research topic as described in the Leverage-Saliency Theory proposed by Groves et al. (2000), the researcher diversified this source of recruitment by inviting to the study those who were willing to help and had greater rapport with the researcher. This was done via the professional network of the

principal supervisor and the supervisor from the current part-time academic employment of the researcher and therefore was more of an informal type of access. The roles of such contacts as gatekeepers helped to recruit a wider audience by creating awareness of research, adding credibility by their intervention, and introducing the researcher and research project to the relevant people (Saunders et al., 2019). Snowball sampling, to a lesser extent though, have also supplemented the recruitment process as a way of getting participants to nominate people they know who also have had experienced the phenomenon (Howitt, 2016).

The researcher further approached the eligible participants via e-mail messaging to explain the nature and purposes of the research and answer their questions. In accordance with the purposive homogeneous sampling technique utilised the researcher also ensured that the participants comply with the 3 pre-determined criteria as described above, i.e. (1) the participants must represent academic profession working in the HE sector of UK; (2) they must normally work on campus; (3) they must have worked remotely during the COVID-19 restrictions. The participants beforehand were given the information sheets with all the FAQs to familiarise themselves with (Appendix F) and were given an opportunity to ask any further questions to facilitate an informed decision. Once the decision was made the participants were given the consent forms to sign (Appendix G) and the dates and times for the interviews were then agreed.

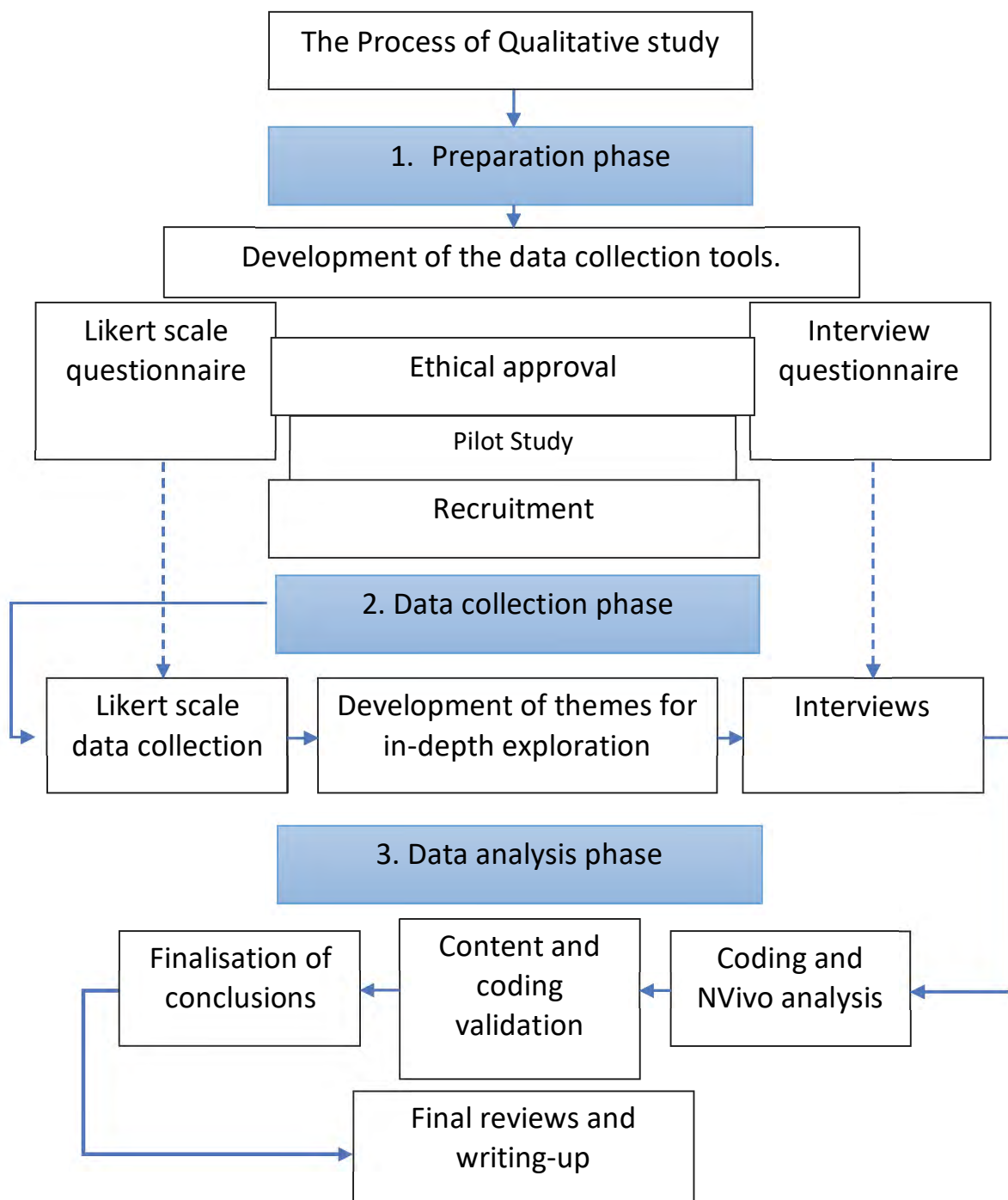
The overall recruitment strategy used by the researcher was in line with the recommendations given by Saunders et al. (2019) to gain the access required, more specifically the researcher:

- Allowed sufficient time for the request to be received and considered and an interview meeting to be arranged at a convenient time for research participant. This took from 1-2 weeks to 1-3 months from the initial contact before an actual interview took place. The multi-organisation access is more time-consuming as the processes of negotiations have to be repeated for each of the organisational units. The first interview of the study took place in June 2021 and the last – in August 2022.
- Used existing contacts and developed new ones. Most management and organisational literature recommend that a researcher is more likely to gain access where he/she can use existing contacts. Their knowledge means increased trust so it can be helpful to begin the recruitment by utilising these existing contacts which should help a researcher's credibility with building new contacts. According to Saunders et al. (2019) it is likely to be easier to use appropriate known contacts in an in-depth study that focuses on a purposively selected sample.
- Provided a clear account by using suitable language of the aim and objectives of the research and the access required in the recruitment letters and by sending the Information Sheets to the potential participants and gatekeepers, i.e., ensured clarity of intentions.
- Identified possible benefits of being interviewed such as opportunity to contribute to the knowledge advancement and opportunity to be heard.
- Facilitated replies by timely addressing questions, requests and providing more information if necessary.
- Developed access incrementally – formally via the publicly available contacts, and informally via the gatekeepers to the target population and finally, by communicating on an individual basis.

- Established credibility by introducing herself and the research, providing all the relevant contact details, assurances about confidentiality and the ethical approval evidence.

The whole process of this qualitative study can visually be represented by the following scheme:

Figure 7. Qualitative Study Process



The next section describes the data collection phase and the logic behind the sequencing the data collection methods.

Data collection

The interviews were conducted online. The tool used for interviewing was Teams software - synchronous video-conferencing tool which implies simultaneous use of a computer, mobile phone, or other device by the interviewer and participant. The interviews were audio-recorded which was clearly communicated to the participants and reflected on the written consent form signed by the participants. This enabled an accurate account of the interview for transcribing and replaying purposes to reach better analysis and comprehension. Anonymity of the participants has been ensured during the course of recruitment, before the recording and afterwards. The participants had the right to withdraw from the study including withdrawing their data if they wish so before their data was anonymised, i.e., before it was impossible to do so.

The tentative interview questions and Likert scale questionnaire (Appendices C and D) along with the Demographic and Screening questionnaire (Appendix B) were sent to the participants after receiving the consent forms signed in advance of the actual interviews. The researcher has given the participants the option to answer the questionnaires before the actual interview or, if they prefer, answer the questions during the interview before starting the main discussion so that demographic and Likert-scale data is received beforehand.

This sequence is reasoned by the Priority-Sequence Model (Morgan, 1998) which establishes the guidance for sequencing research methods from

different research paradigms based on their priority in the given research design (Table 5).

Table 5. Priority-Sequence Model

		Priority Decision	
		Principal Method - Quantitative	Principal Method – Qualitative
Sequence Decision	Complementary Method: Preliminary	<p>1. Qualitative Preliminary</p> <p>Purposes: smaller qualitative study helps guide the data collection in a principally quantitative study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can generate hypotheses, develop content for questionnaires and interventions etc. <p>Example: Focus groups help to develop culturally sensitive versions of a new health promotion campaign.</p>	<p>2. Quantitative Preliminary</p> <p>Purposes: smaller quantitative study helps guide the data collection in a principally qualitative study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can guide purposive sampling, establish preliminary results to pursue in depth etc. <p>Example: A survey of different units in a hospital locates sites for more ethnographic data collection.</p>
	Complementary Method: Follow-up	<p>3. Qualitative Follow-up</p> <p>Purposes: Smaller qualitative study helps evaluate and interpret results from a principally quantitative study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can provide interpretations for poorly understood results, help explain outliers, etc. <p>Example: In-depth interviews help to explain why one clinic generates higher levels of patient satisfaction.</p>	<p>4. Quantitative Follow-up</p> <p>Purposes: Smaller quantitative studies help evaluate and interpret results from a principally qualitative study</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can generalize results to different samples, test elements of emergent theories, etc. <p>Example: A statewide survey of a school-based health program pursues earlier results from a case</p>

SOURCE: MORGAN (1998)

The present research design sets out the qualitative method as the dominant or principal method and the additional tool of gathering data – the Likert questionnaire - is classified as complementary method. Based on the

model the complementary method precedes the principal method, for this reason, the current research falls into the second category of the model (Table 5), where the principal qualitative method follows complementary data collection. Morgan (1998) shows that such sequencing facilitates more in-depth examination during the qualitative stage as the preliminary data collection guides the qualitative inquiry by providing preliminary results. So, this approach is well-suited for conducting current phenomenological research

In addition, there are 4 important aspects according to Creswell (2009) that influence the design of procedures in a study which uses more than one method, they are timing, weighing, mixing and theorizing as discussed below.

Regarding *timing*, the main purpose of putting Likert scale questionnaire ahead of the main interviews was to enhance the in-depth examination. In this case, the preliminary quantitative data contribute to the principally qualitative study by revealing the areas where more detailed discussion could provide more valuable and relevant data. Preliminary quantitative data in this respect helped to focus the analysis of large qualitative data (Morgan, 1998). At the same time, the mixing stage is happening in the data analysis stage making the contribution of both methods *concurrent*.

Weighing of the methods used was disclosed by giving the interviewing the dominant role. So, the priority belongs to the qualitative method.

Mixing of the methods for the current research according to Creswell (2009) represent *embedding*, i.e., the secondary database provides a supporting role in the study during the data analysis and interpretation stage. Since the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data is a rigorous and time-consuming process the author encourages researchers to think about this, i.e., embedded model of design as it emphasizes a major

primary form of data collection which can also include a minor secondary form of data collection.

Lastly, *theorizing* factor refers to whether the research design is guided by a larger theoretical perspective. The answer is 'yes' as the study is explicitly based on the PC theory which stems from the SET. The theories in such studies according to Creswell (2009) are found typically in the beginning sections as an orienting lens that shapes the types of questions asked, who participates in the study, how data are collected, and the implications made from the study.

Thus, based on the above categories the research adopts *multi-method concurrent qualitative strategy with embedded quantitative inquiry based on the psychological contract theory*. This implies a dominant method enhanced by a supportive and enriching dataset which allows deeper perspective. According to Creswell (2009) this method enables the researcher to collect the two types of data simultaneously during the single data collection phase. It provides the study with the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative data and with perspectives from the different types of data within one study. At the same time, the limitations include the challenges that can be associated with bringing the different types of data to a common denominator and with unequal evidence of the methods within the study due to inequality in their priorities.

Likert scale Oxford questionnaire: wellbeing measurement tool

Peer consultations were undertaken by the researcher to enhance the rigor of the research. The Director of the Graduate School at Brunel University London kindly recommended an experienced doctoral researcher from the Psychology Department for this purpose. Through peer consultations and the

review of recommended literature, it was determined that the most prominent and widely accepted methodology for measuring wellbeing is the Oxford methodology. Therefore, the researcher made the decision to utilize the Oxford questionnaire for measuring wellbeing. By doing so, the research is grounded on a solid foundation and can draw meaningful inferences about the wellbeing levels of the sample population. The use of the Oxford questionnaire provides a recognized and validated tool that has been widely used in research, adding credibility and validity to the study.

The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ) has been developed based on the Oxford Happiness Inventory (OHI), which is a comprehensive measure of personal happiness. The OHI was later refined by Hills and Argyle to minimize the likelihood of contextual biases and acquiescent responding, leading to the creation of the improved version, the OHQ. This tool consists of 29 items that are rated on a Likert scale. The OHQ has demonstrated high scale reliability, with a coefficient of 0.91, making it a robust instrument for studying levels of wellbeing. (Hills and Argyle, 2002). The wellbeing for the purposes of this research is considered in a broad sense as can be relevant for remote working conditions and as such is comprised of aspects of feeling good and functioning well during the RW (Seligman, 2011). Later research by Cruise et al (2006) also provides satisfactory evidence for both the internal consistency reliability and the test-retest reliability of the OHQ for studying wellbeing (Cruise et al., 2006).

Pilot study

The pilot study conducted for this research aimed to assess the effectiveness of the interviewing tactics and the reliability of the utilized tools. Initially, a more structured approach was employed during the first interview

with a remote working employee. Although this approach ensured that the entire agenda was covered, it limited the participant's narrative flow and resulted in minimal depth of data. Recognizing this limitation, the interviewing style was adjusted for the second pilot study participant to allow for greater freedom and a more natural flow of information. As a result, the data gathered from this approach was found to be more meaningful and richer.

Furthermore, the structure of the interview was improved to provide participants with more time to establish trust and rapport at the beginning of the session. The initial questions were designed to be more general in nature, focusing on less sensitive areas. The overall structure of the interview was enhanced to facilitate a more effective storytelling aspect in the participants' responses.

Additionally, the researcher devoted effort to refining the wording of the questions, employing smooth prompting techniques, and enhancing skills such as active listening and creating a trusting atmosphere during the pilot study. The pilot study proved invaluable in building the necessary skills and confidence, refining the interviewing style and process, and gaining a better understanding of areas that required deeper examination. Its contribution cannot be overstated in terms of improving the overall quality and validity of the data collection process.

3.5. The Process of Data Analysis

The initial cognitive data analysis of the narratives was naturally performed during the live online interviews. This process was supported by reviewing the demographic information and Likert scale answers provided by the participants in preparation for the interviews. The researcher identified

general and specific topics emerging from the participants' responses, which guided the subsequent in-depth explorations. Throughout the interviewing and interaction process, the researcher diligently documented observations and also recorded personal reflections during and after each interview. This manual or memo writing approach was combined with software-based analysis methods, as described further below.

After the completion of the data collection process, the interviews were transcribed using the AI transcription service Otter.ai. The transcriptions were then edited to ensure accuracy and usability for further analysis. Transcription is an essential step in phenomenological analysis of interview data, as it helps the researcher identify the units of general meaning they believe are significant (Hycner, 1985).

NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program developed by QSR International, was used to analyse the transcribed data. It is a software program that assists in organizing non-numerical and unstructured research data by facilitating processes such as coding, searching, and theorizing. It allows researchers to work with various types of data, including texts, audios, images, videos, and more. In the current study, NVivo was used to create a system of cases, codes, and nodes that could be delineated based on two main aspects: (1) prevailing themes and (2) sentiments or emotions.

The next step according to the guidelines on phenomenological analysis of the interviews by Hycner (1985) is to perform phenomenological reduction or suspending as much as possible the researcher's meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual who was interviewed. The researcher's own assumptions and experiences are described in the "Researcher's Role" section as is also advised by Cresswell (2009) to increase trustworthiness of the current study. This process of

phenomenological reduction done via reflecting on personal assumptions and experiences ensures that the research data is approached with an acceptive attitude to any emerging perspectives to understand the meaning of what that respondent is saying, i.e., it ensures unbiased approach with no expectations to what an individual says.

The process of listening to the interviews as well as reading the transcriptions several times for a sense of the whole takes place afterwards to provide a context for the emergence of specific units of meaning and themes. This step helped to delineate the units of general meanings. When doing so the researcher also used and updated the memos and notes created during the actual interviews as advised by Hycner (1985). After this process of careful investigation of the transcripts and notes the first cycle of structural and open coding were completed which distinguished the units of meaning relevant to the research goals. This then was followed by the second cycle of coding to cluster the units of meanings and determine more general themes from the clusters identified. The text query function of NVivo aided the process of identifying the common patterns and themes useful for the last stage of coding which developed several master themes relevant to all narrations. Thus 3 cycles of coding approaches were utilised for the interview data analysis:

1st cycle of coding:

Structural coding is useful for most qualitative studies as it allows to structure the data by introducing the prevalent topics and thus organising the data (Saldana, 2015).

Open coding is the process of breaking down the data into distinct units of meaning which starts with a full transcription of an interview, after which the text analysed line by line in an attempt to identify key words

or phrases which connect the informant's account to the phenomenon under investigation (Goulding, 1999)

2nd cycle of coding:

Clustering the units of meanings to group open codes into categories to help organize the larger number of open codes (Ariel Cascio et al., 2019). It enabled to determine if any of the units of relevant meaning naturally cluster together or whether there seems to be some common essence that unites several discrete units of relevant meaning (Hycner, 1985).

3rd cycle of coding:

Lastly, this cycle of coding allowed to develop the major themes out of the situation-specific themes identified by the previous cycle. So, the researcher interrogated the clusters into several central themes which express the essence of these clusters. This step was intermingled with the step of “identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews” according to Hycner (1985). As a last point the supervisory board was consulted to provide another check on the rigor of the analysis.

According to Welsh (2002) the use of NVivo in the data analysis enhances the quality, rigour and trustworthiness of the research. Each of the 3 objectives of the present research aimed at examining the PC phenomenon as a result of this approach can be narrowed down into major themes reflected in nodes which then can be narrowed down to individual codes leading to the participants' discussions.

Ethical considerations and procedures

The ethical approval for conducting the research activities, including recruitment and data collection, was obtained on March 25, 2021, and it covered the period from the date of issuance until the end of 2022. The approval letter stated that there were no ethical objections to the proposed study. One of the conditions outlined in the letter pertained to recruitment. It specified that when sending invitations to participants via email, the researcher should use publicly available contacts or personal contact information that was available to the researcher. The other condition advised the researcher to explain the meaning of "PC" in the Participant Information Sheet. Both of these conditions were fulfilled (Appendix A).

Due to the pandemic restrictions in effect at the time of applying for ethical approval, the approval was granted specifically for remote research activities conducted online or via telephone. It was advised to continuously monitor and follow the latest local and national Government health guidelines throughout the duration of the research project.

The Research Participant Information Sheets and Consent Form used for this research explicitly stated that approval had been obtained from the appropriate Research Ethics Committee. The participants were informed that any queries should be directed to the supervisors or the researcher. In the case of complaints, the participants were instructed to contact the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee. The contact details of the appropriate individuals or authorities were provided to each participant for reference.

The researcher took measures to ensure that potential participants were fully informed in order to make an informed decision. The Participant Information Sheet provided to potential participants contained comprehensive

information about the research, including the research purpose, selection criteria, potential benefits and risks of participation, participant rights, data management procedures etc. The researcher actively encouraged potential participants to ask additional questions and promptly addressed any inquiries raised by interested individuals.

It was also assured that the confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants will be maintained unless they clearly express their wish to be acknowledged. Confidentiality of data for the present research included the following measures based on the advice by Wiles et al. (2006):

- Maintaining confidentiality of data and records which means separation of data from identifiable individuals and secure storing;
- Not discussing the issues arising from an individual interview with others in ways that might identify an individual;
- Anonymising research participants through the use of pseudonyms and removing data subjects' names and other personal identifiers to protect their identities. So, all the participants throughout this thesis have been properly anonymised by removing any identifiable information so no interviewee can be identified.

Since none of the participants waived their right to confidentiality the above procedure has been applied to all 32 participants.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Findings

The main aim of this study is to examine the psychological contract of the academics and their workplace wellbeing during the crisis-prompted remote working. The following 3 objectives have been identified to pursue this aim:

- Identify if there were any changes in the psychological contract due to the disruption and the subsequent remote working, determine if any PCB / PCF has occurred.
- Establish and analyse the resulting psychological contract content of the remotely working academics.
- Examine how the above along with disruption and remote working arrangements impacted on the academics' workplace wellbeing.

Based on the aims and objectives the present research addresses 3 key research questions regarding the psychological contract and wellbeing of the remotely working academics during the COVID-19 crisis in the UK:

- Changes in PC: How did the psychological contract of academics change as a result of the disruption and enforced remote working arrangements? To what extent did employees feel that their psychological contract had been fulfilled or breached?
- Psychological contract content: What was the resulting psychological contract content that remote employees held with respect to their employers during the disruption?
- Wellbeing factor: What role did wellbeing play in the psychological contract during this period of remote working?

As it was mentioned above the PC knowledge body mostly consists of the positivist studies employing quantitative research methodologies according to Conway and Briner (2005). The present research uses qualitative phenomenological approach so that the themes and findings can evolve from the data gathered which is also in line with the authors' recommendations. Such approach helps in 'understanding how to get the most out of RW' rather than in 'understanding whether or not to implement RW' which is the research focus shift necessary when RW is an integral part of working arrangements and that shift requires closer investigation of the changed nature of the work (Wang et al., 2021). There are several advantageous features of a qualitative research that the researcher utilised for the present data analysis, they are:

- greater depth of understanding of the subjective experiences of individuals;
- focusing on people's understanding and interpretations, rather than seeking external causes or laws for behaviour;
- exploring research issues from a participant's perspective;
- usefulness in examining changes over time (Veal A. J., 2005)

Thus, the research aim and objectives were reached by the means of this qualitative approach which is inductive by nature and data driven. Before passing to the main body of analysis the demographic and other quantifiable data on the population recruited is presented. In addition, sample population analysis presents some important contextual statistics as well as the influence thereof on the main body of analysis.

4.1. Sample population demographics and background information

The participants in this research who voluntarily chose to participate were academic staff from UK universities with remote working experience during the pandemic. They made their decision to participate based on the information provided to them, as outlined in the Information Sheet (Appendix F). The total number of 30 interviewees took part in the main study, each of them is hereinafter denoted by the capital letter “I” meaning “Interviewee” followed by a random number from 1 to 30, e.g. I10, I25 etc. The Table 6 below summarizes the participants’ demographics and background information.

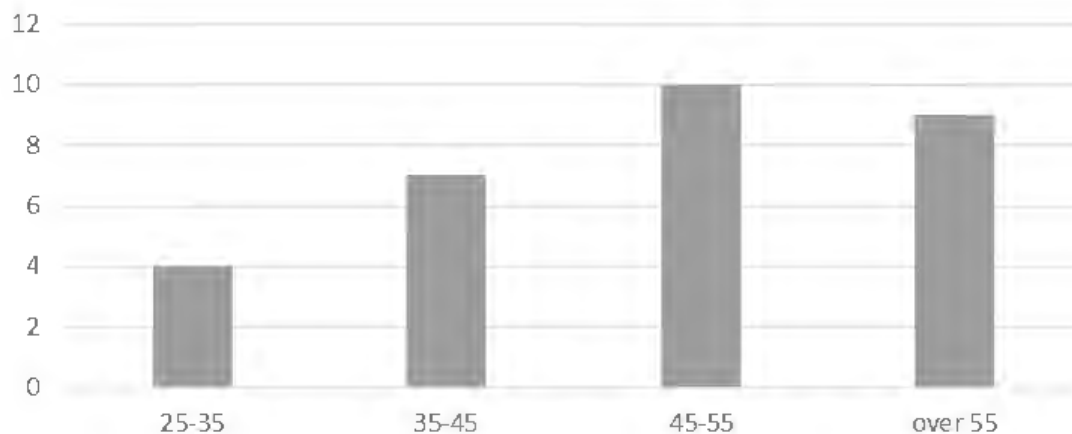
Table 6. Participants’ Demographic and Background Information

<i>number of Interviewees</i>	Male	Female	Total
Age			
25-35	3	1	4
35-45	3	4	7
45-55	5	5	10
over 55	8	1	9
Living with partner			
Yes	11	8	19
No	8	3	11
Care responsibilities			
Yes	8	5	13
No	11	6	17
Commute to work			
up to 1 hour	3	4	7
from 1 to 2 hours	10	5	15
more than 2 hours	6	2	8
Occupation			
Senior/Principal Lecturer	12	3	15
Lecturer	6	3	9
Professor	0	3	3
No answer	1	2	3
Discipline			
Business and management	4	2	6
Accountancy and Finance	3	3	6
Criminology and policing	6	0	6

Law	2	1	3
Healthcare studies	0	3	3
Psychology	2	0	2
Civil engineering	1	0	1
Sociology	1	1	2
Biological sciences	0	1	1
Duration of the employment contract			
20 years or more	1	1	2
from 10 to 20 years	7	4	11
from 5 to 10 years	3	3	6
up to 5 years	5	3	8
No answer	2	1	3

As can be observed, a significant portion of the sample consists of mature participants aged 45 and above (n=19).

Figure 8. Count of Interviewees by Age



These individuals (aged 45 and above), not surprisingly, have a longer duration of psychological contract with their employers. However, according to the table below, the youngest 25-35 age group predominantly expresses more positive sentiments towards their employers, management, and feelings of trust and confidence. The younger age group also reports higher levels of satisfaction with remote work, as depicted in the findings below. So, the generational differences in the perceptions are present within the sample supporting the proposition made by Deas and Coetzee that different age

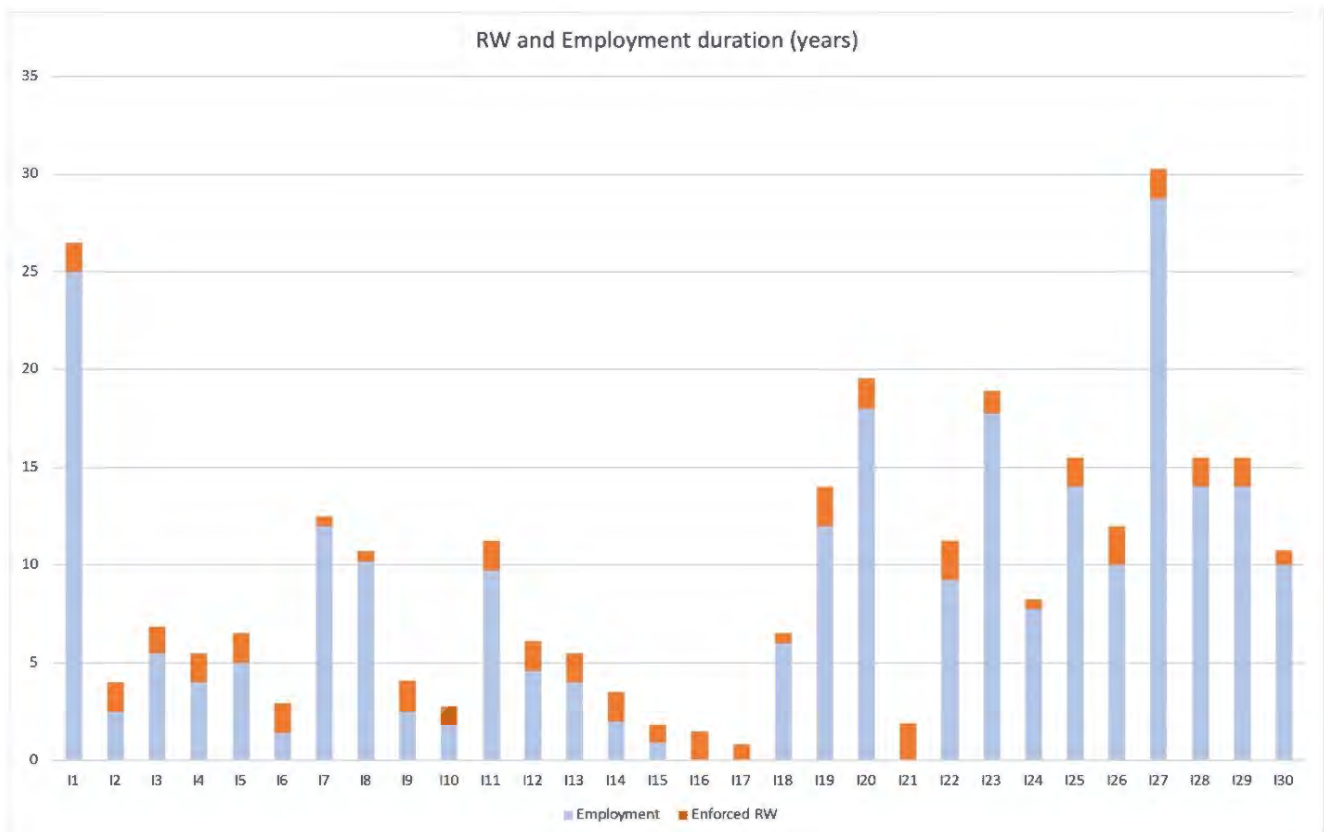
groups may experience 'new organisational landscape differently and may expect different organisational outcomes in exchange for their inputs' (Deas and Coetzee, 2022):

Table 7. Participants' age groups and employer related perceptions

Age	Average of PC Duration (years)	Average of 'My employer is a good employer and is committed to wellbeing'	Average of 'I have trust and confidence in my employer'	Average of 'The management is managing the organisation well'	Average of 'I was satisfied with my enforced RW'
25-35	4	8	8	7	8
35-45	8	6	6	5	6
45-55	9	7	7	6	6
over 55	12	6	6	6	6

As can be seen from the chart below, several participants started their new employments during the enforced remote work period.

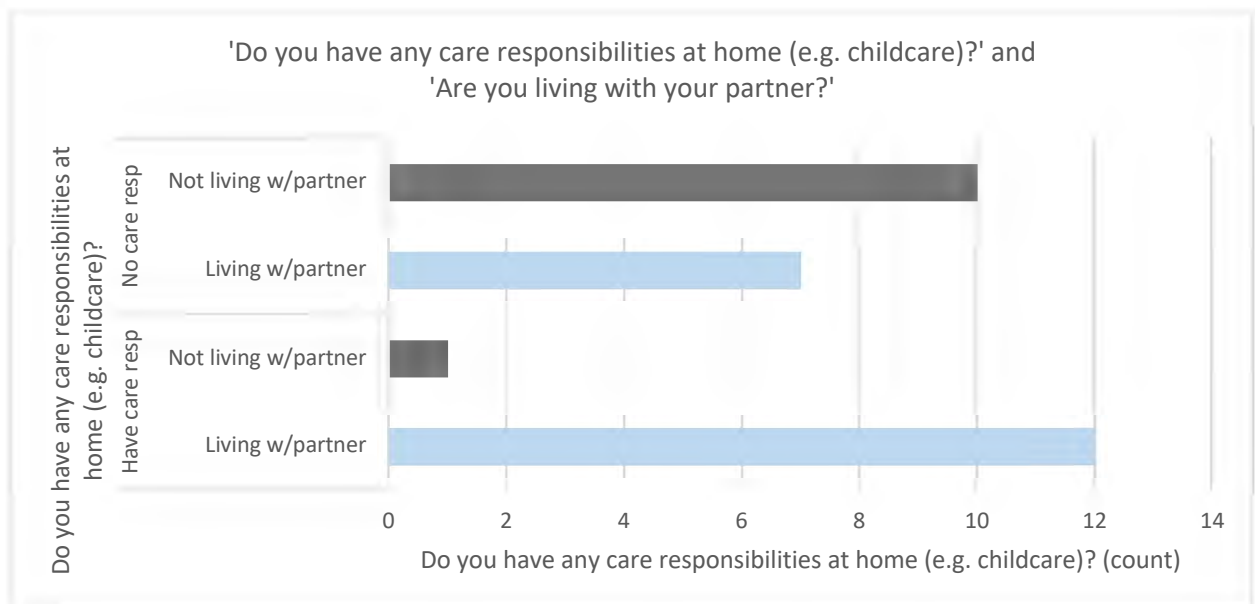
Figure 9. RW and Employment duration (in years)



For the majority of the sample, which is represented by the 'over 45' age group, the duration of the enforced RW constituted a lesser fraction of their overall employment history (Figure 9). The employment duration of most of the participants (n=11) is within the 10 to 20 years range.

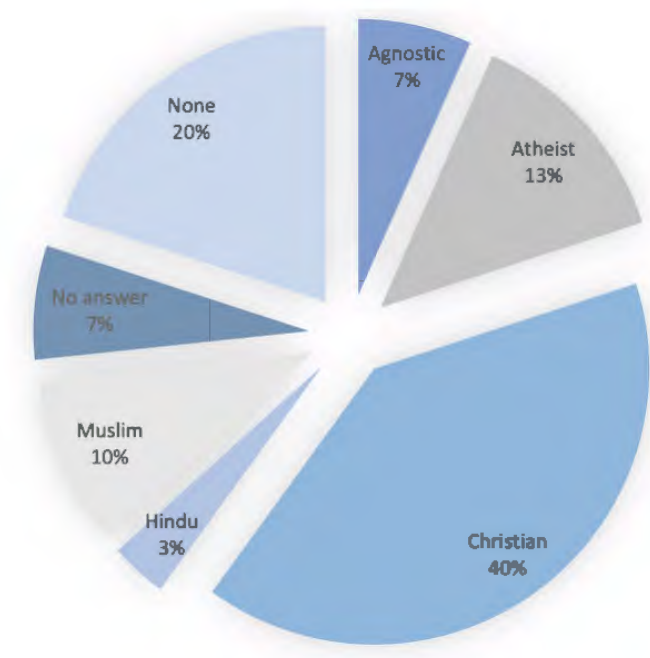
The recruited sample consisted of 19 male participants and 11 female participants. The ratio of the female participants who live with partner and with care responsibilities is higher and the commute time to work tends to be lower for them, i.e., the female respondents live closer to work (avg=1.5 hrs) than male participants (avg = 2 hrs). The breakdown of those who have care responsibilities and are living with partners are as follows:

Figure 10. Family Circumstances of the Participants



Religious background of the sample is represented by the pie chart below:

Figure 11. Religious background of the participants



There are 28 full-time and 2 part-time academics in the sample representing different universities and regions of the UK. 50% of the participants (n=15) hold senior or principal lecturer positions. The sample also encompasses a diverse range of administrative roles, which further enriches the academic occupational variance:

- 1 Principal,
- 1 School Lead,
- 1 Associate Dean,
- 2 Heads of Departments,
- 2 Programme Leaders and
- 7 Module and Course leaders.

The disciplines taught by the recruited academics e.g., business, law, biology, sociology etc. are aligned with the specified sampling criterion, which means that these disciplines can be effectively taught remotely.

The institutional and geographical spread as presented by the map below maximised further the potential variety of the experiences.

Figure 12. Geographical Spread of the Participants



Majority of the respondents (n=16) answered 18-19 months as their duration of the RW during the pandemic crisis.

100% of the respondents answered “Agree” to the question that tests the general understanding of the PC. And 100% of the respondents answered “Agree” to the statement that the COVID-19 RW arrangements was due to the unforeseeable and uncontrollable by the employers circumstances which is important for understanding the assignment of responsibility.

In addition to the background details mentioned earlier, there is a personality factor that plays a significant role in shaping participants' perceived PC during remote work. Although this factor is beyond the scope of the current research, participants were asked to self-assess their personality by indicating whether they consider themselves more positive or more negative. Out of the 30 respondents, 23 identified themselves as having a positive personality, while 7 academics indicated a tendency towards a negative personality. This is important to note at this early stage of analysis because such personality

F		
Negative	4	
Positive	7	
M		
Negative	3	
Positive	16	
Total	30	

factors as personal characteristics and personal identity are recognised as self-fulfilling lens through which the human beings perceive the outer world including their job related experiences (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). Since the individuals may put more focus on satisfying their personal needs through the PC such factor brings another important dimension that has to be taken into account in addition to the contextual and wellbeing circumstances that also affect perceptions about delivery of the deal within the exchange relationships.

In fact, such researchers as Rousseau (2004), Rousseau & Tirojiwala (1998) acknowledge that PC development is influenced by personality traits and that “subjective nature of the psychological contract implies that personality should have an effect on employees’ perceptions of their employers’ inducements, thus affecting the development, formation, maintenance and breach or violation of their psychological contract”. For instance, becoming a parent – i.e., personal identity shift – of a caring individual with greater sense of parental instincts may result in working lesser hours and adjusting the expectations accordingly. Moreover, such personality factors must be considered in conjunction with the professional and organisational identities as they are the parts of the all-encompassing personal

identity (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). The strength of such ties with the profession and the workplaces may vary and the impact on PC varies accordingly.

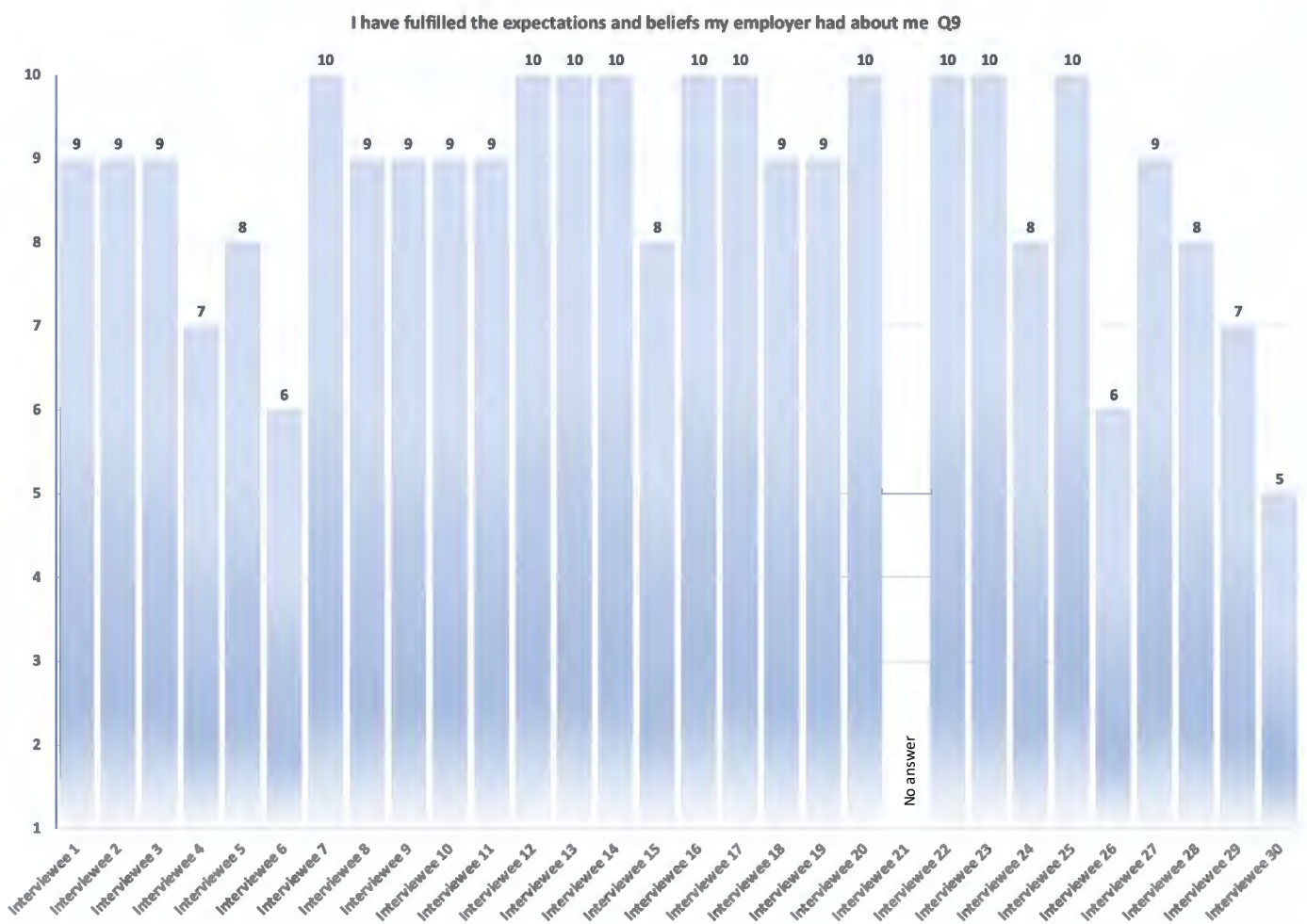
Thus, the researcher acknowledges that considerations of the personality factors are fundamental for the perceptions of PC and wellbeing, therefore the research includes their analysis where the interviewees discussed them and where it was appropriate. Furthermore, the Likert scale questionnaire provided extremely useful insights into the participant's personal aspects and circumstances. However, deeper examination of this factor's influences on the PC and wellbeing was out of the scope of this study.

The other important factor for the PC formation during the remote work of the respondents is the pre-existing relationships with the employers developed before crisis and the questionnaire has also tested this variable. In addition, it is understandable that the wellbeing considerations were taking priority in the interviewees' agenda during the crisis RW, so the questions covered the links of the PC with this area. The summary analysis of the Likert scale answers on these and other aspects is presented below.

Likert scale questionnaire results

Since the PC is based on the social exchange concept it is important to understand the employees' own perceptions about their contribution into the relationships with the universities during the crisis. So, the questionnaire asked the respondents to which extent they think they fulfilled the expectations and beliefs of the employers. 24 respondents answered from 8 to 10 (10 meaning "Extremely") to this question which indicates high rate of deal delivery perception from the employee's side.

Figure 13. Perceptions about Academics' Own Fulfilment

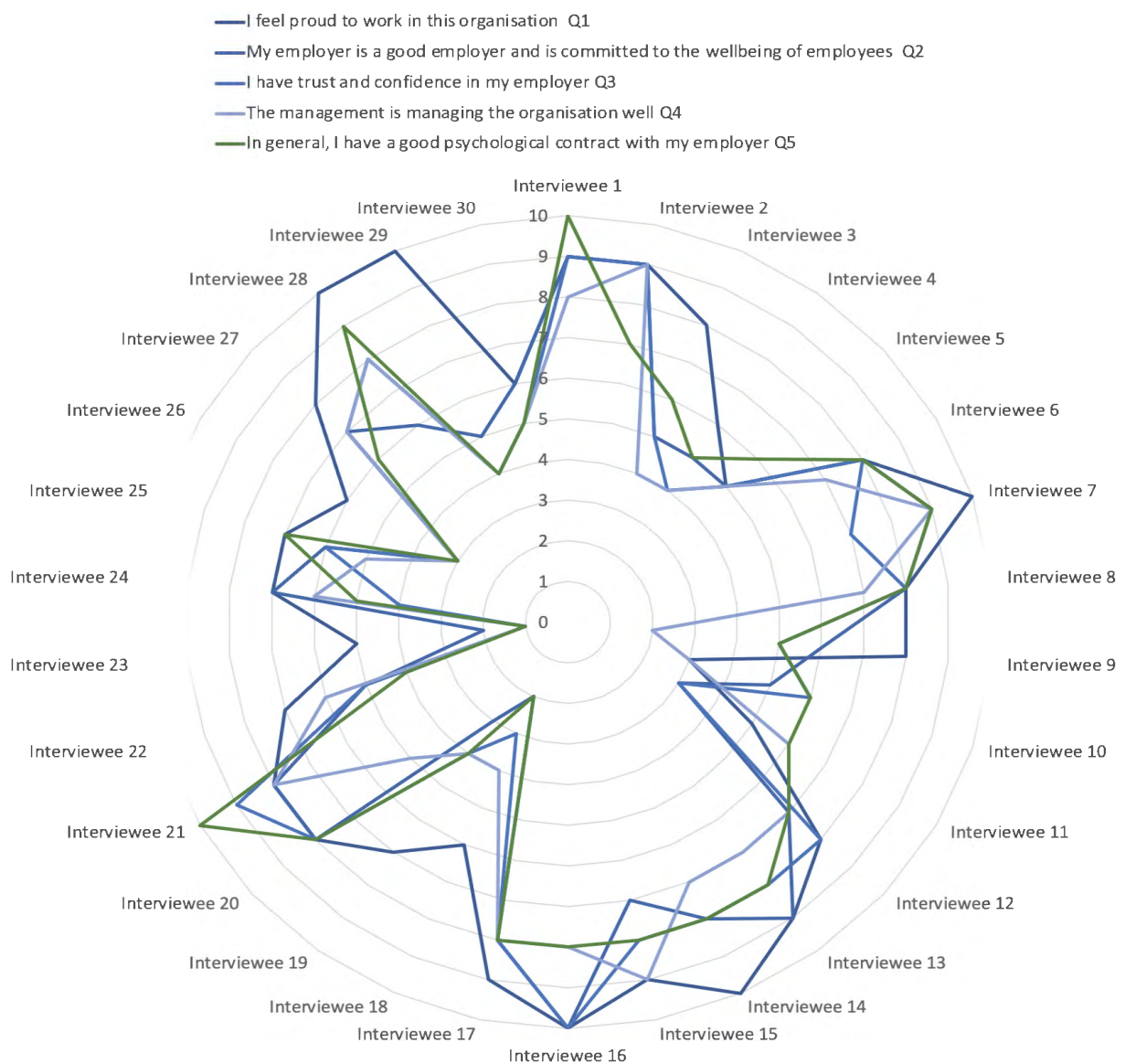


The above trend which is prevalent within the perceptions is crucial to understand the PC dynamics. Based on the reciprocity of the concept the employees with such high evaluation of their own performance are deemed to expect more in return. This also answers the concern expressed by one of the respondents which is in line with the reciprocity norm of the PCT: “I think people are very good, in many ways of looking up and saying “Well, have these people met my expectations?” without necessarily looking the other way around and saying, “Am I still meeting my...employer's expectations?” (I7). So, the answer to the question raised by the participant is evident from the above visual representation.

The chart below, on the other hand, shows the trending pattern in the employer related feelings such as feelings of proud, trust, confidence, feeling good about organisation’s wellbeing policy and the management. It also depicts the scores given to the perceptions of how good the PC is with the employers. Majority of the respondents (n=18) felt that, in general, they have good PC by putting scores from 6 to 9.

Figure 14. Perceptions about Employers

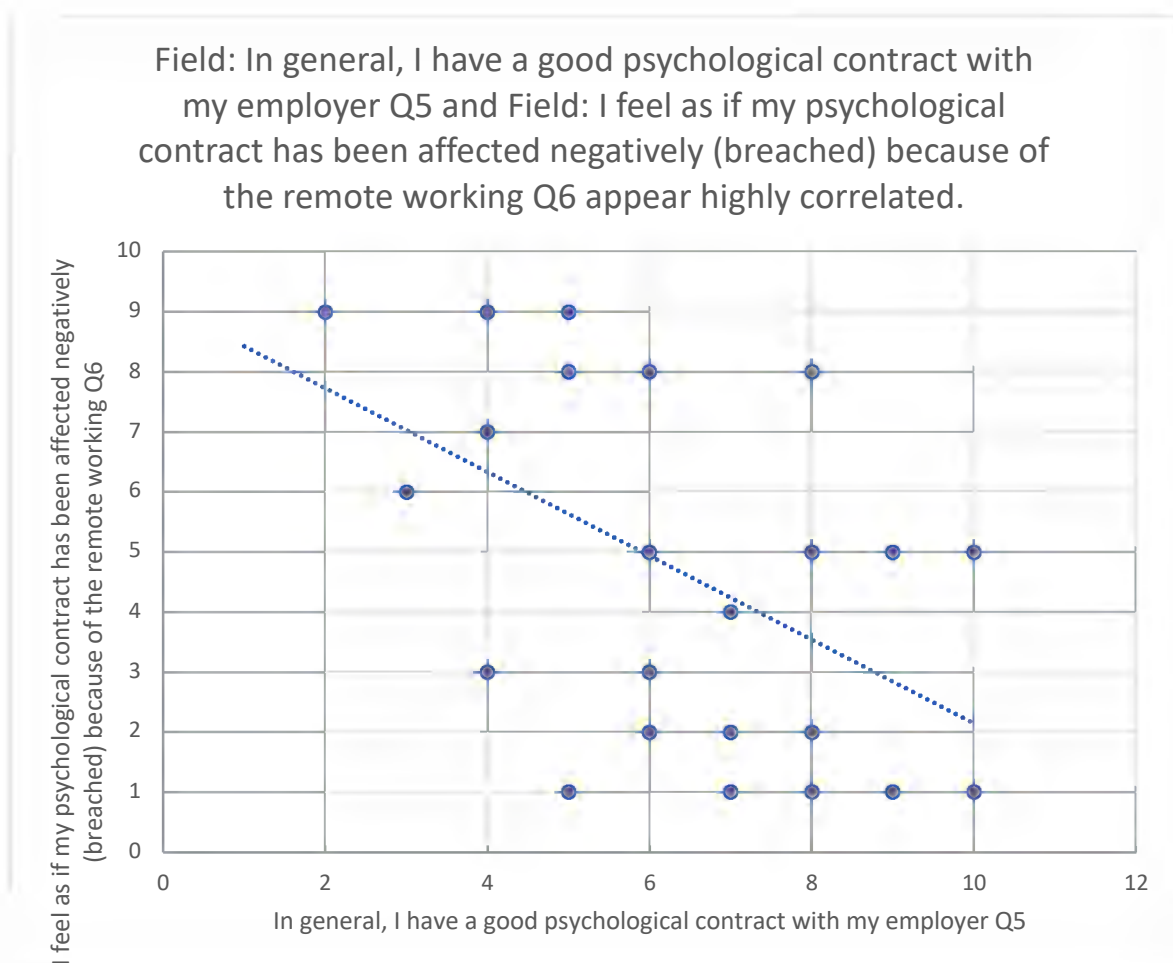
(Likert scale from 1 to 10, 1 = ‘not at all’, 10 = ‘extremely’)



It is evident from the figure above that there is a positive relationship between PC perceptions and factors such as trust, confidence, and pride. This suggests that the better a university is perceived, the more positive the associated PC tends to be, and vice versa. The data collected through the Likert scale questionnaire supports the established theory of PC, which emphasizes the positive relationship between trust, pride, perceptions about the employers, and the underlying psychological contract.

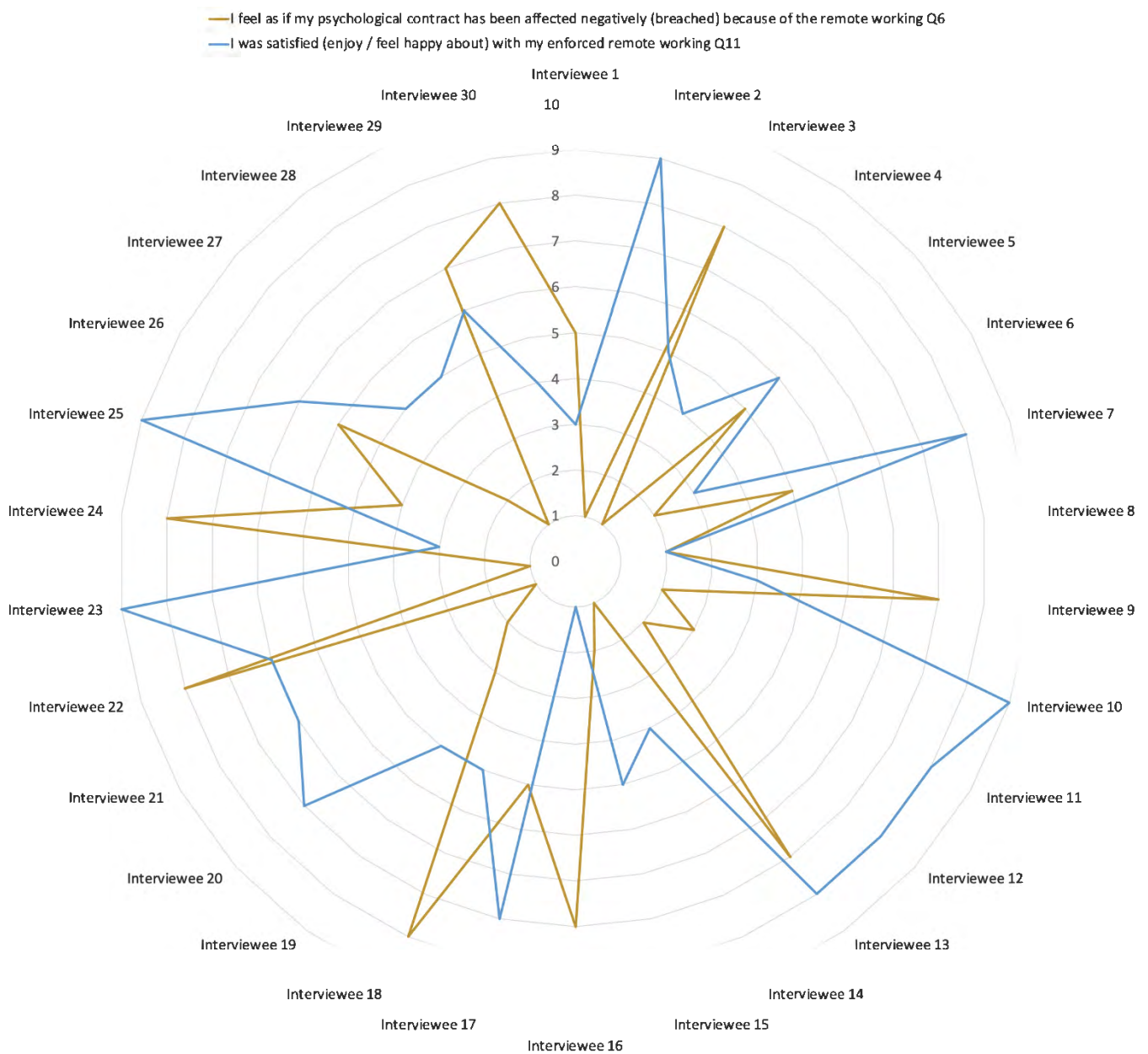
The reverse relationship is observed with regard to the negative effect the remote working arrangement had on PC. Statistical Excel analysis shows negative correlation between the perceived quality of PC and its propensity to be breached because of the RW, i.e., the stronger is the PC the lesser the negative impact of the RW on PC:

Figure 15. Correlation Between PC and Negative Effect of RW on PC



The Figure 16 further proves this negative correlation by showing that those who were satisfied with the RW arrangement tended to feel lesser negative impact of the RW on their psychological contracts and the opposite was true, i.e., the worse RW was perceived the more negative impact of RW was expressed with regard to an interviewee’s PC:

Figure 16. Negative effect of RW on PC and Satisfaction with RW
(Likert scale from 1 to 10, 1 = ‘not at all’, 10 = ‘extremely’)



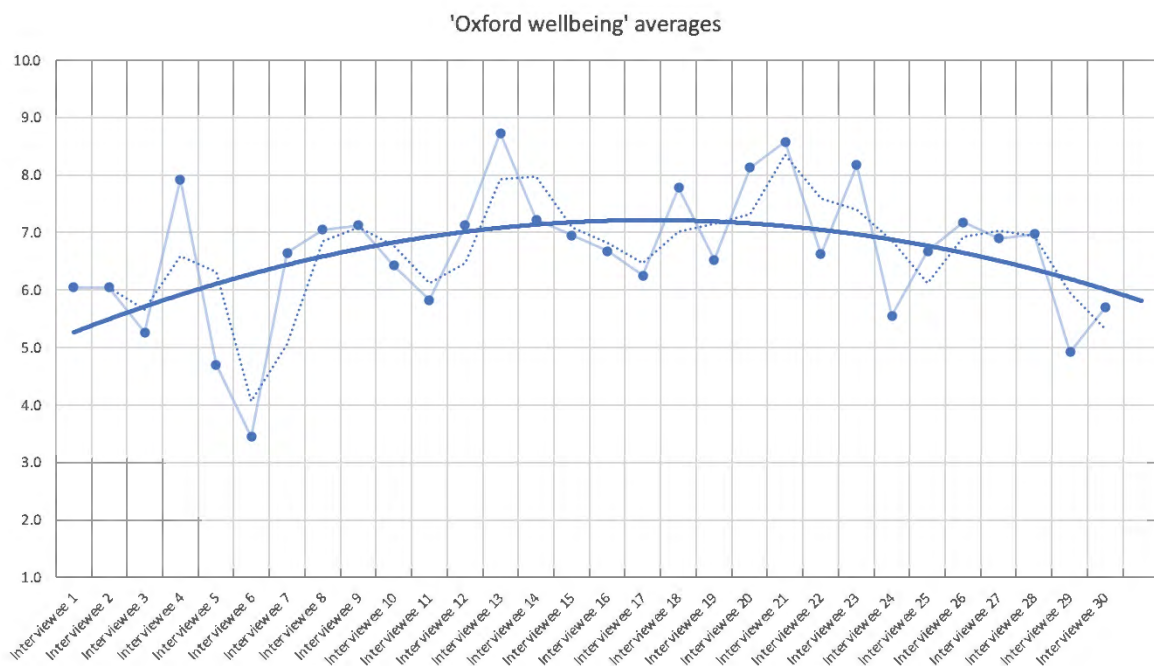
The answers to the above question 11 “I was satisfied (enjoy/feel happy about) with my enforced remote working” were split evenly between the

participants, i.e., 50% (n=15) answered from 1-5 meaning rather 'no' or 'not sure' to the questions if they were satisfied with the RW, and 50% (n=15) answered from 6-10 meaning rather 'yes'.

The responses regarding satisfaction degree, work-life balance, and negative emotions revealed somewhat pessimistic results, indicating a potential negative impact on the overall level of wellbeing. A majority of the participants (n=16) reported that their work-life balance has been weakened, and a similar number of participants (n=16) expressed experiencing negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and depression, as indicated by their higher scores ranging from 6 to 10 on the respective questions.

As it has been discussed, to evaluate the academics' level of wellbeing the researcher used the Oxford wellbeing questionnaire which ensured robustness of the assessment. Based on the data from the Oxford wellbeing questionnaire the average wellbeing score among the participants equals to 6.6 out of 10. The Figure 17 below shows the scores with the trendline and moving averages:

Figure 17. 'Oxford Wellbeing' Average Scores



In general, women (avg=6.8) tended to feel happier than men (avg=6.5). Women who do not live with partners reported higher wellbeing (avg=7) than single men (avg=6.3). The statistics analysis also showed positive correlation between commute time and happiness in relation to RW according to the 'Oxford' score:

Table 8. Commute time, Satisfaction with RW and 'Oxford Wellbeing' Scores

Commute time	Average of 'I was satisfied (enjoy / feel happy about) with my enforced remote working Q11'	Average of 'Oxford wellbeing score'
up to 1 hr	6.3	6.8
from 1 to 2 hrs	5.7	6.3
more than 2 hrs	6.4	7.0

So, this finding confirms one of the conclusions reached by Anderson et al. (2015) which states that an employee tends to be satisfied with the RW more if he or she lives further to the physical workplace due to the benefits of saving time and money that would have been spent on commuting. The analysis indicates that individuals who described themselves as having a positive personality tended to have higher perceptions of their wellbeing and positive PC compared to those who identified themselves as having a negative personality. Individuals with a negative personality reported enjoying RW more. This finding can be attributed to the indirect benefits of RW, particularly for introverted individuals, such as reduced unwanted interactions. Some respondents mentioned that they experienced fewer live interactions, which may have contributed to their positive experience of RW, despite their self-perceived negative personality.

Table 9. Personality, 'Oxford Wellbeing' Scores, PC Perception and Satisfaction with RW

Personality	Average of 'Oxford wellbeing score'	Average of 'In general, I have a good psychological contract with my employer Q5'	Average of 'I was satisfied (enjoy / feel happy about) with my enforced remote working Q11'
Negative	5.7	6.1	6.4
Positive	6.9	6.4	6.0

Indeed, previous research has indicated a positive relationship between employees' positive personality traits and their display of organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Employees who are more positive in nature are more likely to engage in behaviours that go beyond their formal job requirements (Avey et al., 2010) which can also be denoted as extra-role contributions. And many empirical research proved that psychological contract breach influenced employees' extra-role behaviour (Yang and Chao, 2016) so in this regard the personality factor gains additional importance.

Thus, the above analysis provides insights into the dynamics existent within the sample with regard to the central concepts of this research - PC, RW and wellbeing. In addition, the contextual factors, such as family conditions, commute time, age etc. were explored by the questions in this part of the study as the literature emphasises the importance of the context on perceptions of psychological contract (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Such pre-existing mental models and contexts served as a base on which the following interviewing was developed by providing better general understanding of the individual's grounds for developing employment relationships beforehand.

The main part of the data analysis presented below is focused on the in-depth examination of the narratives. Before passing to the main body of analysis, it is valuable to explore the broader contextual landscape of the UK HE industry with a focus on academics' PC formation factors.

4.2. Higher Education Industry of the UK

The Higher Education industry in the United Kingdom plays a vital role in shaping the socio-economic landscape of the country. It possesses several distinctive features that collectively define the underlying employment

relationships by influencing respective policies and practices which set certain expectations. This section highlights the key factors that are crucial to consider when examining the psychological contracts of academics.

First of all, it is worth to mention that the industry makes significant economic GDP contribution: as of the latest available figures, the Higher Education sector's contribution to the UK GDP is estimated to be around £21.5 billion per year (UUK Report, 2021). In 2021-2022, 216 HE providers reported 233,930 academic staff employed on full-time or part-time basis. 43% of academic staff were employed on contracts described as having a teaching and research function and 35% - on teaching only contracts which represents a steady increase from 26% since 2015/16. 48% of the academic staff in the UK are female (HESA Bulletin, 2023).

The other factor important to mention with regard to PC formation relates to the underlying regulatory framework. While HEIs in the UK possess significant degree of autonomy to establish their own employment policies and practices, they are subject to regulatory frameworks set by such organisations as Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Such bodies provide guidelines that influence employment practices, including e.g. the provision of support for staff and professional development (Ahmed et al., 2015).

In addition, UK HEIs operate within a performance-oriented environment which can shape the academics' PCs by setting expectations for productivity, output, career progression etc. The marketization of the industry and the increased competitiveness resulting from a gradual shift towards private sector-oriented funding sources have preconditioned academics to prioritize short-term reputational performance targets which is one of the most evident recent developments (Elmagrhi and Ntim, 2022). The staff is now expected to take into account such factors as increased emphasis on student

voice, students as partners and HEIs seeking ways to highlight their distinctiveness in an increasingly competitive market place (Matthews et al., 2021).

The last factor worth mentioning here is related to trade unions that have significant presence and influence in the UK HE sector. The staff has a notable representation via the trade unions - the largest being University and Colleges Union - which serve as collective bargaining bodies, representing the interests and rights of academic and non-academic staff. These unions advocate for fair working conditions, salary negotiations, and overall employee welfare (Radice, 2013).

Recognizing the aforementioned aspects that shape labour practices in the higher education sector provides a solid foundation for understanding and fostering positive psychological contracts of the academic staff. The next section of the present thesis starts the main body of analysis which is structured based on the 3 main objectives outlined.

4.3. Objective 1. Changes in the PC: breach or fulfilment

Objective 1 is to identify if there were any changes in the PC. As a result of the initial stage of data analysis which took place during the live interactions the answer to this research question was “yes” in 29 of 30 instances, 29 interviewees reported either breach or fulfilment and 1 respondent could not identify any changes. Of those 29 interviewees 16 reported breach of their PCs, 11 reported fulfilment and 2 respondents experienced both PCF and PCB.

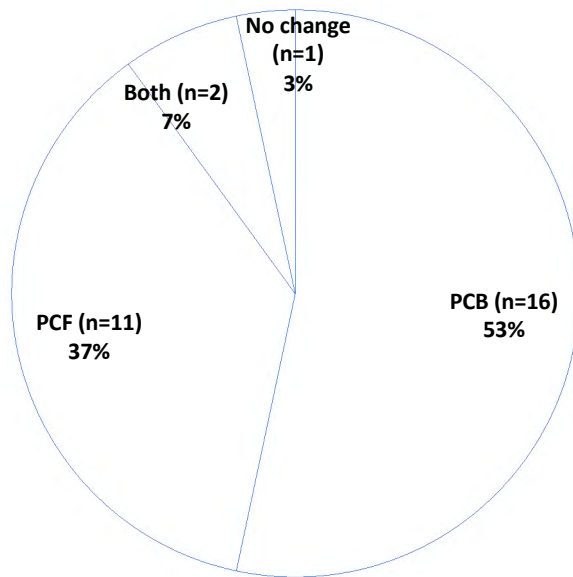
To identify if either a breach or fulfilment happened the researcher explored the employees’ feelings and perceptions as the breach or violation of a PC as well as its fulfilment is a subjective experience that is based on

employee's perceptions (Robinson, 1996). Therefore, the concept of perception which delineates the outcome of the interactions for an individual plays key role for this research as is the case for the PCB and PCF literature in general (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

The prevailing state of a psychological contract was distinguished for each of the respondent based on his or her explanations of such perceptions. Each of the individual might be exposed to different emotions and sometimes from extremely negative ones regarding one aspects of work to extremely positives when considering other aspects. However, the prevailing perception about the underlying PC was useful in identifying whether a breach or fulfilment can be attributed. In addition to the words and phrases used by the interviewees to answer direct question on the state of their PCs, the researcher observed their facial expressions, the changes in tone of voice and gestures to identify the perceptions. The researcher also noted the attitudinal and behavioural consequences of the perceived breach that can be expressed via decreased level of satisfaction and/or trust towards the organisation, limited level of engagement and effort and intention to quit (Robinson, 1996; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). The opposite trends in attitudes and behaviours were observed in case if a PCF was reported, i.e., greater engagement and trust, enthusiasm, OCB, loyalty.

The chart pie below shows the fractions of breach, fulfilment, no changes and both PCB and PCF instances experienced by the academics during the RW:

Figure 18. PCB, PCF and 'No Change' within the Sample



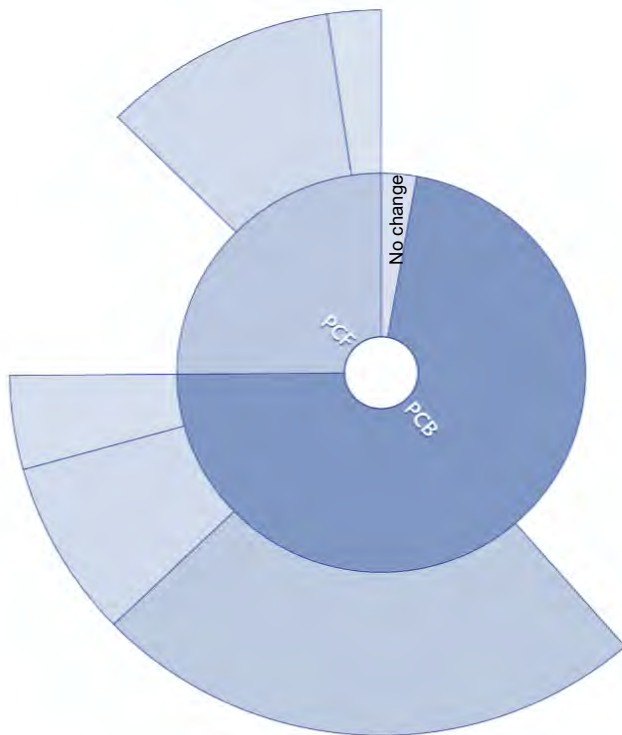
In addition, to the initial stage of analysis, when revisiting the transcripts, the researcher was able to categorise the exact phrases that are key to identifying the state of the PC of the academics. For example, I3 used the following words to describe his/her PC which were classified as PCB:

“I do understand that I feel the contract has changed [the respondent was very happy with the PC before the pandemic]. In terms of what my expectations were previously that were met, they now weren't met during the pandemic and continue not to be met going forward. I'm hoping that will change”.

In contrast, I11 told: “I was really impressed... I think my expectations were exceeded... we genuinely felt really really supported thoroughly”.

The following figure shows the comparison between the number of the items coded as PCB, PCF and “No change” using the NVivo software.

Figure 19. PCB, PCF and “No change” fractions by the number of items coded



4.4. Objective 2. Psychological Contract content

Objective 2 is to explore further and provide analysis of the impact the pandemic crisis had on the psychological contract of the remotely working academics from the employee's perspective. This section examines the resulting PC and its content. To present the findings the researcher found it easier and more logically coherent to follow the actual steps of the data analysis performed. So, there were 4 steps undertaken and the further analysis is outlined in accordance with those steps:

Step 1. 1st cycle of structural and open coding. The framework was developed by the means of the structural coding approach. Analysing and coding of the narratives about the new PC by identifying the expectations and beliefs that constitute the change for those 29 interviewees who have experienced PCB, PCF or both.

Step 2. 2nd and 3rd cycles of coding. This step develops the PC model further. The themes were grouped based on the nature of the underlying experiences - negative or positive - and then regrouped based on the nature of the causes: independent and dependent on the employer's actions and inactions. As it was mentioned above PCT distinguishes breach, the judgment of low contract fulfilment, from an act of "violation" — that is, the wilful failure to honour one's commitments which is associated with stronger negative emotional reactions such as anger, outrage, disappointment, frustration (Rousseau et al., 2013). Therefore, such causes are important to identify as they signal about the attribution of responsibilities. The final cycle of coding also identified core drivers or master themes of the academics' PC.

Step 3. Timing dimensions. The timing factor has an important impact on the PCs as revealed by the data gathered, so this step provides analysis and discusses the time related findings.

Step 4. Conclusive analysis. Analysis of the PC phenomenon is performed at this stage: more specifically its content, common and prevailing trends and characteristics are summarised, and the outlier or extreme instances are discussed.

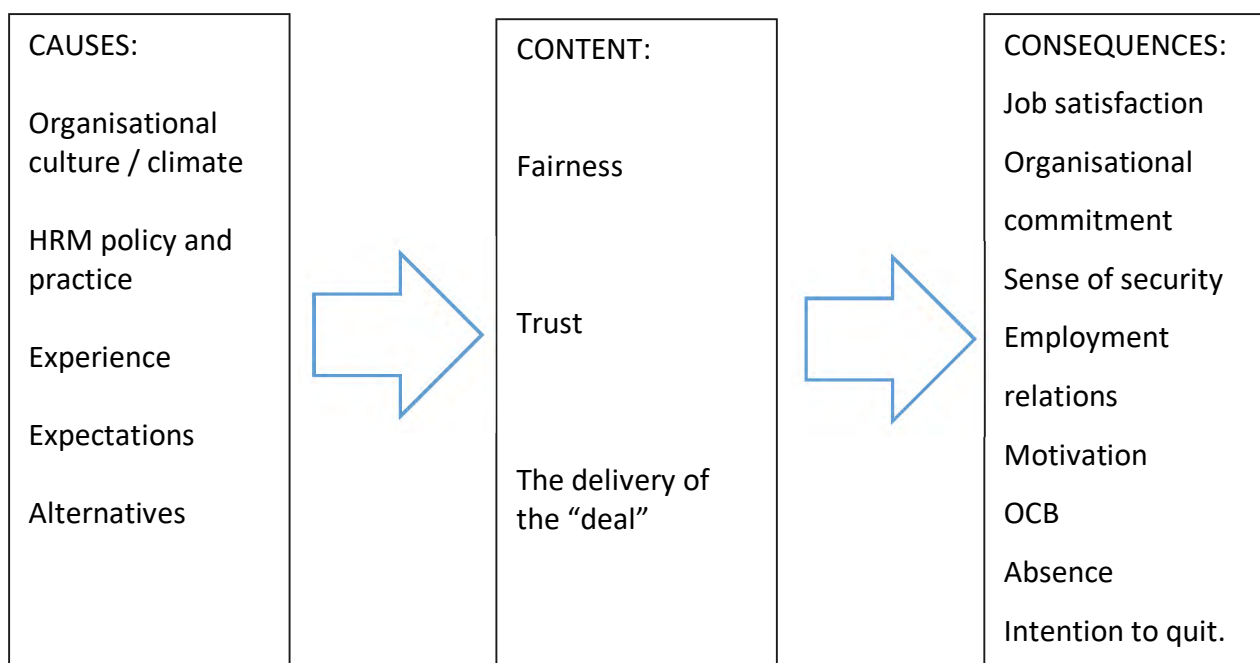
Step 1. 1st cycle of structural and open coding

Central to the coding process is ensuring that coding procedures are defined, rigorous, and consistently applied in order to conform with validity and reliability standards associated with qualitative research (Williams and Moser, 2019). "Coding is oriented around the central concept of [seeking] to represent the interplay of subjects' and researcher's perceptions of the nature and dimensions of phenomena under study" (Douglas, 2003 cited in Williams and

Moser, 2019). Based on the recommendations for developing rigorous and consistent coding the researcher used three cycles of coding which were cyclical, iterative and non-linear.

The open coding the structural coding was applied initially to build the underlying framework for the analysis. The basis for such analysis was derived from the PC theory: the researcher found the framework for understanding the employees' PC developed by Guest (1998) particularly useful in helping to organise the initial stage of coding. The framework used is called "the model of the PC" and it is used to analyse the concept of PC from an employee's perspective:

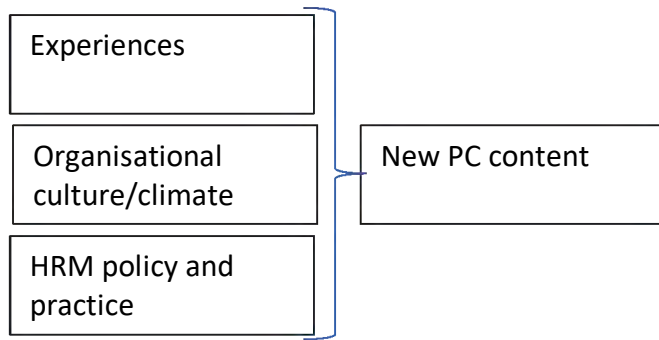
Figure 20. PC Model from an Employee's Perspective



SOURCE: GUEST (1998)

The first group of codes based on the model covers the Causes and the data showed that the following 1st level nodes must be created during the structural coding stage:

Figure 21. Contribution of the Concepts to New PC Formation

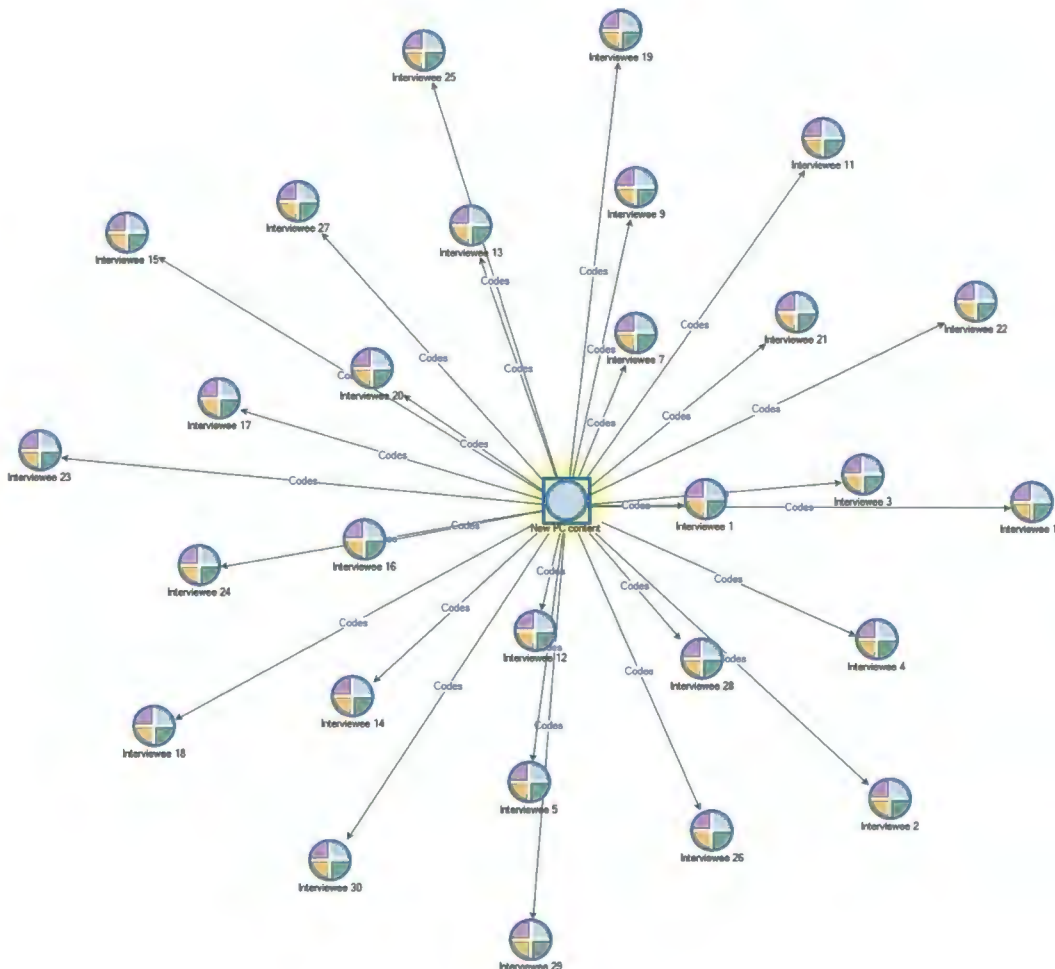


The researcher identified the content of the new PC by coding the beliefs and expectations of the interviewees under the “New PC content” node as they were referring to the new PC components developed as a result of the crisis RW.

The following picture is the visual representation of the coding contribution of each of the participants produced by NVivo: as it was mentioned above 29 of the 30 participants have contributed to developing the new content.

The following picture is the visual representation of the coding contribution of each of the participants produced by NVivo: as it was mentioned above 29 of the 30 participants have contributed to developing the new content.

Figure 22. Contribution of the Participants to New PC Formation



The process of open coding established the new PC content that the employees had with regard to the universities during the crisis. The list on this stage was not classified and structured yet since the aim of the open coding stage was to determine the distinct themes that emerge in a more general format. The themes identified from the interviews reflect core constructs across some of the components captured by existing quantitative measures of psychological contract – e.g., workload or pay - as was the case with the analogous interview study conducted by Duran et al. (2019). However, most of the content revealed does relate to the profession specific PC that has never been identified in the literature yet. The below is the list of the content components followed by more detailed explanations accompanied by the relevant citations.

PC content of the UK academics during the crisis prompted remote working:

- Support services
 - IT services support
 - Mental health and wellbeing support
 - Equipment / material support
 - Training support
- Communication
 - University-wide communication level
 - Individual-level communication
 - Team-level / collegial communication

Note on the common communication issues during the RW

- Workload
- Bereavement policy
- Engagement in crisis response

- Re-emerging from crisis
 - Acknowledgement and recognition
 - Smooth gradual return
 - Office spaces
 - Health and safety of the workplaces
 - Hybrid TL
- Flexibility
 - Autonomy
 - Online meetings policy / workload
 - Ethical concerns

Support services

The support services proved to be of crucial importance for the employees' PC during the pandemic: 'employees need to be supported more than ever especially with the uncertain future and the high possibility of losing jobs or salary deduction' (Mala, 2020). This need becomes even more evident when there is high reliance on the IT and equipment, Internet, and associated services: "I think checking in much more regularly [would benefit PC], I'd want them to acknowledge much more quickly that we needed support" (I24).

In addition, academics were dealing with a relatively novel realm of online pedagogy and delivering the TL via the assigned platforms. Moreover, due to the fact that loneliness and isolation from the colleagues is common in teleworking it can lead to a negative impact on employees' mental health which is associated with a high risk of psychological distress and depression (Hamouche, 2020). The academics were also expectant of being supported in this area as well.

Thus, the support mentioned during the interviews can be divided into 4 major groups that are described in the following sections: (1) IT services support, (2) mental health and wellbeing support, (3) equipment and other material support and (4) training support.

IT services support

It was established that people can feel insecure, incapable, and stressed about handling all the skills and knowledge related to the recent updates of information technology (Ingusci et al., 2021). So, the overall mood around the IT services support expressed can be described by such feeling as stress about handling the IT at home alone, more specifically the major complain around the IT services during the pandemic was related to their slowness: “...poor IT people were trying to manage all of these, you know, different problems that everybody was having. So, credit to them, they did that really well. But still, there was a delay for things” (I22).

At the same time, there was perception that the pandemic was used as an excuse: “...those technical issues that you will be able to really easily overcome when you're actually physically at work compared to sitting in your study at home... I found that the COVID stroke remote working seemed to give everyone a reason not to be contactable, it was just seemed to be a sort of way of... pulling out. I don't know how much you notice it... Everything was, you know ‘you had to bear with us that the calls are higher, we didn't have as many staff because of the COVID’. So, I suppose I found it quite difficult in that respect. And then you put things to one side and try and do again the following day... a slower pace” (I18).

The respondent further noticed that: “I effectively worked their pace rather than my pace, but I sort of started to change. If they were slow, then what was the point of me being really fast, if that makes sense? So, I probably adopted their psychic really. And I suppose I felt that they were even more remote than they were when I first joined them” (I18).

It should also be mentioned that the IT support was essential for improving the social aspect of RW as there was heavy reliance on ICTs to communicate and collaborate with colleagues, supervisors (Wang et al., 2021) and students. In this respect IT support was also contributing to the overall mental health and wellbeing levels as discussed below.

Mental health and wellbeing support

The need for such support was apparent within the sample: “...my wellbeing has been impacted fairly significantly... physically and mentally, physically. I've got a back issue again, I because I'm not getting up. I'm not moving. I'm not walking... and I've had lots of headaches that can't sleep properly. Those things... I'm thinking about work 24/7, that because work has invaded my home” (I19).

At the same time while all the interviewees were aware of the mental health and wellbeing services offered by the universities, none of the 30 interviewees reported that they used such services even though they actually were in need for such type of support. This was proved by the fact that several (n=6) employees were using private counselling services:

“...the stress of all that is just meant that I've been in counselling for the last four months because of that work related pressure” (I22).

“I'm seeing a counsellor now. I could have started counselling sooner. I could have put more effort in for longer” (I6).

Not using the university provided mental health and wellbeing support services but rather hiring the counsellors privately which definitely shows the need for such services within the sample may suggest that many current wellbeing approaches 'are either tokenistic, reactive, or they fail to offer responsive mechanisms that support the unique needs of staff' in education contexts today (Anna Dabrowski, 2020). Hence the respondents who shared that they privately hired the counsellors expressed a wish for a financial support with that: "I'd certainly want there to be more financial assistance, in terms of buying equipment that you need at home. But also, in terms of accessing appropriate psychological support... if you need to access a counsellor, who is a trained PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] counsellor, then work should be paying for that. Or at least, subsidising it, or at least giving you some support with that, so that then that's not an additional burden on what you're already going through" (I24)

In addition to subsidising counselling costs, the interviewees expressed such expectation as better socialising via such activities as online meet-up or some physical activity classes such as yoga, individual welfare calls, managing the issues around work overload, giving greater autonomy etc. which would have a positive effect on the overall mental health: "I mean more social activities, I think would be much appreciated. And just the chance to actually do something fun with your colleagues and not for all to be about work" (I24). For instance, the study of Duran et al. (2019) puts forward a consideration of training in mindfulness to benefit the PC via greater wellbeing such training would bring.

The wishes expressed regarding wellbeing support included the desire for more social activities and experiences to foster a sense of belonging to the group. Participants also mentioned the importance of opportunities for

professional development, as many felt their progress had been stalled. Additionally, they expressed interest in participating in shared groups, such as book clubs, to enhance their overall wellbeing.

Equipment / material support

The perception that the universities must provide technological equipment and software suitable for virtual delivery of TL was evident within the sample as setting up a home office and buying necessary equipment can create additional stress and burden on the staff (Franken et al., 2021). The interviewees were mentioning provision of good office equipment especially ergonomic chairs and laptop stands to reduce the symptoms of back pain and posture problems associated with prolonged sitting in front of the screen. Provision of the screen glasses to protect eyes when using digital screen, for instance, was considered as a legal obligation by the respondents: "...there's a legal obligation such as, you know, monitor, glass, eye tests for staring at screens all day... So, the [employee] would have an expectation that not only working flexibly to our required workplace, but they also have an obligation to provide you with the tools to facilitate that" (I17). Stable Internet or high-capacity Wi-Fi connection was also among the major concerns expressed by the academics.

Thus, the degree of the impact of this expectation on the PC was high enough as the participants used such words as "duty" or "legal obligation". To fulfil this duty some universities allowed academics to take their office equipment such as screens or laptops to homes however "it was really restrictive about when you could do it, and you had to book it... it wasn't very well advertised, if I'm honest, it was kind of you found out because somebody else had done it.... I don't know...whether anybody else managed to access any

of the equipment they needed...they have a duty to do it, screen and computer, so desk space assessment for everybody... whether they work for them at home, or they work for them in the office” (I19).

Training support

A significant challenge associated with changes in work dynamics during and post-COVID-19 was the rapid adoption of technology, particularly in the early stages of transitioning to flexible work which happened rapidly (Franken et al., 2021). The technological preparedness of the interviewees varied significantly: while some of the academics felt noticeably confident with this aspect of the work and even provided self-initiated trainings for their colleagues, the others felt that they need more time to get used to the technological side of the RW. “We weren't given a lot of access to training or help or anything like that to do with the technology. And no kind of training and how to teach remotely. None. None of us were ever told. We were just sort of figured out on our own. And that's not It's not ideal” (I24)

It was noted that switching between different TL platforms which the universities undertook a number of times during the pandemic did hinder the process of technological integration: “Certainly all I needed was enough training to teach on these online software... you've heard of Teams and Zoom, and then you suddenly hear something called Collaborate, and then you're like, Okay, how do I do that?” (I2). Moreover, the online pedagogy is different and therefore needs more proper attention and coverage by the training support provided. It was also established that effective and efficient training on utilisation of technologies to facilitate remote work and communication reduces the level of stress as the study shows (Greer & Payne, 2014 cited in

Hamouche, 2020) and therefore training support is also beneficial for the overall wellbeing of the academics.

At the same time there was a general understanding among the respondents that the novelty of the experience puts both the employers and the employees “in one boat”. So, as is advised by the research conducted by Hamouche (2020) training needs to involve managers as well so that they are trained on how they should manage virtual teams, considering the context of teleworking, in order to be able to support their team members.

It must also be noted with regard to support that whilst in minority quite the positive opinions were also expressed:

(1) “The employer has dealt with it exceptional; I think. It was really quick. So, we had a lot of training, you know, we had a lot of instruction guidelines, support, the team was ready if you had questions” (I4).

(2) “So, there were enough practice sessions, employer made sure. And also, even if there were mistakes that have happened along the way, in terms of handling examinations... the employer has been understanding, because there's only so much you can do from a work from home setting. So not only were additional promises made, but they were also kept as well” (I2).

The subsection below discusses the next cluster of the PC components which can be generalised under the name of “Communication”.

Communication

The researchers on communication highlight the importance of continuously informing the employees about the general matters that influence their work role because it leads to a better understanding of management’s actions and to enhancing mutual trust between the employees and

organisations (Daneci-Patrau, 2011). Poor communication will not only hinder performance, as suggested by the research performed by Wang et al. (2021) but can also impair relationships and have a negative impact on wellbeing by increasing stress levels. In general, the communication concerns that the respondents shared during the interviews were about 3 distinct levels of communication: (1) university-wide communication (2) individualised communication and (3) team-level collegial communication.

University-wide communication level

Optimized university-wide communication was deemed to provide greater transparency and clarity about the plans both during and after the pandemic to address the uncertainty of the employees about expectations both to and from their employers (Diab-Bahman and Al-Enzi, 2020). Therefore, it is essential for management as leaders to commit to supporting employees through actions and effective communication, as this will enhance relationships with academics, fostering greater trust and respect between all parties involved (Dennerlein et al., 2020). By contrast, some inconsiderate practices of copying the academics into the emails addressed to the students, for example, and authoritative one-way communication were proved to be detrimental to the psychological contracts. The below are the two examples of such practices that negatively impacted the academics' PCs:

(1) "...communications, were first going to students, and then [they] will copy of that to us... it shows a lack of respect and appreciation to the staff really, because you're kind of almost second place in terms of sort of, you know, let's keep the students happy so the staff" (I23).

(2) "I think maybe they've dropped the ball in terms of communication a little bit. So, there was almost no information flowing up the ladder, and there was a lot of information coming down the ladder all the time" (I12).

Individual-level communication

In general, the data confirms that managers should maintain continuous communication with their employees whether they are physically present or not in the workplace (Greer & Payne, 2014 cited in Hamouche, 2020) which is extremely beneficial for an individual's PC: "I remember, we used to have one on one meetings with my boss asking "What are the requirements? What is my mental state? What is my... Where am I? Are you living alone? Do you need any additional support? Do you... Do you...?" you know, all that, and whatever promises were made - were delivered as well" (I2). A number of employees expressed their expectation that the management representatives should check-in regularly with the staff and keep in touch. This may take the form of some kind of "welfare calls" (I18), for example, or any other form that would enable the parties to exchange their personal circumstances affected by the crisis in a more private and regular manner: "...the communication wasn't great. So, for example, centrally, there was a requirement for everybody to be risk-assessed their own personal circumstance. And then because... the team is all split up you can easily lose sight of more vulnerable members of staff. And there just wasn't that individual contact... we had one conversation at the very beginning...and that was the only conversation we had about risk assessment from then till now, it just never happened again" (I22).

A more personalized approach, which could have compensated for the limited communication that became a barrier to implementing and executing

programs promoting health, safety, and wellbeing (Schall and Chen, 2022), was often left to the discretion of individual managers and not systematized by universities. Consequently, academics found that individualized communication became a matter of luck, rather than a consistent practice within the university setting.: “[I] think a lot depends on your individual manager... so the university as a corporate entity, was trying to do a lot of very good things they were trying, I mean, in a desperately difficult situation for an organisation... So centrally, they did a lot of the right things, but I worked with head of service... but to give her a due she tried... I think she thought ‘I’ll soon be gone” (I22). Alternatively, normative-level guidance could establish general standards for such interactions, aiming to eliminate the inconsistent approach towards staff members.

To sustain effective individualized communication during a prolonged crisis, the research reveals the necessity for managers to possess emotional intelligence in their management of remote working which would allow them to understand and navigate the emotional challenges faced by their employees during the crisis.: ““I know because I’ve had leadership roles and senior leadership roles, I know what the requirement is, it’s about actually spending time and investing in your people, and knowing your people properly, having the emotional intelligence to understand each individual. And if you haven’t got that emotional intelligence, you will never understand with any real sincerity and integrity, what those needs are for each individual member of staff” (I30).

Another concern that could have been addressed through individual-level communication is the timely giving and receiving of feedback, as emphasized by several respondents. Effective communication channels and feedback mechanisms play a crucial role in providing clear expectations, constructive criticism, and recognition, which are essential for employee

development and performance improvement.: “...working from home -... it can feel quite isolated from your workplace, especially when you're new, sort of wondering whether am I doing? Does anybody think I'm doing a good job? Does anybody think I'm doing a bad job? Who do I go to?” (I17). In other words, the uniqueness of the experience urged this need for an observation and opinion on the employees’ performance from the management side: “ [it] could have been a really good chance to kind of check in and just say “Look, I'm working on X, Y, and Z at the minute, I'm thinking about X, Y, and Z at the minute, I'm worried about X, Y and Z at the minute. You know, here's the kind of complete picture of what's going on” (I12). Even though “the offer was always there, and our managers were very much contactable” (I12) a more proactive approach and clearer guidance from the managers would have made more of these contacts possible: “I think when you kind of get into the groove of working, you don't really want to get out of that groove. And you don't really want to be seen as pestering anyone or causing a problem or anything like that. So perhaps they could have been just a small amount more proactive in terms of setting aside time for more of that discussion to take place, potentially” (I12).

[Team-level collegial communication](#)

Scholars have suggested that third parties such as peers play significant roles in shaping how employees respond to events they interpret as breaching their implicit contract with the organisation (Shen et al., 2019). Social support appears to be the most powerful virtual work characteristic because it had positive indirect impacts on performance and wellbeing via its associated beneficial effects on all the challenges (Wang et al., 2021). COVID-19 lockdown negatively impacted the interpersonal work relationships, collegiality, and socialising with

the colleagues by imposing restrictions on being on campus: "...whilst there was support available, it was always through booking a team's meeting to get that support, as opposed to when we have more pre-pandemic times, you would have a conversation with a colleague in the corridor" (I17). The interviewees also mentioned lost professional development and growth opportunities because of lack of live interactions: "I had quite a few conferences planned for that year, I think it was May when the first lockdown started, and I had three conferences in line, for example. And I knew for sure, if I was able to attend those conferences, it would open some great doors for me" (I5).

ICT-mediated communications including the mobile solutions become the only option for engaging with the colleagues as is also supported by Wang et al. (2021) research. There were several cases when the academics self-initiated group chats in WhatsApp or Teams to communicate and support each other: "...we set up our own Team meetings, we set up our own ways of communicating" (I22). However, such initiatives involve some degree of interpersonal risk because it implies a behaviour that no one has instructed one to do, which heightens the need for individual self-efficacy. This is due to the fact that social interactions in the remote working context cannot simply "happen"; instead, individuals need to proactively initiate or engage in online interactions (Wang et al., 2021).

Alternatively, an employer can initiate and stimulate such behaviour and thus ease the risk mentioned for the individual employees and foster better relationships and trust: "...psychologically, it wasn't until quite a long way into the pandemic, actually, that they started putting on virtual coffee mornings and virtual meetups and that sort of thing. And it was quite a long time before we had that collegiate meeting again, and it still was not, it's not where it was. Everyone seems to take a track that was just for themselves. And we stopped

working together to support each other” (I24). This might be due to the fact that lack of opportunities for live informal communication, dispersed physical locations, different contexts etc hinder the virtual team’s ability to effectively collaborate (Morrison-Smith and Ruiz, 2020). For this reason, some teams require timely and proactive measures from the management to initiate the collegiate support among their group members.

Common communication issues during the RW

Several communication-related issues had a significant impact on the effectiveness of the communication flow, both among team members and between managers and staff. These issues hindered the smooth exchange of information, collaboration, and understanding within the organisation. Such issues that the interviewees were facing during the RW mostly relate to the informal communication which was severely affected by the lockdowns. Not being physically present in one space or environment caused lack of spontaneous conversations or so called “corridor talks” mentioned by the respondents which deprived the employees of the opportunities of small talks, joking and laughing together while having a coffee, for example, sharing some news etc. and thus creating stronger emotional context for building trust crucial for further effective cooperation. According to the research by Nardi et al. (2000) recent empirical research has demonstrated that informal workplace communication, primarily conducted through face-to-face interaction, plays a crucial role in fostering effective collaboration.

Whilst instant messaging (IM) was able to replace such live interactions to some degree during the COVID-19 it does possess some of the features that if managed properly would ease its functionality for building better workplace

relationships. Two of such IM features were reported to be crucial for the sample within this study – one is related to online presence and the other is related to availability of an individual to interact. While the first feature supports the sense of connection among the colleagues by providing awareness information about the presence of others, the second feature is used to negotiate the availability of others to initiate conversation, where the problem of interruptiveness is a major concern.

Given the impromptu nature of informal communication, a key problem is to locate and get the attention of the person with whom one wishes to converse (Nardi et al., 2000). For example, the interviewees shared that seeing a “red dot on their Teams” prevented contacting people because “they're busy, I don't really want to disturb them” (I17). So the signalling language of the IM tools or other ICTs such as emails exerted noteworthy influence on people’s perception on whether a person could be contactable at the moment which then invoked or otherwise prevented the communication initiative: “I see everybody's busy - if you could see they are online, you know, with a red dot on their Teams... they're busy, I don't really want to disturb them” (I17).

Thus, since informal conversations are normally opportunistic, the recipient may be present but the request to talk occurs at an inconvenient time because the recipient is engaged in another task or conversation. This gives rise to a fundamental asymmetry in conversation: the time and topic are convenient for the initiator, but not necessarily for the recipient (Nardi et al., 2000). The degree of such asymmetry is substantial especially for the team members working remotely: “particularly university senior leadership don't always acknowledge that it's not easy when you're looking after your elderly mother to balance that with university demands and expectations... So, I need a response within an hour but actually, I'm not teaching in that hour, my diary

is blank. So, I've chosen that hour to go get my mum's shopping and check my 85-year-old grandmother who lives at the other end of our village, or I've used that hour to help my son with maths... And it's that speed of required response, I don't think senior management always recognised that while you're sat at your desk, the chances of you being able to put whatever it is to one side and do whatever they asked was doable... when your remote working, there are other things that are impacting your time and, therefore, your time management changes slightly" (I21).

So, the problem of asymmetry described gives rise to another problem which is response time as can be inferred from the quote above. One of the university management representatives shared the following view: "...I've got people that I'm trying to line manage at the moment and they're not answering emails very timely, or Teams messages or anything like that. And I need to speak to them... when they're not in the office, and not replying to you this is where I think we need to think about it moving forward. And I think this is [where] we need to rethink this psychological contract. Because I'm certainly coming across colleagues who are... teaching when they need to teach, they attend most meetings, but they're not responding. And I think that's where we've now got to get to grips with those sorts of issues, because otherwise these people are not necessarily underperforming... but they are not doing their job if they're not answering you in a timely manner. So, if I sent... a Team's message and they've not even read it, but they're not on holiday - so that's what I think is the issue that organisations need to set up some boundaries". The interviewee continued by describing what expectation was regarding the response times: "So every day, you need to check in your messages, and we expect to reply, if you're not on annual leave, we expect reply perhaps within 24 hours or you know, something sensible, we don't

expect it immediately. But I think the psychological contract thing, what COVID has done, it perhaps made people think that they can do the work for what they want... And I think universities are certainly where I'm working, have got a job to do to re-establish those expectations. I think too many people are just busy writing their papers and nothing else. But there are other bits of the job that we need doing" (I20).

So, the issues raised require development and adaptation of such communicative practices that would clarify the parties' positions and foster better interactions of the remotely working academics. To reach this objective the presence and availability signalling as well as response times in the IM tools, email and other IT mediated messaging need to be discussed and negotiated. The solutions may seem to be "really, really small" (I21) as changing email footers, for example, but the impact was shared as very successful: "...we changed our email footers, really, really small stuff that says 'I choose to send emails outside of standard working hours. That's completely my decision. I don't expect a response from you'. And so, as a leadership team, we did say 'Okay, we recognise that we all work at different times, actually, we don't expect everybody to respond instantly, because this might not be a time that works for you'... there's not always that recognition that everybody doesn't work 14-hour days, seven days a week... if I'm brutally honest" (I21).

Showing such recognition and clarifying the positions would not only ease the pressure associated with being unseen but also would increase trust and freedom in managing own working hours as noted by the respondents. At the same time, respecting the "organisation's boundaries" and ensuring the equitable contribution as explained above does also require such explicit demarcation thereof which benefits both sides of the exchange relationships.

Thus, the research supports the proposition that communication channels need to be adjusted in such a way that specifically support remote working (Franken et al., 2021).

Workload and pay

The participants noted that the workload issue is like the Achilles's heel of the profession and it has been so long time before the pandemic: "I think this is just kind of the way higher education is, it is a labour-intensive job" (I28). However, the remote work and the associated virtual TLA delivery exacerbated this problem further: "...university workload ramped up hugely... I was certainly working seven days a week... it couldn't have been a more stressful collection of work pressures. And that wasn't taken into account at all. Not at all" (I22).

One of the major reasons behind such overload stems from the necessity to develop teaching materials from scratch that would be suitable for the online pedagogy: "...essentially, they adjusted our workload for kind of regulatory reasons without really taking account of the context, and is proven to be quite a problematic decision, mainly, because they gave us only a very limited amount of time to be able to turn that around. So, we only really had about two and a half weeks to develop 24 weeks of materials, in my case from scratch. So yeah, throughout this academic year, we've been developing materials very shortly before those materials are going to be used. And that's added to pressure quite significantly" (I12).

In addition to the increased procedural workload related to online assessments, designing the modules specifically for virtual delivery and other issues there was techno overload which involves information overload and constant availability (Ingusci et al., 2021). The first stressor occurs when a

worker receives a lot of information from various sources, and this can cause excessive strain. The second is about the individuals' constant availability to be connected to their work through the use of ICTs (e.g., mobile phone or PC) which prompts the employees to work longer than usual because ICTs create expectations for faster response contributing to work overload (Ingusci et al., 2021).

Increased workload represents significant challenge which intensifies remote workers' work-home interference, and thereby undermines employee wellbeing (Wang et al., 2021) The research shows that workload, techno overload, and behavioural stress are positively and significantly associated (Ingusci et al., 2021): "...there was just always quite a strange disconnect at the end of the day when you'd kind of shut your laptop and then go to try and get some headspace. And you would find that you'd be completely fried from nine hours of teaching, your brain would have completely gone your words aren't coming out in the way, there's ways that you'd intended them to. But you still have quite an adrenaline rush from teaching three sessions back-to-back. And it would be quite hard to balance that out at that time... my workload increased to such an extent that I no longer really had the capacity to just be talking to people on an ad hoc basis throughout the day" (I12).

The problem of workload is connected to the financial remuneration as the norm of reciprocity can then be adequately observed: "there are two things really... one is workload and one is pay, we're not paid, as well as we could be compared to other university staff lectures and our workload is significantly higher in terms of teaching expectations of teaching modules we'd have to run. And the administration that we have to do is just continues to increase" (I11).

Moreover, the immediate student related workload intensified: “So that also came from, from student demands, I think, as well. So, student demands increased massively” (I19) and they were “anxious or worried, mental health of our students was dropping all the time and we had to learn a new way of working and it was really shocking” (I29).

Increased workload in its turn affected professional self-esteem: “I don't think I'd have done a good job... I think it's mostly because of that increased workload, that then has meant that I feel like I'm not doing...I'm juggling too many balls... I'm juggling so many balls that I dropped, I'm going to drop some... because I can't juggle that many balls” (I19).

One of the positive feedbacks on managing the workload problem of the academics referred to so-called “quiet Fridays”: “I think the university responded in the best way that it goes, and tried to say ‘Okay, let's give staff the ability to be able to say no on a Friday ‘No, sorry, I can't meet you on a Friday’ ... unless there was an issue with the student, then, of course, we would meet and we would have that conversation. So, I think that really worked. I think now, quiet Fridays are a thing that is creeping out again, we're not having so many quiet Fridays. But I think the university did try to recognise that. And they also gave us some additional days leave this year, which I think they thought was a good idea that we would just close University and say, these are extra days annual leave, and we'll be closed. But it was a really nice talking gesture, it was really, really nice. But actually, all it didn't reduce the workload. So, people are still working weekends to keep up with their workload” (I28). The interviewee then concludes that “it comes back to that wider issue that higher education is kind of got to look at its model of delivery, and how it supports staff more generally, I think” (I28).

Bereavement

Personal check-ins, such as welfare calls, requested by academics would convey a message that universities care about the health and wellbeing of their staff, which is particularly crucial during a health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis significantly increased the likelihood of individuals encountering deaths in their families, underscoring the importance of providing support and empathy during such challenging times. Social isolation aggravated the problem by intensifying feelings of loneliness that is part of any bereavement experience and by imposing restrictions to say farewell in accustomed ways (Stroebe and Schut, 2021).

Family losses have been experienced by 10% (3 out of 30) participants interviewed. The employer's response to one of them has led to a severe psychological contract violation and the subsequent resignation from the job: "...we lost a couple of members of our family. And that on top of the working condition certainly didn't help. And I did struggle with it [in terms of] my mental health really. My sister-in-law died early in COVID. My dad was in hospital, we couldn't go visit him, he was in hospital on his own... So, all this was going on in the background with remote learning part of it. My youngest brother died of COVID ...there was no support from the [university] whatsoever. Then I actually received a phone call from the vice dean at the University to say how sad she was that my brother had died, and it was actually six months after he died... And I said it's actually six months today since my brother died. And the Dean was very embarrassed... that just demonstrates for me the lack of care about staff, all the challenges of doing what we do and yet there was still the sort of, you need to do more of this and more than that, you're not doing enough for this, you're not enough... I thought it was a total neglect towards staff welfare.... So,

I think there are some changes that need to be made in HRs with regard to staff wellbeing. Having said that I've moved to different university now, I have to say is a totally different experience, I'm glad to say... fortunately, I've gone to an institution where things are 100% different and students' welfare is primary importance, the wellbeing of the staff is very highly regarded... [so] there was something wrong with that organisation, which should be addressed" (I26).

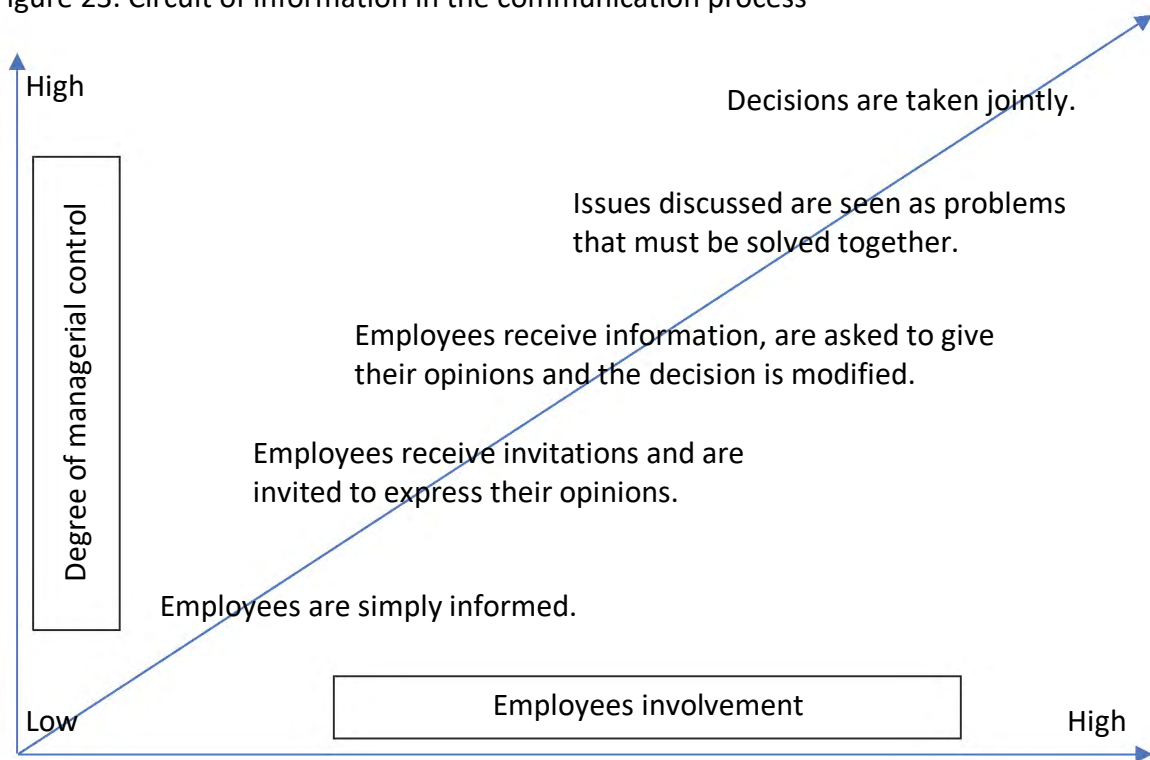
Regular personal contacts and development of the bereavement policies as crisis response measures would have prevented such kinds of PC violations. This case shows that the proper readiness is very important for an employee's PC especially with "the tsunami of bereavement grief in the years ahead as deaths increase rapidly in number with population aging" (Wilson et al., 2021). Timely and adequate response from an employer's side in such situations is proved to be especially important for a good PC: "they would have been knocking on your door... that day or the day after" (I26).

Engagement in crisis response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, employee engagement emerged as a top priority for HR managers as organisations recognized the positive relationship between employee engagement and productivity in the workplace, making it a key focus during the crisis (Chanana and Sangeeta, 2021). Several respondents clearly expressed that they wished to have more active involvement in developing crisis response measures including the after-pandemic stage. They mentioned the form of either consultations or some working groups that would represent the academics in the management board to jointly develop the respective policies and procedures.

However, based on the narratives, it can be concluded that the academics were mostly positioned on the lowest level of the Daneci-Patrau’s Circuit of the information in the communication process which means, as can be seen from the Figure 21 below (Daneci-Patrau, 2011), that the employees were “simply informed”: “even if we are communicated things first, is not a question of, you know, what do you think? Or what is your opinion of this? Literally, this is what's going to happen. Take it or leave it” (I23).

Figure 23. Circuit of information in the communication process



SOURCE: DANECI-PATRAU, 2011

The communication processes in the universities represented mostly one-way vertical flow which emphasised the hierarchy rather than collegiality: “I really felt that the voices of lecturers were kind of drown out by all the stuff that was coming down” (I12). So, this revealed a significant mismatch to the employees’ expectations as a higher level of involvement was deemed to be reasonable and beneficial for better employer-employee relationships.

The RW naturally increases disconnection from the organisations and isolation (Jaiswal and Arun, 2020) due to the lack of live contacts: “...because of the lockdowns, you know, that connection with academia, I lost that connection” (I5). So, increasing the employees’ involvement and participation in developing the management decisions during transition periods would soften the effects of this drawback on the employees’ PC. Moreover, such inclusion would express greater acknowledgement and recognition of the staff and thus depict higher emotional intelligence of the organisation representatives as was also emphasised in the communication section. It is important to ask people involved to understand staff’s perspective which would also enhance the strategic position of a university: “...transformational leadership style, is about engaging with the staff and asking them how to improve rather than being autocratic.... adaptive leadership where you adapt your leadership style depending on the circumstances, but for me, overwhelmingly, it's about having that emotional intelligence to understand the people you're working with both from an individual perspective and from a team perspective. And indeed, from a strategic perspective as well...” (I30). “Much more mothering was required in lockdown, I think, rather than managing” (I25).

In the end, it is not pure listening but listening followed by taking the measures that would be able to resolve the PC problems associated with lack of staff’s engagement in developing crucial solutions: “And I think just for the management to listen to us a bit more, so when we say that we need X, Y, Z to actually listen to us and actually try and put it in place, rather than saying they've listened to us...” (I24).

The study established that re-emerging from the crisis stage caused the largest number of the promises and expectations to be perceived as breached or violated. The after-crisis plan therefore is at least of the same importance as the emergency remote working measures and it is essential that the plan is clearly communicated in advance so that the academics are informed on what to expect after the pandemic. Indeed, providing clear and transparent information about the organisation's future plans may reduce the fear of the unknown and the risks of mental health issues (Hamouche, 2020). Ideally, such plan should be developed with the employees' active contribution as is reflected in the previous point.

The main PC issues that arose during the re-emerging stage were concentrated around the following 5 themes:

1. Acknowledgement and recognition

The wish for greater acknowledgement and recognition was expressed in relation to the work done during the crisis – the academics expected some kind of emotional appreciation for the extra efforts they put to keep the universities' business through the crisis: "I didn't expect them to pay us extra but be nice to have the acknowledgement. I feel that we are taken for granted for the amount that we do, and now after the pandemic... many of my colleagues have been on strike for three weeks now" (15). Such approach based on progress evaluation practices (Dennerlein et al., 2020) would balance the imbalances created by the crisis in the exchange relationships. Additionally, providing appropriate acknowledgement that recognizes the potential psychological difficulties associated with challenging work and informing staff members about the available support options can contribute to fostering their resilience (Greenberg, 2020).

2. Smooth gradual return

Based on the narratives, it is highly beneficial to take individual situations into account when planning the re-emergence from remote work. Conducting "return to normal work" interviews can facilitate this process, as they allow line managers to gain a deeper understanding of staff members' experiences and stressors, such as bereavement or feelings of being overwhelmed (Greenberg, 2020). "Believe it or not, there was a lot of assumption that everyone would be entirely happy to be back. And, you know, like I said before, we want it to be back in the classroom with our students. That complete transition from 100% home working to 100% working in the office again, and not having any hybridity or the opportunity to discuss the options - that was really harsh. That was really tough" (I11).

3. Office spaces

"The things that are bothering me about going into work now are that... as a result of COVID... the workplace has... decided that unilaterally that we will continue to deliver some things remotely... So, they are now not expecting us to be in the workplace full time. And even though we never did... five days a week before anyway, we had a desk, a place... and a sense of belonging. What they've done is now everybody's individual desk, and a space has gone and now we have hot desking. So now we don't even have any sense of belonging or place to go at work anymore... I think it's a really, really poor decision. I think it's a really retrograde step... it doesn't facilitate effective teamworking... A really important part is professional identity, and distinctness and that comes from being together with a group of people who have the same purpose that's now gone because there's no space for that... that may create

issues going forward... there is a sort of an underlying message to us from our employer that we don't matter... We're not important anymore" (I19).

Furthermore, teleworking of the academics has invoked the need for having additional privacy because of the increased number of the online meetings. The online meetings are supposed to accommodate the students' and colleagues' needs to meet remotely. Therefore being "in open space offices where multiple colleagues have their office in the same room makes it complicated to have an online meeting there. Whereas if each one of us had our own individual office space or cubicle or something, then it means I can still be on campus... it's a bit complicated now, when there is no space for an online meeting, because multiple colleagues may be around, for example, I find myself having to make a choice more often. What is my day like? Do I have mostly online meetings, then maybe I have to stay home? Am I teaching mainly, then I probably need to go on campus" (I13).

4. Health and safety of the workspaces

Safe and hazard free working environment during the crises circumstances is one of the university's obligations the academics perceive important. An essential step to support safety was, e.g., allowing at-risk students and staff to stay home and ensuring that all cases of COVID-19 are immediately quarantined (Melnick and Darling-Hammond, 2020). Whilst "...the health and safety team tried to ensure that" it then "immediately also relaxed rules and then the students stopped caring about wearing masks and everything" shares I22 by concluding that "I felt really uncomfortable really, really unsafe..." (I22). The interviewee 22 explained further that the "...relief has turned into massive frustration quite a few times, every time that the safety measures have been relaxed inappropriately...the requirement is go back on campus when we know it's not safe, when we know that the rates are going up... but on the one hand,

you need to think about the safety concerns, and that there's a bit of frustration that's not always taken into account, but on the other - I look forward to seeing the colleagues that I work with...and the feeling around that is great enjoyment” (I22).

After the pandemic health and safety considerations were also strong among some of the respondents: “...that expectation that people should come back to the classroom regardless, show to me that, basically, senior management team doesn't really care for the wellbeing of staff, if you catch COVID ‘Well, so be it’. And you can probably notice from my white hair, I'm not essentially a young person... I was seriously afraid that I would be seriously affected by it. So, I think that... really brings down for me the perception of the university” (I23).

The data thus confirms that universities' active efforts to prevent exposure to health risks while simultaneously providing support and motivating employees to engage in safe and healthy behaviours can lead to improved outcomes for the employees (Schall and Chen, 2022) (Dennerlein et al., 2020).

5. Hybrid TL

The general opinion on providing the students with the options to study remotely was quiet positive given the growing demands and the consideration of enhancing inclusivity: “I think as universities we need to recognise that the world is very different to the way it used to be... Actually, what we should be doing is providing three different methods of learning: face to face opportunity, which is supplemented with an opportunity to join online, we should also be recording those sessions so that students who have got caring responsibilities, and may have a conflict are able to join, catch up later on... So,

for example, there's a student that I'm aware of, she's an Indian student, her father is really ill in India, so she had to go out to India to be with him... if we do a blended type learning, she could either get up in the middle of the night, and join the class, if that's her choice, or she can wait and catch up with the recording later on. So, I think it opens up opportunities. But that shouldn't disadvantage the students who want that face-to-face experience” (I14).

So, the driving force for supporting the hybrid TLA according to the respondents was the drive to bring greater value to a larger cohort of students: “I love being in the classroom. I absolutely love being in a lecture theatre, that kind of rock star mentality. But as I said, I've recognised that, for some of my students, the ability to be online while they're parenting, listening while they're making lunch for their grandmother, whatever it happens to be is really important. So that recognition that we need to be everything to everyone is probably quite significant” (I21).

On the other hand, the negative opinions on the hybrid TL were prevailing due to enhanced degree of the emotional strength they conveyed as can be observed from the following citation: “I was feeling extremely stressed. I felt that I was never having enough time to do everything that needed to be done... you're expected to work, you're expected to attend committees, you should be doing research... when at the same time the university has surreptitiously taken part of your time by forcing you to do online teaching, which is non timetabled... the before pandemic expectations have returned but on top of that, we have that additional obligation to do remote teaching from our own time really. So, obviously, I was feeling extremely distressed, extremely unhappy, and sort of, not really being able to cope with the work” (I23). So, the fact that the hybrid mode of TLA was time-consuming and was

not timetabled created the stress mentioned because of the feelings of unfairness.

In general, the majority of the respondents expressed their definite preference for face-to-face teaching. The interviewees believed that the students can be benefited more if they either learn face to face or online: “We've done hybrid. So, you've got students in the classroom, but you've also got students online. I think that's the worst of both worlds. You cannot satisfy both at the same time. I either teach to the kids in the classroom, and I forget about the ones online. Or I start typing and answering questions online and teaching to the ones online and then the ones in the classroom get distracted and start talking. You can't manage both at the same time” (I25)

Flexibility

The flexibility that remote working, working from home, and hybrid working offer is now considered the "new normal" or "new norm," bringing more freedom and control over one's own time (Deas and Coetzee, 2022). Academics are no exception to this trend. The great extent to which the respondents value this feature of RW is evidenced by the fact that it is unanimously expected to be continued after the crisis. This is deemed to be reasonable for such areas of an academic's work as research and administrative tasks. The delivery of teaching and learning though as mentioned earlier, for the same unanimous degree, is preferred to be done face-to-face. Thus, there is no need to meet the balance between those who wish to maintain working remotely and those who prefer the physical working environment as the general agreement is present among the participants – flexible or remote working is preferred for administrative and research tasks while education delivery is preferred to be done face-to-face.

Overall, flexibility is the product of remote work, more specifically it is its positive side or advantage. The benefits of flexible working are numerous from less money spent on transportation, lunch, and wardrobes suitable for the office (Lund et al., 2020) to better marriage relationships and ability to travel and pursue hobbies. So, the challenges associated with the RW in general, such as social disconnectedness from the colleagues, increased reliance on support services, work-life imbalances can be considered as the offsetting negatives of the flexibility that the employees were aware of and therefore, for the most part, were acceptive of.

Flexible working itself, at the same time, can be challenging because of the collision of work and home lives that may contribute to heightened stress via increased distractions and a loss of routine (Franken et al., 2021). One of the challenges mentioned is associated with the ethics around being unseen which requires more pronounced expectations around working from home or remote working. The related concern shared was about the recognition of the work done: “I would say that's certainly a challenge associated with working from home, making sure that your employer recognises the extent of work that you've done on a day-to-day basis” (I12).

The other opinion raised relates to the ethical side or morality of taking breaks during the working hours: “...take that break... you feel like you need permission to stick it out, almost feel like I'm being deceitful or misusing my time... when I think about it, I think ‘Am I taking too long away from work? ...Is it morally wrong?’ so... if my line manager had met with me, for example, and said ‘Okay, so the university have got this sort of the ideal working policy... let's discuss how that would work for you... and saying, try to make sure when you have lunch, you don't sit at your computer, which is what I do every day while I'm eating my lunch... and I know it sounds really silly when you verbalise it

because I'm a grown up... I don't need permission to take a break. But psychologically, there's something else going on... as if you're expected to be there" (I19).

It can be inferred from the narratives that both of the above concerns stem from the larger underlying problem that some people "Probably not doing all the job properly" (I20). So, while it is important to make sure that "people are managed in such a way that they can work in patterns that they are happy with, so if they want to work remotely, they can" it shouldn't be done "to the detriment of the business... Because I think there are some staff who are very conscientious and working very hard, regardless of whether they work remotely or in the office. And then I think there are other staff who are perhaps going to meetings so that they do what they have to do but then I think they go and do their own thing. And I think... if we don't think about ways of managing these people, they're the ones who are going to become the real problems" (I20). So, there is general awareness of the necessity to manage the PC of the remote employees in a more relevant and just way that would heighten the fairness on the workplaces.

The other expectation expressed by the interviewees with regard to flexibility relates to more autonomy in decision making and organising his or her work schedule which is opposite to micromanaging the remotely working employees: "I think one of the major errors that our management made was trying to treat every course as a one size fits all. And it doesn't... So, I think allowing us a bit more autonomy, to be able to do what works for our students, and what works for our teams. Rather than having these things from above... there was a lot of patronising that went on as well, descending conversations...we were basically being told how to do our jobs. And we know how to do our jobs, we know how to look after our students, we know how to

run our courses, put support in place to help us do that, instead of telling us that what we're doing is wrong. And [it] is treating us like children. So, I think giving us more autonomy. I felt how [it] would be a huge step in the right direction” (I24).

Previous theory and research established that job autonomy is crucial for fuelling proactive behaviour because autonomy enhances people's internalized motivation, builds their self-confidence, and fosters activated positive affect (Wang et al., 2021). By providing autonomy the employer representatives express more trust which facilitates positive outcomes (Franken et al., 2021). Trust creates greater opportunities to reinforce the relationships and is deemed to be beneficial for expressing better OCBs as a result of the fulfilment perceived. At the same time, it must be noted that workers with higher autonomy might potentially be distracted by their family issues and unable to concentrate on their work at home (Wang et al., 2021) so such personal features as self-discipline and ability to work with minimal supervision become essential.

The next concern originates from the negative experience of increased workload, i.e. high work intensity and high work variety (Franken et al., 2021) as workers tend to work longer hours to meet job demands (Kossek et al., 2021), which was further aggravated by back-to-back meetings:

(1) “...there were so many meetings and joint event you can't get any work done far. There's another faculty assembly and there's another faculty team meeting... you just try and get that balance between not leaving staff isolated, but on the other hand not overloading people with contact time” (I22).

(2) “I would probably ask people to consider how frequently they book meetings online, that was one of the biggest things. We ended up with meetings literally back-to-back. So almost at the end of the one meeting, I'll skip over to another

meeting. Whereas on campus, you'd always have that transition period... there would be enough time to walk to the meeting room, which might be the upper end of campus, there always be a better time to stop to pick up a coffee" (I17).

If the practice of RW is to be continued further, which is the case based on the general trends within the industry and the employees' expectations, it is reasonable to have an online meetings policy that would prevent overloading the academics' schedules with the online meetings taking place one after the other without giving an opportunity to unwind and have a break: "One of the suggestions is that meetings are never scheduled for the full hour, but are only scheduled for 45 minutes of that hour to allow you to take 15 minutes for screen break..." (I19). Such overload increases the perceived workload in general and contributes substantially to the overload stress: "...these back-to-back meetings would go on from eight in the morning all the way through to the end of the day... so I think there was recognition that the technology we're now using was making us more productive, in that we got more meetings in throughout the day but there was then psychological pressure..." (I28).

Measures offered

As evident from the presented narratives, academics have not only shared their experiences, expectations, and beliefs regarding psychological contracting, but they have also provided valuable solutions to the challenges encountered. It would be highly beneficial for the underlying PCs to utilize participatory approaches that involve academics in identifying daily challenges and developing unique solutions (Dennerlein et al., 2020). So, some of such solutions offered that have not been discussed above are considered in the present subsection. For example, the problem of back-to-back meetings could be

resolved by taking the following measures according to the interviewee 17: "... as an employer in terms of welfare... [I would] ask employees to consider... and also manage meeting times - if meeting is scheduled for one hour, then let's not overrun on the hour, let's just rebook another meeting rather than try to run over because towards the end of meetings... I've got another meeting booked...if I was employer, I'd be asking my staff to please give yourself time between meetings" (I17). Such a mindful approach to the workload academics are exposed to, aggravated by the blurred boundaries between work and other responsibilities, could have mitigated the adverse effects the crisis had on the overall state of the employees (Schall and Chen, 2022).

The other common topics where the mitigation measures were offered concentrated around tackling such problems as poor communication, mental health and the workload. For example, one of the solutions offered that would resolve these and other challenges related to effective management the remote employees' PC was as follows: "I think I would do two things. First of all, I would put into writing a form of a policy, my expectations from you, and your expectations from me. And then I think I would hold a big meeting where we discuss this, because I think at the minute... there's an imbalance between people. So, I think some people are doing lots and lots and lots of work and they're fed, they're carrying some of these people who are not engaging enough... Because there's definitely some people who are not engaging enough. I think that's what we've got to get back to managing is making sure that everybody is making a fair contribution. I think the remote working allows some people to make a lesser contribution and it's hard to manage that because they're not physically in front of you... I would set it up as a working party, with representatives from different levels in the organisation... with some staff from

different schools and different grades of staff. So, I would do it as a consultation...to make sure that [the opinion] was quite representative” (I20).

Thus, the analysis of the narratives revealed that various forms of organisational support, including emotional care and instrumental assistance, have proven to be crucial for employees (Franken et al., 2021). The data also shows that it is important to employ collaborative efforts to increase system efficiencies (Dennerlein et al., 2020).

The strongest message revealed

The highest level of emotional resonance was observed in relation to the students and the challenges faced in delivering education of the same quality and volume as agreed upon prior to the pandemic. Academics expressed deep concern and emotional attachment to providing an optimal learning experience despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The impact of reduced hours of teaching and measures taken by the university during the crisis directly or indirectly affecting the quality of education had a significant impact on the academics' psychological contracts. The issues of support, including IT, equipment, mental health and wellbeing, as well as the questions of hybrid teaching and individual office spaces, were viewed through the lens of academics' duty and the need to cater to their students' needs. Academics expressed a strong sense of responsibility towards their students, comparing their relationship to that of a proud parent to their children: “I felt that they [students] are important. And their fears and their worries are important to me. They're almost like my children... They're like my babies. I felt a need to support them, when they needed in the same way that you would with your children” (I19). The immediacy of student needs, particularly in terms of mental health and support, was emphasized, highlighting the important role that university

staff play as the first point of contact for students accessing mental health and wellbeing services (Gulliver et al., 2018).

The next narration shows that the university's actions that resulted in reduced hours and quality of teaching were perceived to have an impact on the ethics or perceptions of morality: "...a lot of depends on providing online resources in a very short period of time, which led to maybe less than good products being produced because of time constraints. I also thought they didn't really consider the students sufficiently because of the unprecedented situation we found ourselves in... So, they thought I'd caught this opportunity to change things, for example, reduce the number of hours per modular a student received... So, whereas previously, each student had received 90 hours per module teaching they [now get] less than half that. So, they... 'you're just going to have this online learning, and that's going to be the replacement' which was... immoral. In my opinion, [the employer] didn't consider the student or the staff [which was] under a lot of pressure to produce stuff, teaching material, and students weren't really sufficiently considered" (I26). The morale of management decisions during crises such as COVID-19 has a profound impact on employees' perceptions of their psychological contracts and subsequent levels of satisfaction (Tabasum and Ghosh, 2021). The employees in the study confirmed the significance of adhering to ethical and legal standards in their relationships with the universities (Dennerlein et al., 2020). These findings highlight the critical role of management actions and ethical practices in shaping employee perceptions and satisfaction within the organisational context.

In addition, there was strong care for the colleagues, members of staff which was also evident from the narratives: "...the students, they are important, of course, they are our bread and butter, that's what pays our wages. We can't support them if we're not okay ourselves. So, I think it should be more focused

on checking in that we're okay. Whether that is through more regular meetings or whether it's through I mean, hopefully if we go to another crisis, it's not going to involve more self-isolation, so we'd actually be able to do things face to face and on campus... I'd say, look to your staff first. Because you can only look after the students if the staff are okay" (I24). Therefore "frontline staff is really, really important because they are the people who meet the students... the governance needs to support the frontline, not the frontline satisfy the governance" (I16).

The findings of the study confirm that aspects of the psychological contract in a remote working university environment are grounded in the shared goal of providing value to students. When this shared goal is observed and upheld, it contributes to perceptions of psychological contract fulfilment. The presence of fairness and a just climate, which foster trust and organisational citizenship behaviour, is crucial for the psychological contracts of academics (Shen et al., 2019). The findings also indicate that the PC content components revealed via the analysis of 30 narrations can be clustered around several underlying themes which represent academics' core values. Hence when these values are not observed or when there is a failure to deliver on them, employees perceive a breach in their psychological contracts. For instance, if a university's actions prioritize financial considerations ('profit' or 'money') over the wellbeing of students or staff, or quality education and support services it is seen as an ideological breach, even if there is no direct impact on an individual. This aligns with according to Thompson and Bunderson's definition (2003) of ideological breach.

Thus, the open 1st cycle coding for the subject of PC content provided the researcher with the list of expectations and beliefs that formed the PC from the academics' perspective. This broad thematic analysis whilst useful for clarifying

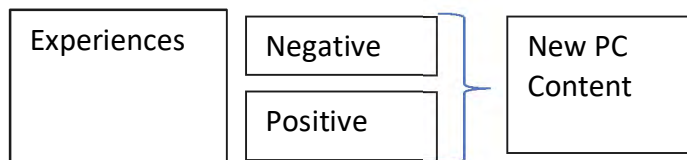
the general picture was not yet organised into subcodes and superseding codes. The alterations in the PC were then analysed based on the PC content identified during this initial stage.

The 2nd and 3rd cycle coding techniques were further applied according to the recommendations given by Hycner (1985) to determine the relevant segments of information on these broad topics for more in-depth analysis and interpretations across topics. Such approach is useful in virtually all qualitative studies because it helps the researcher to organize desired sets of data from qualitative interviews (Saldana, 2015). By the means of this coding technique the segments of information were compared and grouped together based on their similarity and relevance. As a result of this procedure the researcher identified the codes that were common among participants and the codes with the least occurrence (Saldana, 2015) as described in the next steps.

Step 2. 2nd and 3rd cycles of coding

This step involves clustering the codes created as a result of the previous cycle of coding and the analysis of the trends revealed. Simultaneous open coding for the other nodes within the “Causes” group revealed that most of the experiences led to new expectations and most of the text stripes can be coded twice as the “Experiences” and the “New PC content” nodes. Increasingly frequent occurrence of this strong inter-relationship between what an employee experiences and what he or she expects of the employer prompted the researcher to regroup the codes to reflect the data:

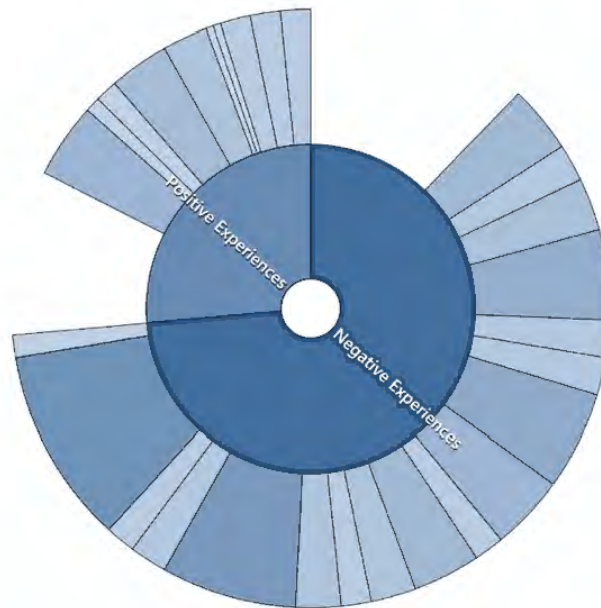
Figure 24. ‘Experiences’ node development



As is shown the first level of 2nd cycle of coding also identified the nature of the underlying sources of such expectations and beliefs. Based on the data they can either be of positive or negative nature. The resulting content of the PC thus was based on both: positive experiences and negative experiences related to the enforced RW and the resulted outcome, i.e., fulfilment or breach is tied to the nature of those experiences. For instance, negative experience of struggling with technology at home and not getting any support might lead a person to perceive that the PC is negatively affected and therefore the expectation of better support becomes more evident because of such negative experience. Likewise, having experienced a great degree of flexibility and ability to manage own time as during working from home, an employee is now expecting this practice of RW to be continued and perceives it as a “new norm” in the after pandemic working environment. Thus, such positive experience and the consequent PCF have formed a new PC expectation essential for an employee to express positive behavioural and attitudinal outcomes.

The first group of negative experiences represents the largest group of the causes leading to the changes in PC. Such prevalence can be visually observed from the NVivo graph below which shows the fractions of the items coded to the weights of the 2 experience nodes.

Figure 25. Positive and Negative Experiences Compared by the Number of Items Coded



The prevalence of negative experiences in a crisis context can be attributed to the inherent nature of crises, which often create challenging and adverse circumstances. These negative conditions make the occurrence of negative consequences, such as breaches in the psychological contract, more probable than positive outcomes. This can be explained by the Affective Events Theory (AET), which proposes that the nature of events can trigger respective, i.e. negative emotional reactions that have a significant influence on subsequent attitudes and behaviours (Mi et al., 2021).

However, it is important to note that the context of remote working in a higher education setting as a crisis response has not been explored in the existing literature, and therefore there is a lack of evidence regarding this specific scenario. The data analysis conducted for the first objective of this study suggests that breaches in the psychological contract may not be as prevalent as could be concluded based on the above explained AET. This finding could potentially be attributed to the nature of the profession under

study, which already involved some degree of remote working in pre-pandemic arrangements.

At the same time, the frequency of change is high enough to state that even the fact that the profession implied some RW before the pandemic the employees still experienced either breach or fulfilment to such a great extent that changes in PC have led them to quit the job (7 participants) or develop an intention to leave the profession (2 participants) because of the PCB or decide not to quit because of the expectations and beliefs being fulfilled (1 participant). The coding analysis further revealed that each group of the experiences - positive and negative - can be divided into 2 groups depending on the role of the employers:

(1) those that are caused by objective circumstances that are out of the employers' direct control, for instance health and family conditions, availability of a separate home office space, care responsibilities etc.

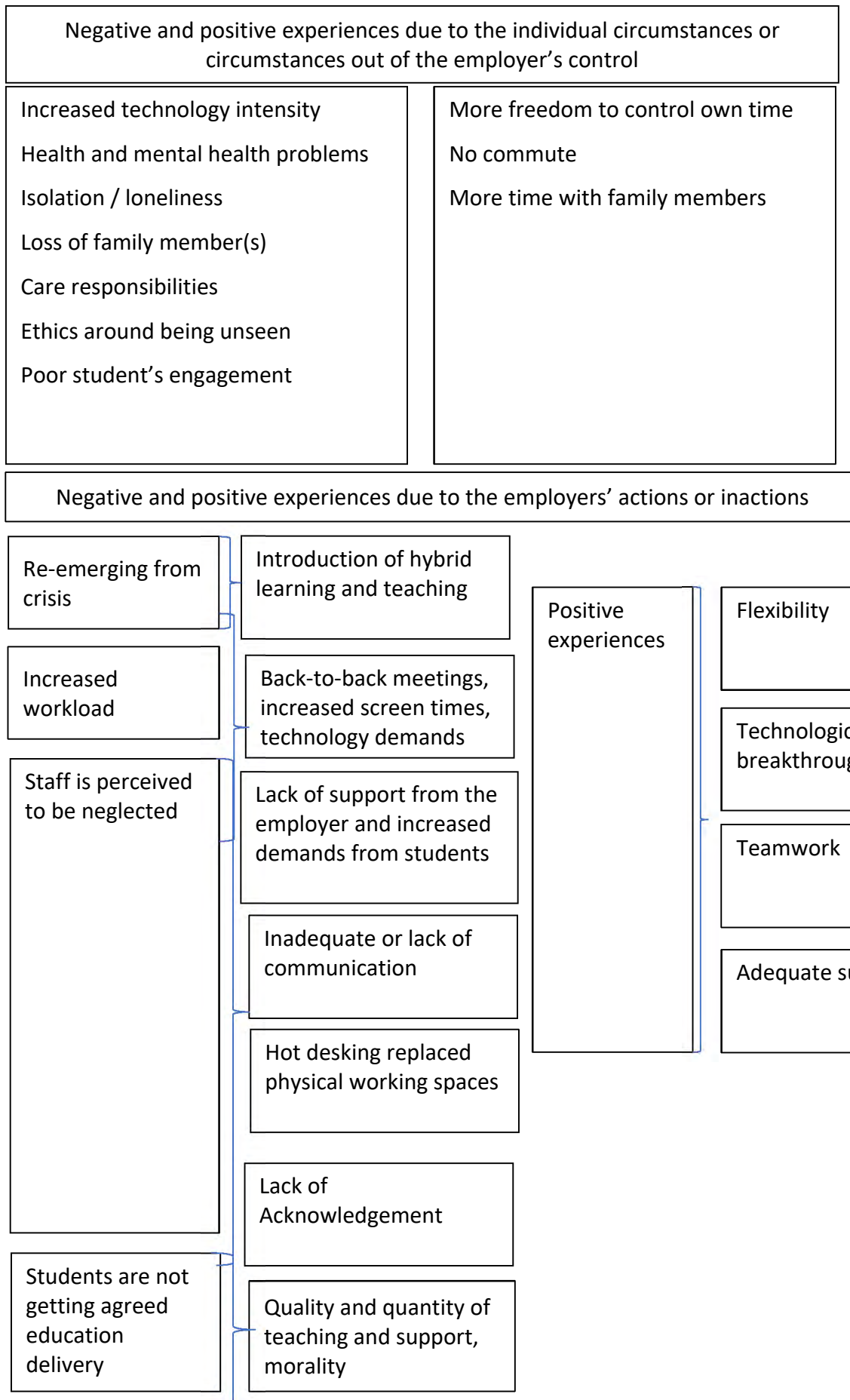
(2) those that are caused by the direct employers' actions or inactions, e.g., support, communication, workload management etc. The perceptions about HRM policies and organisational culture from the Guest's PC model are also included in this group.

The second group has more vivid and direct impact on whether there is any breach or fulfilment being perceived and on the final ABO expressed by an employee: "I was working sometimes 85 hours a week and I was just totally under resourced. There was no support at all. And in the end, I went off" (I14). This is confirmed by the PC theory which states that the norm of reciprocity holds the parties more responsible of the breach if it occurs as a result of intentional actions or inactions.

In contrast, the employees might be blaming less if the mistreatment is caused by the circumstances beyond the organisation's control, i.e., disruption according to the Rousseau's (1995) classification: "...the thing with COVID it was unprecedented. It was a crisis and obviously happened so quickly so nobody could plan for it or anything like that... I think people in charge didn't really know what they were doing... everybody was just trying to manage the best they could, given the circumstances. So, I do think that it was very one off very immediate, and you had to respond to it..." (I20). It can be observed from the narrations that employees who attribute their negative experiences to external circumstances or conditions may react differently compared to employees who perceive intentional renegeing by the organisation. These differing perceptions can significantly influence employees' reactions and subsequent behaviours. As such, attribution of breach to external conditions decreases probability of negative ABOs such as intention to quit or disengagement. It is also worth noting here that based on the experiences examined the disrupted nature of the PC does not exclude other causes of a breach discussed, i.e., renegeing or incongruence.

The chart below summarises the coding scheme developed as a result of this process which proved to be data driven and iterative by nature:

Figure 26. 2nd and 3rd cycles of NVivo Coding Analysis



Each of the above coding linkages is leading to the perceptions, beliefs and expectations that affect the resulting PC which by now represents a list of items grouped depending on the prevailing themes, i.e., communication, IT support, equipment and material support, re-emerging from crisis, students experience, workload, flexibility, team, technology, wellbeing, positive association with the group of colleagues, confidence in the capacity of online lecturer and other. Having developed the 1st and 2nd cycles of coding the researcher was then able to perform the final cycle of coding that enabled to see more general and core themes that these groups could be further clustered around.

The 3rd cycle of coding allowed to identify the core underlying themes behind the PC components revealed as discussed below.

The key finding from the multi-layered process of coding and narrative analysis is that the employer-employee PC within the higher education (HE) context extends beyond transactional and relational aspects. It was observed that the identified content of the psychological contract (PC) consists of clear and specific values and ideals that form the foundation of the PC, which are further translated into specific expectations and beliefs. Therefore, the expanded interpretive framework for the PC, which incorporates ideology-infused perspectives as proposed by O'Donohue and Nelson (2009) is deemed to be the most applicable framework for the current context:

Table 10. Expanded Interpretive PC Framework

	Transactional	Relational	Ideology-infused
Scope	Narrow	Pervasive and comprehensive	Boundary less; 'all encompassing'
Time Frame	Close-ended Specific duration	Open-ended Indefinite duration	Open-ended Variable duration
Primary Currency	Economic	Socio-emotional	Ideological
Organisation's Obligations	Provide continued employment, safe working environment, fair compensation	Provide training, career development, promotion opportunities, long-term job security	Demonstrate credible commitment to a valued social cause
Individual's Obligations	Fulfill formally specified role requirements	Fulfill generalised role obligations; organisational commitment and involvement; OCB	Participate in the organisation's mission / cause; organisational and societal citizenship behaviour
Salient Beneficiary	Self ("me")	Self and organisational community ("we")	Society, some segment thereof, or an intangible principle ("all")

SOURCE: O'DONOHUE AND NELSON (2009)

An important aspect that distinguishes the psychological contract (PC) of academics and makes the expanded interpretive framework more applicable is the presence of salient beneficiaries. In the context of the population studied, these beneficiaries are represented by "Students" and "People" (referring to staff, colleagues, and family members). It was observed that the commitment of universities to the social cause of providing value to these beneficiaries is crucial for the evaluation of the PC as positive or fulfilled. By introducing ideological currency into the academics' PC, the framework helps to explain why breach can be perceived even in the absence of personal mistreatment, and conversely, why some academics may remain loyal to an organisation despite breaches in the economic and socioemotional aspects of the PC, as outlined by (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003).

The issues around one of the important PC value component “Students” often involve such obligations and expectations as:

- Delivering high or at least the same quality of TLA as it was pre-pandemic ↔ the interviewees felt concerned about quality of online teaching, students’ engagement, the cameras being off and expected the employers to provide adequate software and technical tools to increase effectiveness and efficiency of online delivery. Teaching online and the challenges that come with that is one of the largest nodes created in relation to the students’ experience:

(1) “In the class, you can see their faces, you can see whether they can understand the concept or not. And you can speak that, or you can repeat that, and you can just prompt them much more whereas in remote working you can't see their faces unless they want to share but most of them don't” (I4).

(2) “...if I had the power, I would make it 100% face to face” (I8).

- Delivering full volume of promised teaching ↔ the interviewees felt concerned about restructuring the programmes in such a way that the students were receiving reduced hours of teaching as a result, so this was perceived as “a cost saving exercise” (I26) and damaged such other central PC elements as trust and fairness (Guest, 1998).
- Caring for students’ wellbeing and mental health as well as student experience ↔ the interviewees reported increased instances of wellbeing and mental health problems among students that they as their teachers had to address: “We did many meetings with the colleagues... to come up with some strategies to make things better for students” (I5) therefore caring about wellbeing of the ‘frontline’ staff means also caring about the students’ wellbeing according to the opinions expressed:

“...you've got all that supervision going on, over and above your own demand, your own needs. And that's really, really tough” (I30).

The value of People is represented by issues around staff or colleagues and family members. Hence the concerns over communication, support, office spaces, collegiality, bereavement policy, recognition and acknowledgement can be clustered around “People” node.

The values of freedom and family are catered for by a greater degree of “Flexibility”. In fact, the value of “Family” was clearly pronounced as an important aspect of life that was reassessed and put forward during the crisis: “...at the end, all of this has taught me that the only thing that's really, really important is my family... it was such a time of crisis... I think the most important thing in life is family in that situation, there were thousands and hundreds of thousands of people that were potentially dying at that situation, and I've got elderly parents, and I was desperately trying to keep everything working as well as I could do. And I'd probably say if I did this differently, I would really focus 100% on the family” (I29). So, because of this reassessment of values that took place during the pandemic and due to the higher degree of freedom being associated with the RW, the “Flexibility” element of PC was given immense importance by the respondents. The survey results also confirm that working from home does influence family values in a positive way because of the ability to spend more time with family members due to greater flexibility (Abdullah et al., 2020). This newly emphasised value is expected to be observed after the pandemic and therefore the expectations of ethical guidance, workload and online meetings policy, equipment and training support etc. are present within the respondents’ PCs and tied to the “new norm”.

In addition, the organisation's ethical values and climate, its level of morality is what proved to be important for the academics' PC which is also in line with the expanded interpretive framework of the PC developed by O'Donohue and Nelson, 2009. The authors state that individuals have their inherently developed system of values-based ethical norms – what is right and what is wrong – that are deeply internalized. According to the expanded PC framework, an employee cognitively assesses the degree of incongruence (or congruence) of the ethical climate of his or her organisation with personal and professional ethical values and its impact on the salient beneficiaries (O'Donohue and Nelson, 2009). As a result, he or she then comes to a conclusion on whether the organisational requirements clash or coincide with the individual's ethical fundamentals. According to the narratives, due to the crisis circumstances the universities were adjusting their programmes that resulted in reduced hours of delivery and/or perceived decrease in the quality of education. These measures affected the students as the salient beneficiaries. The changes introduced were perceived as conflicting with personal ethical standards, as they involved the abandonment of ideological duty. This discrepancy led to the perception of PCB among the academics.

Such PC components as increased workload with the additional hours not being timetabled, communication strategies when “the staff was copied to the messages addressed to students”, availability of support, adequate pay, transparency, greater degree of autonomy and effective two-way communication, providing the tools that enhance efficiency and other components mostly associated with the employer's direct area of influence - have affected the other group of salient beneficiaries – colleagues and staff members. Unfulfilled PC components from this group were also impairing the perceptions of trust and fairness and other ethical values at the workplace. This

is because of the strong belief that an employer is obliged to present all the tools and resources needed to its employees to promote the cause that is highly valued. So, failure to do so defined organisational ethical climate and if it was not in line with the individual moral standards then the breach was reported due to such incongruences.

In the above cases, the universities' attempts to stimulate the employees to express better attitudes and behaviours (greater effort, commitment, contribution etc) may prove problematic. This produces difficulties for management in resolving the wider crisis prompted challenges in the best interests of the organisation. So, the problem of crisis related financial, strategic, risk management and other considerations can be exacerbated by the problem of unsupportive employees because their basic values which are linked to ethics (Payne, 1988) have not been recognised or have been breached in an attempt to tackle the crisis consequences.

In fact, crisis prompts the perceptions on the ethical norms to differ as the management are concerned with some set of problems and goals that differ from the ones of the academics such as financial healthiness or competitiveness. However, the common recognition of the salient beneficiaries and the values that stand behind the crisis management actions would help to resolve the tension created by those actions without offending the employees concerned to the point when a PCB occurs.

Thus, the values that shape the academics' PC are represented by the salient beneficiaries - "Students" and "Staff", the value of being free or "Flexibility" and the "Ethical climate". This conclusion can also be based upon and therefore confirmed by the word frequency analysis of the "New PC content" node generated by the NVivo software.

The next table summarises the PC content around the values identified during the final coding stage and according to the extended framework approach. It also provides the associated citations from the interviews.

Table 11. Summary of the PC Content and the underlying Values

Students - Staff - Ethical climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support services: 	<p>“...to have something on IT familiarisation and how the platforms work” (I15)</p>
	IT services support	<p>“...they really don't care about the staff, they don't really care about the wellbeing of the team is just you know, making a profit” (I23)</p>
	Mental health and wellbeing support	
	Equipment / material support	<p>“I did ask for support in that. And I was cut categorically told “No. Because if we give it for you, we have to give it to everybody” I was very disappointed in the way the university responded to that” (I3)</p>
	Training support	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication: 	<p>“I think they could keep in touch a bit more” (I1)</p>
	University-wide communication level	<p>“...more opportunity for, for staff to provide input, and maybe, at least say an opinion...” (I13)</p>
	Individual-level communication	<p>“...having a system whereby you do come together once a month or something of that nature once every two weeks, just so you feel a part of a group” (I18)</p>
	Team-level / collegial communication	<p>“...just a little personal email each week would have been nice to the people you line manage, not to everybody... that feeling that they care about you” (I20)</p> <p>“I definitely did make it heard. But a lot of people didn't, and just went down under that stress, and nobody ever checked on them” (I22)</p>

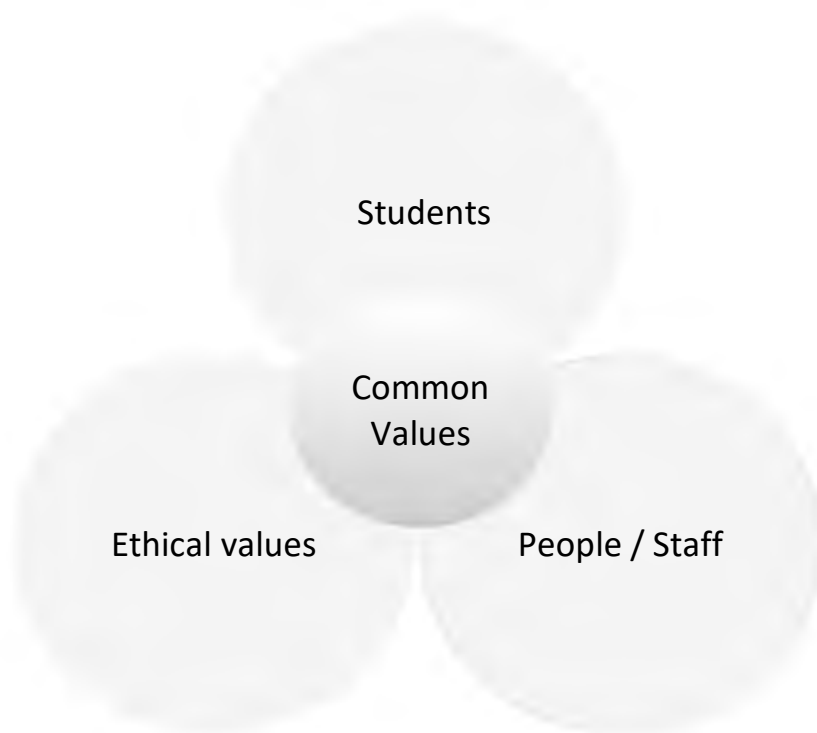
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workload and pay 	<p>“we're working 112% 115%... and that should never be...you should leave a bit of headroom” (I22)</p> <p>“...my workload went through the roof with the online recordings” (I25)</p> <p>“...the problem was, I would log on to my computer at 7am and I will probably still be logged... at 7pm” (I3)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement policy 	<p>“I guess, that [inadequate bereavement policy] leaves you with a bad taste in your mouth...” (I26)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in crisis response 	<p>“...and actually, they haven't listened to us at all, and hadn't even consulted us” (I24)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-emerging from crisis: 	<p>“...one of my major criticisms of the place where I work now is the fact that there was no kind of recognition” (I11)</p>
<p>Acknowledgement and recognition</p>	<p>“I didn't expect them to pay us extra, but be nice to have the acknowledgement...” (I5)</p>
<p>Smooth gradual return</p>	<p>“I think that [trust] has immediately been lost [because of harsh return]” (I11)</p>
<p>Office spaces</p>	<p>“Office spaces... [support our] sense of belonging” (I19)</p>
<p>Health and safety of the workplaces</p>	<p>“...obviously students not caring for wearing mask, put your risk credit” (I22)</p> <p>“They've got different needs, which could never [let you] put them in the same classes” (I25)</p>
<p>Hybrid TL</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility 	<p>“I would expect employers to appreciate that actually, people can be productive at home, and or given the option of a flexible working environments” (I17)</p>
<p>Autonomy</p>	<p>“I don't want to go back to the office, it's quite convenient. I've lost my 2-hour commute, I can put the washing while I'm making a cup of tea, I get my shopping delivered, I can sort my hair cut out in the morning, and then work later in the day” (I21)</p>
<p>Workload management and Online meetings policy</p>	<p>“Maybe I could have used this flexibility to not work five days a week just work two days a week, who would have known, say no to meetings...I'm sure a lot of colleagues did... So, if I had a more firm, directive from the employer make that, don't worry about it, or you don't have to work... it should have been one of the priority items in managing staff. But it wasn't” (I9)</p>
<p>Ethical guidance</p>	<p>“Maybe I could have used this flexibility to not work five days a week just work two days a week, who would have known, say no to meetings...I'm sure a lot of colleagues did... So, if I had a more firm, directive from the employer make that, don't worry about it, or you don't have to work... it should have been one of the priority items in managing staff. But it wasn't” (I9)</p>

The strongest message behind the new PC revealed can be summarised by the following quotes: “[the university should] have invested much more into the students” (I26) because “the student's needs were the most important thing” (I3), for this reason, the staff members’ needs must be catered for as “they are the people who meet the students” (I16). Flexibility expectation represents a new yet evident demand realised by the participants. The ethical issues around working remotely and their importance for organisational success are understood and therefore it is expected that greater attention and clarity will be provided in this respect. Ethical considerations can be centred around the values of fairness, integrity, trust.

Each of the elements presented is more likely to include aspects from the different values both concurrently and independently, i.e., the elements can be attributable to more than 2 values of PC. For example, Staff Support and Communication elements are deeply interrelated as whatever support is required for a staff member has to be performed via effective and efficient communication. Mental health and wellbeing support, for instance, is enhanced with better communication strategies that allow conveying the individual challenges. Consultations with academics on crisis and after-crisis measures does imply greater acknowledgement and recognition. By recognising greater workload during RW the one of the Workload related expectations is met. The element of PC originated from the negative experience of back-to back online meetings which increased the overall workload is expected to be addressed by an online meetings policy in case if greater Flexibility is granted.

Figure 28. Common Values



Thus, the basic values explicitly or implicitly mentioned during the interviews are deeply interrelated and each of the elements of the PC can serve more than one value, e.g., better communication strategies enhance the senses of trust and care for people. Flexibility does serve the students' needs as well as allow greater care for people's families and contextualities to be expressed. Workload management observes the values of ethical fairness and caring for people. Observing the value of Students leads to greater senses of trust and fairness among academic staff members and thus improves the overall ethical climate.

These values or ideals are featured continuously in the narratives irrespective of the gender, age or any other factors and also irrespective of whether the breach or fulfilment was experienced. Therefore, it is reasonable to anticipate that a positive PC would remain in place via sustained mutual observation of the ideals-infused approach in the PC management, more specifically, via benefiting the salient beneficiaries and adhering to the ethical norms. At the same time, the balance of interests must be maintained to ensure sustainability of the relationships. This is important to note because any distortions in the exchange relationships represent potential threats for their long-term liveability.

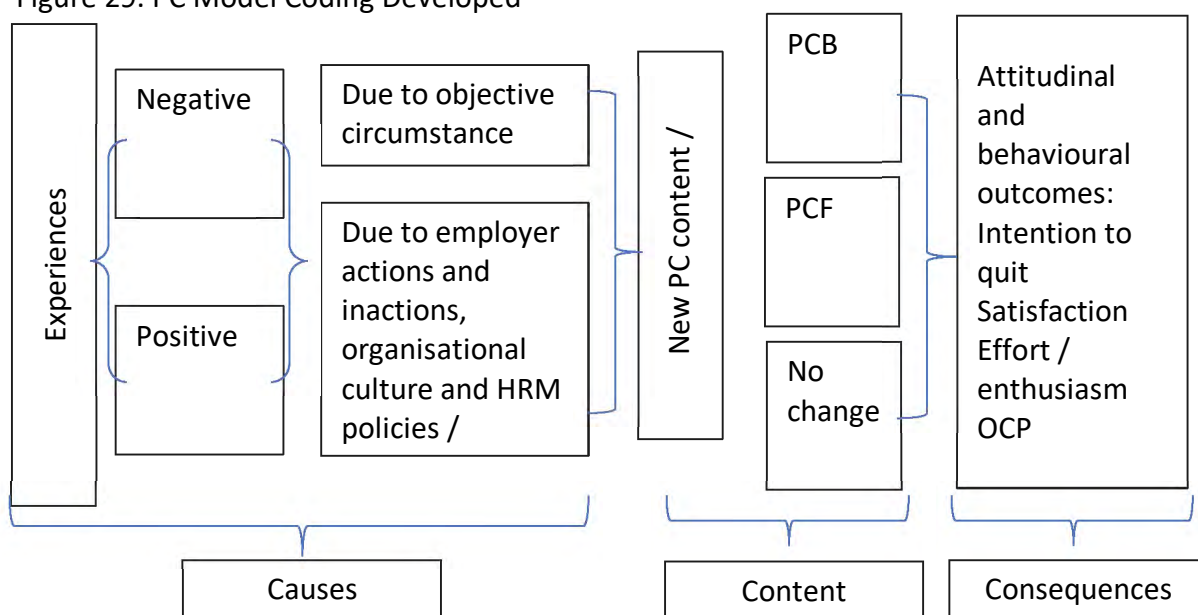
For the reasons outlined, the PC content analysis established that the PC studied represents the complex system of interrelated expectations and beliefs that impact the perceptions of the staff through the values related to the main work and personal lives and also via the ethical principles. The degree of the cumulative impact as well as single impact of each of the PC elements is surely different for each of the staff member depending on the underlying personalities, contextual and other factors. However, the analysis of the general trending and common features of the PC content elements implies that

observing the common fundamental values is important to benefit the ultimate PC of the university academics.

Complete PC model and the ABOs

Having defined the New PC content, this section now describes the final stage of the structural coding of the next 2 blocks of the PC model, i.e., perceptions of changes in PC (PCB / PCF / No change) and the ABOs. The figure 29 represents the ultimate system of the coding levels developed as a result of the NVivo structural coding analysis. As can be seen from the chart the described iterative and data driven approach has modified the Guest’s PC model (1998) utilised initially to reflect the tendencies and features present within the data as well as the nature of the underlying contextualities. However, the three basic elements consistent with the Guest’s approach – Causes, Content and Consequences – proved to be applicable and useful for the analysis. Thus, the structural coding approach allowed to create the categories which correspond to the approach in the literature reviewed (Burns and Cruikshanks, 2017).

Figure 29. PC Model Coding Developed



The above coding categories developed represent expanded Guest's model applicable to the population of academics within the context studied. Due to the negative nature of the crisis and because of the importance of attribution of blame the causes – negative and positive – were regrouped to reflect the impact of the universities as perceived by the employees. In addition, the perceptions about organisational culture, HRM and management policies according to the PC model influence the state of PC of an employee. Those perceptions during the crisis ranged from strongly negative to strongly positive sentiments. The below are some examples of the beliefs the employees hold about universities, their organisational culture and HRM policies and practices:

(1) "...fundamentally, they were poor managers and poor leaders...There was no integrity or no sincerity... It was all functional...didn't really care about, you know, their own staff" (I30);

(2) "...they did okay. I mean, in terms of managing... students' worries and students' questions... But I cannot say the same thing for our wellbeing, I think we expected to work more than what we agreed to do...And we were not compensated for that" (I5);

(3) "I think they performed really well. They did do things that they did care, and they did do things to support me. It's just that a lot of these things didn't have as much impact as I would have hoped and I'm sure they would have hoped" (I6);

(4) "...they have done quite a good job. We had an excellent teaching and learning professor who was hands on ...swift trainings were there, the support was there, people could upload many tools on their computers..." (I4);

(5) "So, it comes back to my expectations, right? As long as it's a flatline... I mean, it's [PC] only going to go down if they go down below pre COVID levels,

and they never did that. I can only say that they surpass expectations to a lot more extent” (I2).

As it can be inferred from the extracts presented such perceptions are interrelated with the “Ethical Climate” node created for defining the PC content as described earlier. The resulted PC – breach or fulfilment - was established based on the implicit grounds of those experiences as well as based on the explicit expressions with such key words as: “expectation”, “obligation”, “duty”, “met / unmet”, “breach”, “fulfilment”, “leave”, “quit”, “resign” or such less formal expressions as “that’s enough” or “we weren’t on the same page”. In addition, there is usually a lot of contextual and body language information, tone of voice and facial expressions, pauses taken during the interviews etc. signalling about individual’s perceptions on his or her PC that were also taken into account.

Depending on whether breach or fulfilment is perceived the PC consequences or ABOs can also be of negative or positive nature. The following is the list of negative ABOs revealed - such as intention to quit or less motivation towards the workplace or even profession - and the reasons behind:

- Increased workload for the same pay (including during the hybrid teaching) → feelings of self-doubt and unfairness: “...it did have quite a significant impact. And it did take... it took a couple of events for me to realise, actually, the way I felt wasn't a true reflection of who I was” (I3).
- Lack or no material and equipment support → less motivation towards workplace and profession: “Look, I'm not happy, but I mean, well, whatever it may be, I should really be wasting time here I'll look for opportunities. So, in that sense, is like maybe even a positive, right? And it's a push to change” (I10).

- Lack of individual contact - Bereavement and inadequate response of the employer → feeling of anger and detachment from the employer: “...it is a big thing if somebody knocks on your door and says, you know, I'm really sorry, but can I help you at all? Even if you say no... Whereas the anonymous silent thing ... actually puts that person concerned into a negative way of thinking... I've just related the story about the Vice Dean ringing me up six months the day after my brother's died, I was angry at that thing...” (I26).
- Taking out the physical offices → lost sense of belonging, dissatisfaction: “psychologically, is not a good place. Yes. For us to feel we don't belong somewhere. We're not important anymore” (I19).
- Re-emerging from crisis and lack of acknowledgment of the crisis related wins → feelings of unfairness: “So when they turned around and said, no, no excuses you need to be in... we didn't think that was fair. Because, you know, that didn't acknowledge of how productive we'd been while working from home. So, to suddenly snap their fingers and expect everyone to be in full time -hat was really harsh” (I11).
- Lack of support – isolation → feeling disconnected from the employer which led to transactional relationships: “I don't know if I have any expectations anymore, other than just to pay me at the end of the month” (I29).
- Increased workload → lost enthusiasm and decreased OCB: “I lost my enthusiasm towards my research topics. I no longer feel that, you know, this is what makes me happy, and this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I and that's, that's one of the reasons you know, why had that change of heart” (I5).

The positive attitudinal and behavioural consequences of PCF include:

- Flexibility → postponing the planned resignation: “so it [RW] gave us some degree of flexibility... definitely made it a lot easier for me to carry on looking after her [elderly mother] and working. I think if we hadn't moved to working from home, I probably would have left work” (I25).
- Adequate technological and training support, peer connection and student satisfaction → increased engagement and greater satisfaction: “I had enough support. without it feeling invasive. I knew exactly where I needed to go... And my management team were great within that my peer support network was as you know, we spent a lot of time on the chats...in a similar manner to the way that we would have done if we were in the classrooms and are back on site... I look back over the last two years and... actually there's some real positives to come from it... our students seem to be relatively satisfied... staff are relatively satisfied; our turnover was quite low... So, obviously we were doing something right” (I21).

Thus, the common trend found within the data gathered supports the theory of PC which states that PCB leads to negative ABOs and PCF – to the positive ones. The PC theory proved to provide valuable framework for understanding the ultimate behaviours the academics expressed. Such understanding helps to pre-emptively manage the PCs so that the impact of the ABOs on the organisational performance is of more positive nature. Numerous research establish that the behaviours and attitudes of the employees impact the organisational success via such behavioural aspects as efforts, engagement, productivity, loyalty etc. Moreover, an individual's ABO expressed within the group can have contagious effect on the whole team as one of the interviewees with PCB expressed it “toxicity [can be] spread” (I26)

among the colleagues. So increased turnover - because of termination and exit as was the case in the examples above - is one of the ultimate outcomes of the PCBs which is also confirmed by the theory (Abu-Doleh and Hammou, 2015).

The opposite was true for the academics whose PCs were fulfilled. One participant with the PC being fulfilled expressed his relationship with the employer as being “affective” which endorses the assertion that the PC is applicable to more personal contexts such as marriage or friendship i.e., the concept is applicable beyond employment relationships (Conway & Briner’s, 2005). Employees in such relationships express their willingness to give their utmost but also expect the university to offer the required support and feel grateful if it is provided. It also means that if the relationship is nurtured by both sides and the contract is fulfilled then the PC prospers further.

Similarly, the exit, as is the case with personal relationships, might not happen immediately upon the breach is realised. The reasons behind might be related to the fact that the organisations were putting certain efforts to reconcile with the employees and / or the employees with PCB may have some barriers to exit which prevented them from leaving their organisations. In addition, an employee may attribute the breach to the RW conditions which casts the blame away from the organisation. Alternatively, an employee may attribute the responsibility to the crisis conditions which is more probable during the first stages of the crisis when an emergency was perceived in most of the cases. Besides, there is so called “cycle of abuse” in the personal relationships that can be applicable to the employment relationships as well (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003). One of the propositions of the cycle of abuse theory is that an individual might undergo several cycles of abuse before leaving permanently which can also explain the untypical ABOs (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2003).

In case an employee due to the above or other reasons decides to stay after a breach occurs the narratives confirm the findings of Yang and Chao (2016) research which distinguishes extra-role contributions. Such extra-role contributions can be also regarded as an equivalent of OCB initially defined as the discretionary behaviours which generally promote the effective and efficient functioning of the organisation the employees belong to. In addition, OCB has a positive prediction effect on psychological wellbeing of the employees. So, if an exit is not an option then breach leads to employees' re-evaluation about their corporate culture as well as the abandoned feelings which will lower the employee's psychological attachment to the organisation damaging the employees' OCB and extra-role contribution (Yang and Chao, 2016).

The table below summarises the whole PC model of the employees with the relevant quotes used to distinguish the components of the model. So, the table presents the extracts from the expressions used by the interviewees which the researcher then classified as being causes, content or consequences to formulate the new PC model.

Table 12. The PC Model Formulated with the Associated Expressions

Causes	<p>Negative experiences due to the circumstances out of the employers' control:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...it's been quite isolating. It's been quite lonely (I24) ▪ I found myself more prone to feeling anxious and feeling uncomfortable (I11) ▪ ...the actual disease itself has added to a lot of that stress and pressure as well (I22) ▪ it was quite nice to begin with. But it did progress onto something that was quite detrimental to my mental health (I3) ▪ I didn't expect this, this kind of surprised me but that lack of separation [from work] made it difficult to stop those worries (I6) ▪ we lost a couple of members of our family... and I did struggle with it (I26)
	<p>Negative experiences due to the actions or inactions of the employers/ organisational culture / HRM policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ...the pandemic exacerbated the problem of the workload and... that feeling of not being appreciated...our employer not acknowledging, you know, how hard we work (I5) ▪ ...we were just left to pretty much left alone to get on with it [online teaching technology] (I15) ▪ I don't think anybody in any level thought "I will just work them to death". I do genuinely think they [management] wanted people to be okay. But they just didn't focus on that (I22) ▪ ...we were copied into communications to the students about what the university was going to do... instead of communicating things in advance to staff... we would get a copy of that message...it shows a lack of respect and appreciation to the staff (I23) ▪ I think it's just luck of the draw. If you have a good line manager, you'll be well supported (I25)
	<p>Positive experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I think one thing that I really like is that I'm much more in control of my time (I10) ▪ I don't have to get up at 7am with an alarm... And I'll feel much better throughout the day (I12) ▪ I was also able to visit my home country, and be able to carry on working from there (I13) ▪ I've had a [IT] response not only in the same day, usually within the hour, so I felt supported...around the systems (I17) ▪ ...our employer was doing anything and everything that they could to help. I know that we were talking about "Do you have your own laptop? Do you need to send the computers home?" (I21)

New PC content / expectations:

- the main issue for me which we could talk about is the support services (I1)
- I didn't have the equipment to necessarily work from home in an ergonomic way, let's say, which is an expectation for workplaces that they will provide an ergonomic desk space (I12)
- ... [there is] a legal obligation such as, you know, monitor, glass, eye tests for staring at screens all day (I17)
- ... more welfare phone calls... I think if you are about remote work, you have to build in some welfare support networks, personally, even if it were just a once-a-month phone call to say "How are you? How's it going?" etc. (I18)
- ...they have a duty to, to provide support and look out for their employees' wellbeing on all levels (I19)
- ... we've realised that presenteeism is no longer important...you don't have to be at your desk nine to five (I11)
- ...it was quite frustrating, because I was basically working with my own personal equipment that was not up to scratch to the task, really. And the University took a really long time to sort that out. I guess everyone was scrambling for laptops (I23)
- I'd certainly want there to be more financial assistance, in terms of buying equipment that you need at home. But also, in terms of accessing appropriate psychological support (I24)
- ...people should not be loaded up to more than 90% of the maximum sort of, because that gives a bit of flexibility for some of the other things which can't be counted (I27)
- ...if universities are going to commit to online learning in the future, then they have to invest in the proper skills, training for staff, and also in the software to support interactive learning online... in the software packages for people to be able to develop interactive quizzes, interactive videos, put them on there, make it easy for staff... (I28)
- ...[they need to] try to come up with some strategies to, you know, to make things better for students (I5)
- ...[they should] reduce the frequency of meetings or keep those meetings to one particular day in the week (I3)
- ... need... to understand with any real sincerity and integrity, what those needs are for each individual member of staff (I30)
- ...provision for staff mental health and focus on it and...more staff available for staff mental health (I4)
- I expected that [WiFi] to be provided blanket to everyone. The same way as monitor to be provided blanket to everyone...the employer should have put in place a training system for someone like William or other older... or whoever, whoever (I9)

No change

- I didn't ask anything from my employer - maybe I'm different...no [changes in my expectations] (I8)

PCB

- ...with a remote working everyone's workload model, hours increased much beyond what they were. I think that's enough (I10)
- I was working sometimes 85 hours a week. There was no support at all (I14)
- The sense of belonging to something has been taken away...there is a sort of an underlying message to us from our employer, that we don't matter, we're not important...which psychologically is not a good place for us to feel, we don't belong... (I19)
- I did ask for a meeting with her and just said I cannot continue at this pitch. And it was quite an upsetting meeting, was quite tearful... but nothing changed, the workload stayed the same (I22)
- it's taken them 2 years to sort out grievance that their policy says should take 15 days. So, no respect at all for my previous employer (I14)
- ...to give them [students] the best experience we can give them... But we weren't always on the same page... the expectations from above were "What about next year? What about next year? What about next year?" I felt horrible (I16)
- ...I'm not very keen on my employer, per se...you can remember at least two promises that were breached...(I10)
- I found that incredibly unfair. My dissatisfaction with the university went through the roof, because then I felt they were establishing very unreasonable expectations on us (I23)

PCF

- We had a running system, for me, that's a tick. We had students being able to attend the class, that's a tick, student learning hasn't gone bad. And we had avenues if we were in trouble to approach and that some other tick for me. So basic conditions were fulfilled in that sense (I4)
- ...we used to have one-to-one meetings with my boss asking "What are the requirements? What is my mental state?... Are you living alone? Do you need any additional support? and whatever promises were made they were delivered...the university did what it could do...I think expecting anything extra ... could be making things up (I2)

PCF / PCB

- That complete transition from 100% home working to 100% working in the office again, and not having any hybridity or the opportunity to discuss the options. That was really harsh. That was really tough...while they built up a certain amount of trust with us during lockdown, I think that has immediately been lost (I11)

Negative ABOs:

- I lost that interest in [my university] because of the reasons, obviously, I wasn't confident in how they were running things I wasn't particularly enjoying myself there, I used to really enjoy it.... So I was looking for other opportunities (I30)
- ...it did make me question over lockdown if this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life (I3)
- they started to give me a load of work back again. And I just went off sick and said I'm not doing this and effectively went for constructive dismissal, and left the job (I14)
- "Look, I'm not happy", but I mean, well, whatever it may be, I should really be wasting time here, I'll look for opportunities (I10)
- If they're going to do what they say they're going to do to reduce the workload, then I would want to progress here. I would like to go for promotions, and I've got...research that I want to focus on...If that doesn't happen, I'll be doing it somewhere else (I22)
- that ultimately led me to leave the university...it was a total neglect towards staff welfare...there are some changes that need to be made in HRs with regard to staff wellbeing... I've moved to different university now (I26)
- I feel hugely disconnected from that place. So yeah, I don't know if I have any expectations anymore, other than just to pay me at the end of the month. It's awful, isn't it?... I don't want to stay here forever (I29)
- I came to that realisation throughout the pandemic. So, the ridiculous amount of work we do, but we don't get paid enough. I lost my enthusiasm towards my research topics. I no longer feel that, you know, this is what makes me happy, and this is what I want to do for the rest of my life, that's one of the reasons you know, why [I] had that change of heart (I5)
- I was feeling extremely distressed, extremely unhappy, and sort of, not really being able to cope with the work (I23)

Positive ABOs:

- [RW] made it a lot easier for me to carry on looking after her [mother] and working. I think if we hadn't moved to working from home, I probably would have left work (I25)
- I can't imagine another job where I'd have so many opportunities to learn. Even if that means I've got to catch up on my emails on Saturdays and Sundays (I28)
- I think I'm also more willing to, to help colleagues a little bit more actively, when they need some input...And I think that comes from the employer as well, in terms of these collegial supportive relationships (I13)
- Do you want to attend all the trainings? ...despite me knowing the online teaching, I went into them (I4)
- ...[they] have provided us with the space and the technology to do it and therefore, we're expected to maintain that level of professionalism that we had two years ago (I21)

As it can be inferred from the citations the interviewees used very definite and clear wording to express their perceptions of PC that can be classified based on the theory of PC.

In general, the perceptions were developing throughout the crisis and proved to be different depending on the stage of the crisis. For example, the aspects of steep learning curve and productive teamwork were mentioned with regard to implied greater recognition expected in the last stage of re-emerging. However, the sense of urgency in the need to move to remote working mode has played its part in making allowances for the delays or imperfections of the systems. This initial stage was mostly associated with the panicky emotions and feeling that “we are in the same boat” so the PC experienced was different from the later PCs. The next section explains the timing relationships revealed that give more deeper insights into the phenomenon and represent a different angle of examination.

Step 3. Time dimensions

The data gathered evidenced that there are 2 different dimensions of time that need to be considered when exploring the academics’ PC during the crisis.

Time Dimension 1 refers to whether the newly acquired PC is forward looking and represents a “new norm”. As the research is about crisis prompted RW 100% of the PC elements are relevant to the crisis RW circumstances, indeed “...if we did it again, we’d have much higher expectations than we had two years ago” (I21). At the same time, while interacting with the research participants the researcher noticed that some of the PC elements expressed were also applicable to the after-crisis circumstances and the interviewees perceived them as the “new normality”. For instance, welfare phone calls and

provision of office equipment for home working are the expectations relevant to the crisis RW. However, continuance of some working from home and therefore greater flexibility, fair workload management and pay especially with the hybrid mode of teaching, adequate bereavement policy and individual office spaces are the examples of what the interviewees mentioned in relation to the foreseeable after-pandemic future. This group of expectations and beliefs are based on the general assumption that the practice of RW will be continued after the pandemic which indicates that the team members gradually adapt to the flexible work environment over time (Franken et al., 2021).

The table below shows this division based on this time related trend present within the data.

Table 13. Crisis related and After-Crisis PC Components

Crisis related PC	After-crisis PC (“new norm” PC)
	<p style="text-align: center;">Quality education and support for Students</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Online TL support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IT services support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Equipment and software support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Training support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mental health and wellbeing support</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Adequate bereavement policy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Two-way communication, collegial and social interactions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fair workload management with adequate pay [especially with hybrid mode of teaching]</p>

<p>Online meetings policy</p> <p>More trust and autonomy in decision making</p> <p>Keeping/providing individual office spaces</p> <p>Flexible [remote mode of] working</p>	
<p>Individualised approach / keeping in touch / welfare phone calls</p> <p>Involvement in crisis and after-crisis measures including through consultations</p> <p>Recognition of the increased workload during RW</p> <p>Ethical guidance</p>	<p>Acknowledgement and recognition of the work done [especially during the crisis]</p>

Thus, the majority of the PC components are relevant to both crisis and after-crisis circumstances.

Time Dimension 2 refers to the stages of the crisis remote working. The data gathered revealed that the PC of an employee goes through three distinct stages and can be different on each of the stages identified:

1st stage is the emergency situation and moving into the lockdown – this stage lasted for about 2 weeks according to the general perceptions of the respondents. The PC expectations are normally lower during this time due to the emergency nature of the crisis and therefore the majority of the respondents reported neither breach nor fulfilment during this period of time as everybody’s in the same boat (I15, I30, I25): “...in the first couple of weeks... it was totally okay to have your small child eating biscuits or running into the room or

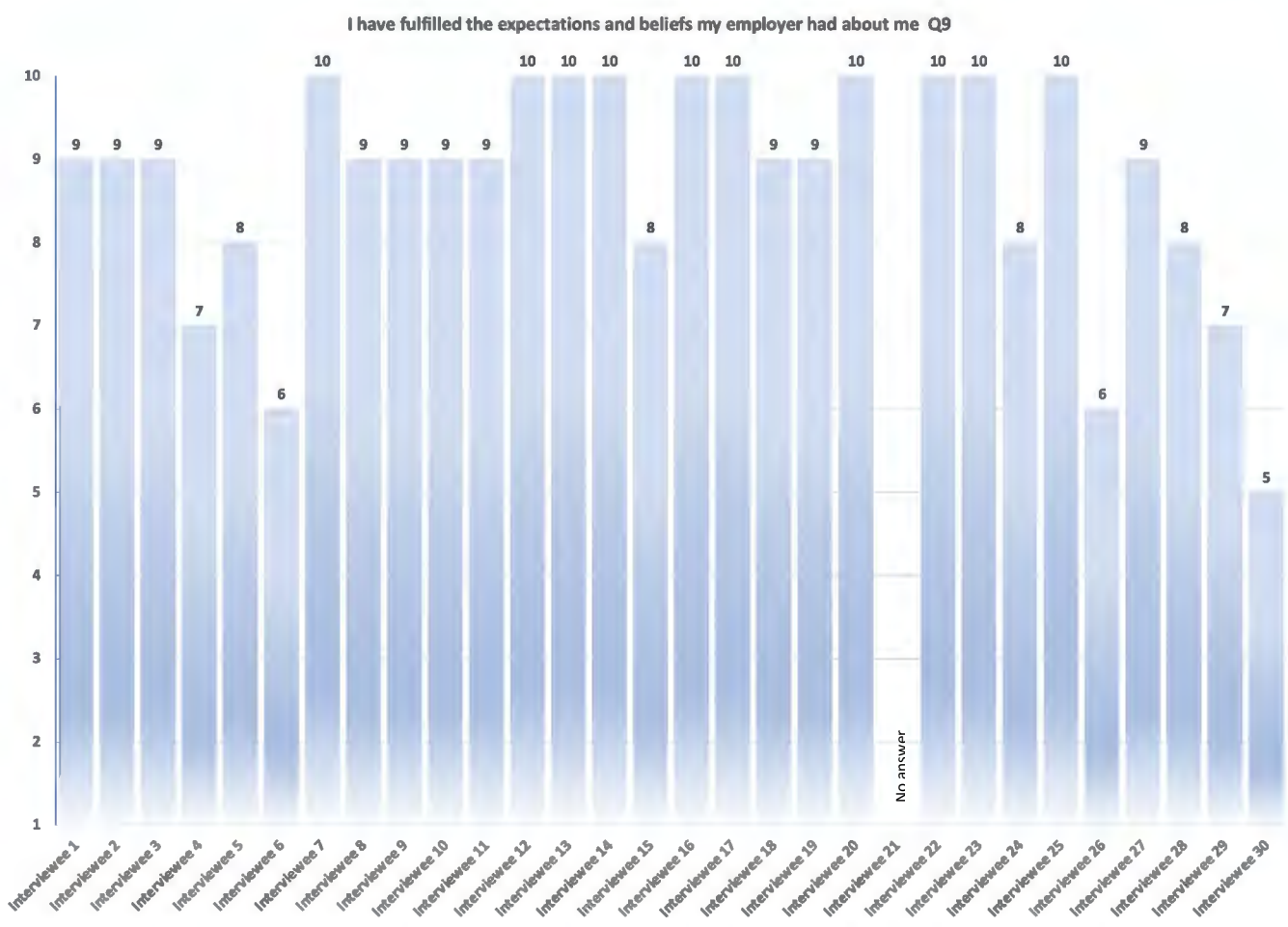
whatever it happens to be... down the line, there's an expectation that actually, employers have provided us with the space and the technology to do it [professionally]" (I21). So this initial stage can be classified as a disruption and according to the PCT it does not normally lead to PCBs or violations because no attribution of blame happens towards the organisations.

2nd stage is the period of RW which in this case lasted from the 2nd week for about 17 months in average. This is when the employees start to realise that the work has to be done properly because the peak emergency is over, and the students are still expecting at least the same quality of the TLA delivery. The PC of an employee can now experience transformations via the cognitive processes of the experiences lived and thus lead to a breach, violation or fulfilment: "I expected my employer to send an email in the second week, and say, if you need Wi Fi da-da-da-da tell me, tell me, tell me. But by the time that email came, it was probably two months down the line, or what then I heard from my colleagues was provided to them in terms of Wi Fi was just cheap and not adequate for teaching" (I9).

3rd stage is transitioning back to campus and to face-to-face TLA. Depending on an employee's preferences related to the "Flexibility" node in the majority of cases, he or she can experience further PC changes. Transitioning back, in the majority of cases, was managed based on the assumption that "everybody is happy to be on campus" (I11) which was not the case for 100% of the employees concerned. For this reason, e.g., the employees whose PCs was fulfilled during the 2nd stage reported breach during the 3rd stage: "I do have grievances with the place where I work, it is more to do with how they dealt with the return... I

think the first phase... they could have done more, but I thought they were very good. I think during for the most part, they were very good. But for the last part, the transition from digital back to face to face, very poor. Again, there was hardly even acknowledgement” (I11).

As it can be inferred, the other common expectation at this stage was “Acknowledgement” and in this case it relates to all the “tremendous work done during the crisis”, the teamwork and breakthrough reached and utilising those wins and achievements for the future. To understand this expectation, it is useful to look at the employees’ perceptions about fulfilling their part of the ‘deal’. The earlier presented chart below is important to understand the “Acknowledgement” component of the PC as it depicts the perceptions the academics had about their own “part of the deal”:



Based on the norm of reciprocity the efforts expressed and reflected by the picture above have to be compensated – tangibly and/or intangibly – to restore the balance as the basis of the exchange relationships.

Hybrid delivery has been reported to cause the major challenge for the majority of the employees in the last stage of the crisis:

(1) “It was easier to go from face to face to online, [than] going back into the classroom where we've done hybrid. So, you've got students in the classroom, but you've also got students online. I think that's the worst of both worlds...Hybrid is a disaster” (I25).

(2) “I would say hybrid has reduced the quality because we just don't have the infrastructure and investment and the equipment and training” (I9).

(3) “...we're having to deliver live face to face and simultaneously deliver online at the same time... That is extremely difficult, and it makes our life extremely hard as academics, because we need to make sure that both types of students are receiving equal value...for me, that doesn't work” (I3).

(4) “I think it probably be it's best to stick to research when it's remote working. And if I must teach, I'm very glad that I'd rather do it face to face” (I2).

In addition, the interviewees noticed that there is some leftover from the pandemic workload that is present during the third re-merging phase: “I think we all came out of the pandemic with a little bit more work or workload than normal” (I13).

Thus, although upon beginning of the crisis, its first two weeks or so, one's expectations and beliefs about organisational obligations were very low due to the emergency, they gradually increased during the following months. Hence an unfulfilled PC during the first stage is not normally reflected in a behavioural change. However, if the trend persists then the cognitive reappraisal takes place, and an employee might decide to invest less time and

effort on their employment and rather spend time on his or her other interests and aspects of life to outweigh the employer's underperformance. Working from home facilitates such attitudes as the focus can be easily shifted to hobbies, family members, pets, house chores routine etc. This can be viewed as a balance for an employee, and it will maintain the PC and the employment according to the tradition PCT approach. However, the question about how long this could last puts the academics in a totally unique perspective. This is due to the fact that the salient beneficiaries and the ethical values or in other words the ideological PC is not benefiting from such "balance". In addition, perfectionism or hyper-professionality as traits common to academics (Watermeyer et al., 2021) are certainly not compatible with such underdelivering: "...I'm really conscientious with work, really conscientious. And I work really hard. And I have a strong sense of personal accountability and integrity with my work. And I'm also slightly a perfectionist, which means that I don't like things not done or not done properly" (I19). So, profession specific features of the PC are important to consider in addition to the personality factors. There were instances where the academics decided to endure the theoretical breach and continue their employments because "the students are happy" or because RW allowed them to perform their caring responsibilities and the family members benefited. Therefore, it can be concluded that PCB does not always lead to the negative ABOs as long as the salient beneficiaries and / or ethical values meaning ideological PC of the academics is satisfied which proves the main conclusion reached with regard to the PC content.

The next section provides more detailed conclusive analysis of the PC phenomenon, more specifically its content, common and prevailing trends, characteristics, and it also discusses the outlier or extreme instances.

Step 4. Conclusive analysis

Since the main aim of the present research is to examine the disrupted PC as a phenomenon the analysis made is cumulative, i.e., while the individual level perspectives are examined the greater emphasis is placed on the feelings and perceptions of the sample as a whole. This is in line with the guidance provided by Howitt (2016) who states that the purpose of phenomenology is not to describe the individual experiences of the participants but to provide a general description of the phenomenon itself. So, the analyses of each individual interviews are an intermediate stage in the phenomenological analysis. The next stage is the synthesis of the individual analyses to provide more general description of the phenomenon itself.

As it was discussed, the themes from the interviewees' narratives were organized into nodes and codes reflecting the PC model to analyse the perceptions of the PC. The subjective experiences captured during this analysis revealed that the new experiences of crisis RW – negative and positive – have played a key role in new PC content development. It is quite predictable that the sentiments about the pandemic in general that led to the lockdown and RW were mostly negative ranging from “shock” and “fear of the unknown” to the prevailing sense of “frustration”. The study by Anna Dabrowski (2020) established that the transition to fully online format of teaching “with only a week’s notice” is not favourable to mental health or wellbeing.

In contrast though, the RW itself was evoking quite opposing emotions – from “excitement” and “enthusiasm” to “stress” and fear of the unknown. Nevertheless, it is possible to distinguish some general trends within the perceptions of the employees towards the RW. It can be concluded that the prevailing perception of teaching online was negative due to the students’

engagement issues and pedagogy concerns. In addition, the interviewees noted that “I just personally think, it [RW] took the fun out of teaching... and as a result work was not as fun as it used to be” (I2). However, the administrative and research areas of the academic work were reported to be compatible with the RW to such a great extent that the “Flexibility” which RW offers now constitute an integral part of the after-crisis PC.

The “Flexibility” node, in its turn, is tied with such values as Freedom and Family. The other salient beneficiaries mentioned in the context of the expanded PC are represented by Students and People or Staff. Thus, the research revealed that the PC of the academics must be considered within the wider or expanded framework which includes the ideals / values and the salient beneficiaries. As such, care for “People” could be expressed in flexible arrangements, acknowledgment and recognition, adequate bereavement HRM policy, keeping in touch more on an individual basis and more. The value of “Students” sets basis for expecting proper training and technology support, agreed volume and quality of teaching delivery, wellbeing support etc.

Furthermore, the “Flexibility” component of the PC not only benefits above mentioned family members as the salient beneficiaries but also serves one of the most important considerations put forward because of the pandemic – health and safety considerations. It is generally accepted in the PC content related literature that organisations are responsible to protect their employees and therefore to provide and ensure hazards free, safe and healthy workplaces (Herriot et al., 1997). So, by providing flexibility to work remotely the employers were observing this obligation as well which represents a broader societal obligation within the pandemic circumstances. In addition, flexible or remote working allows for greater inclusivity and diversity of the student cohorts.

Next, the ethical context or ethical organisational climate plays a significant role in the expanded PC framework as it impacts the salient beneficiaries. It was perceived via the cognitive reappraisal of the degree of congruence with the individual ethical beliefs. The issues of whether the employers fair and can be trusted were among the most encountered considerations around ethical climate of the universities. And this was quite expected as both “Fairness” and “Trust” represent traditional PC elements established by such authors as Guest, Rousseau, Robinson and other scientists. So, the perceptions around ethical climate originated such PC elements as transparent and equal communication, workload management, fair pay, adequate support: “...at least they should be honest enough to say, well, you know, we're going to give you a lot of work, and... we're not going to recompense you for that in a meaningful way. It's really, really dissatisfying” (123).

Thus the 3 master themes identified – People, Students and Ethical Values - represent the core of the academics’ PC from which the expectations, beliefs and perceptions are then developed. These core master themes are ideology-infused PC elements considered through the lens of the expanded framework. The latter means that the salient beneficiaries (Students and People, i.e. staff and family members) and the values and ideals are the cornerstones of the PC that involve employee beliefs that the organisation is obligated to demonstrate a credible commitment to and investment in these values and beneficiaries (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). The subsequent subdivision of the PC elements is relatively conditional as the themes and their subthemes are interrelated because the ideological PC implies serving one organisational mission. Therefore, the employee is obligated to perform his or her role in a way that promotes the organisation's ability to pursue that cause or mission by

subordinating all the needs to this cause, even if it involves some sacrifice on the part of the employee (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003).

Due to the fact that the values are of utmost importance for the employees from the ideology-infused PC perspective the employee-employer relationships and PC built around those core ideals and values are of more sustainable nature. Failure to observe those fundamentally constant ideals increases the chances of PCB and violation via the perceptions of unfairness and reduced trust towards the organisations. The research shows that the values revealed were evolving through the crisis and were expected to be observed irrespective of the circumstances, degree, and the stages of the crisis. The only exception could be made to some degree during the short initial stage of high emergency.

Moreover, in an ideology-infused contract there is the assumption that the employee is willing to contribute extra role behaviours to support the pursuit of the espoused cause (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003) which has been observed within the population. However, the sacrifices made due to the prolonged nature of the crisis could not be endured once the emergency period was over. Therefore, based on the norm of reciprocity of an exchange relationship they required some adequate measures from the employers' side. Hence considering the stages of the crisis that affected the development of the PC is important to receive deeper insights and better understanding of the phenomenon.

One of the time considerations suggests that the PC components do not only relate to the crisis circumstances - as it was initially designed to explore- but also relate to the after-crisis circumstances or to what is called the "new norm" PC. As a result, it can be concluded that the PC of the academics have

undergone deep structural transformation during the pandemic. The time related considerations are further expanded via introducing transformational feature of the PC during the three stages of the pandemic crisis identified: the PCB is least likely to take place during the first 2 weeks of emergency as the expectations are lower and it is most likely to happen during the last or 3rd stage of the crisis when the re-emerging occurs. The underlying need among all the interviewees which is relevant across all the stages of the crisis is still the need to perceive that the values and the ethical standards are adhered to by the universities.

The next subsection discusses some specific and unique cases to understand the outlying features of their PCs and therefore shifts the focus to some individual contextualities.

Unique instances

The data includes several noteworthy instances that warrant closer attention. One unique case involves an interviewee who had an extremely poor PC prior to the pandemic, but remote working significantly improved the PC due to the elimination of the need to physically go to the university. This case cannot be classified as a PCF per se, as there was no delivery of the original deal, but rather a slight improvement in the breached PC. Such a case was not encountered in the literature reviewed, highlighting a gap in the existing knowledge base.

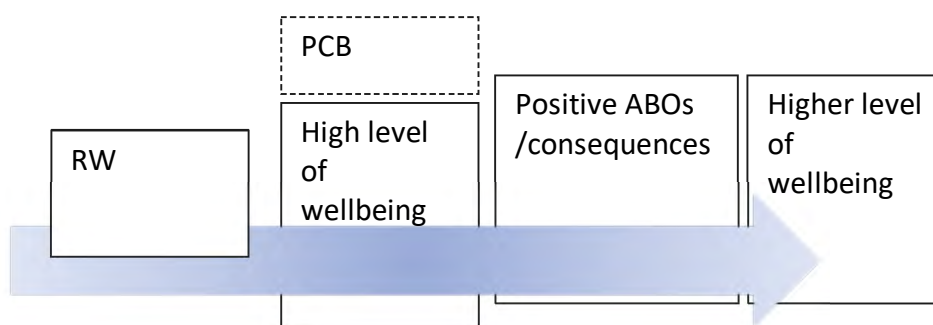
The other two instances primarily pertain to the perceptions of remote working (RW). In the majority of the interviews, employees clearly distinguish between RW as a condition and their employers, attributing specific benefits and challenges to each. For instance, they recognize that the challenges of

isolation are imposed by the enforced remote working arrangement rather than the employer itself, while the lack of social activities is attributed to what is being offered by the organisation. Similarly, there is a general understanding that the benefits of flexibility are inherent to the overall remote working conditions.

This nuance is particularly important when there is a significant discrepancy between the state of the PC and the ABOs of the employees. For example, positive ABOs may be demonstrated even when the employer is perceived to be breaching the PC. In such cases, the final ABO can be unrelated to the breach and can be better explained by the employees' attitudes towards RW rather than their attitudes towards the employer itself. The research identified two instances of such discrepancies, where the ABOs were in conflict with the state of the underlying PCs. It is worth noting that both of these examples were influenced by distinct wellbeing circumstances that were shaped by the conditions of RW. Therefore, these cases are analysed in conjunction with the contextualities of wellbeing, as explained further below.

In the case described by the Figure 30 below the RW circumstances were highly satisfactory for the respondent's wellbeing. So, despite the PC that was breached the interviewee overdelivered and showed high degree of engagement which then resulted in higher satisfaction.

Figure 30. PCB-High Level of Wellbeing-Positive ABO



So, the Interviewee whose PC was actually perceived to be breached due to the lack of equipment and training support actually overperformed with a considerable degree of enthusiasm. The main explanation of such attitudinal and behavioural outcome was that “I was being nice and social”. Apart from the home-schooling aspect the respondent enjoyed the remote work: “So looking back through that first summer, in the pandemic, I have very fun memories... We had just moved house... the sun was shining and yeah, it was good. I spent time with my son in the garden. Yeah, we gradually did some things like we would go out once a day if we could or go to the garden, bake...” (I9). So, it can be concluded that because of the higher wellbeing level the individual was able to support other colleagues: “I was training my older colleagues... throughout the pandemic.... Not the employer... if I hadn't supported [them] God knows what would have happened” (I9).

This unique case prompted the researcher to further explore the role of wellbeing in the PC. The literature reviewed in PC research often considers an employee's wellbeing as a dependent variable, meaning that the delivery of the PC deal defines the level of wellbeing or, in other words, the state of the PC influences employee wellbeing and the resulting ABOs. However, this case, although rare in occurrence during this study, suggests that the ABOs after a breach can be different from what is expected based on the existing theory. In this case, the benefits of RW outweighed the challenges of the PC breach, leading to positive ABOs. This implies that an employee may attribute the common benefits of RW to the employer's PC delivery. Moreover, the outcome in this case may be tied to factors beyond the traditional exchange relationships, as evidenced by the high level of wellbeing resulting from overall satisfaction with the flexibility of RW. This example challenges the traditional understanding

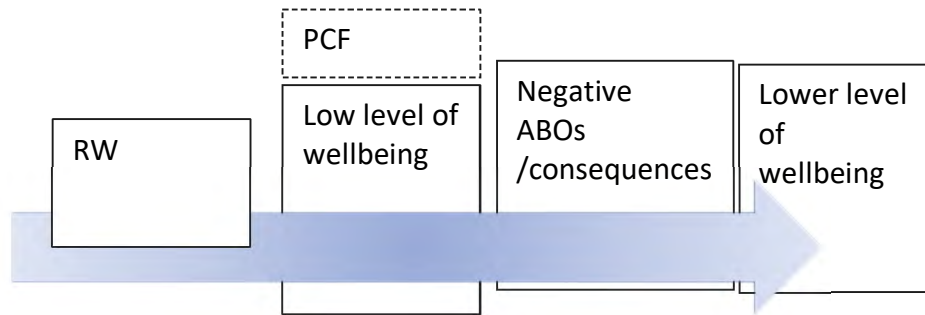
of reasons for staying after a breach occurs, however does not exclude other reasons as covered by the PC theory:

- some exit barriers;
- reconciliation efforts made by the employer which satisfied the maltreated employee;
- personality traits such as optimism or resilience which gives reasons to wait for the conditions to improve or willingness to endure adverse circumstances (Cassar et al., 2013; Rousseau, 1995)
- In addition, ideological PC theorists Thompson and Bunderson (2003) suggest that employees who premise their organisational relationship on ideological goals will be more likely to "wait out" a short-term breach, if they believe the organisation remains committed to the long-term objective. The authors explain this by the ideological PC's ability to endure higher temperatures (meaning evidence of abandonment of employer's obligations) before so called "boiling point" when perceived breach will erupt into felt violation and the respective ABOs. Such "boiling point" occurs at relatively lower temperatures for the employees with relational or transactional PCs (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003).

Thus, PCT provides several reasonings that can be suitable to explain the academic's behaviour.

The second example is described by the Figure 31 which shows that the respondent's wellbeing suffered from the RW challenges and despite the fulfilment the ABOs expressed were negative which then led to lesser satisfaction:

Figure 31. PCF-Low Level of Wellbeing-Positive ABO



The reasons for experiencing negative ABOs even when an employer fulfils its obligations have not been extensively covered in the existing literature. In response to this gap, the researcher developed several hypotheses that aim to explain such negative ABOs despite PC fulfilment:

The level of wellbeing: It is hypothesized that an employee's level of wellbeing may have a greater impact on their final ABOs than the state of their PC.

Crisis-related attributions: The challenges and benefits associated with the crisis-induced remote working may be attributed to the employer, influencing the employee's perception of the PC. In this case, the employee may adjust their PC perceptions based on their experiences during the crisis RW, resulting in negative ABOs.

Individual factors: Personality traits or personal circumstances that are unique to each employee may contribute to negative ABOs. These factors may include individual preferences, values, or external factors that cannot be generalized across the entire employee population.

By exploring these hypotheses, the research aims to shed light on the complex dynamics between PC fulfilment and employee ABOs, offering a deeper understanding of the factors that influence employees' perceptions and reactions in the context of the HE industry and remote working during a crisis.

The above hypotheses and, in general, the ABOs which do not follow the PCT logic clearly represent the gap useful for future investigations. Similarly, the literature does not consider the wellbeing aspects for expressing positive ABOs after a breach occurs.

Thus, the role of wellbeing in perceiving PC is evident from the narrations because it exerts certain influence on formulating expectations and beliefs as was discussed above. The next section examines the role of wellbeing in the PC equation - the final 3rd objective of the research – more closely.

4.5. Objective 3. Wellbeing factor

The overall pandemic-related stress encompasses various factors, including the threat and risk of contagion, infobesity versus the unknown, quarantine and confinement, stigma and social exclusion, as well as fears of economic loss and job insecurity. Consequently, there is a clear and undeniable negative impact of COVID-19 on individuals' mental health (Hamouche, 2020) and overall wellbeing levels: “I wasn't happy, you know, that's my wellbeing” (18). The overall emotional state was characterised by the emotional fatigue and distress linked to the pandemic emergency situation (Carey et al., 2020). On top of that the interviewees were reporting challenges related to online teaching and the remote working, in general, such as worries about technology, lack of support and collegiality, loneliness and other negative experiences described in the previous sections.

While remote working ensures health and safety of the employees during pandemic and therefore helps to maintain the company's operations and income earning for the employees there are certain wellbeing drawbacks

associated with it. Among the main wellbeing challenges faced by academics, social isolation and loneliness stand out. Remote working has resulted in fewer face-to-face interactions with colleagues and supervisors. Additionally, due to restrictions on non-essential social gatherings during the pandemic, people have lost opportunities to meet friends and colleagues, which has inevitably contributed to feelings of loneliness. The ICT-mediated conversations with colleagues have not been able to fulfil the psychological needs for belongingness or relatedness, further exacerbating the challenges of social isolation (Wang et al., 2021). This is associated with a considerable risk of psychological distress and depression according to Hamouche (2020) and increased workload because of the blurred boundaries between work and home. The latter factor is especially problematic and stressful for the employees with home-schooling children:

(1) “So, we've only got one small office space. So, we were sort of juggling... and we've got young children... a five-year-old and an eight-year-old. And suddenly we were home-schooling as well. So, it was quite a stressful period with that dimension, because I was getting up early to home-school” (I17)

(2) “I was lucky that I only had the one child. But my one child needed my attention because he was isolated. People with more kids are even worse... there was acknowledgment, but there was no support... So, my line manager acknowledged it. But there are so many people that have children, there was no solution or support” (I9)

Furthermore, the research in this area suggests that workload and techno overload during the COVID-19 health emergency was positively related and increased the behavioural stress levels intensified by the work-life balance issues: “I think what was tricky is the kind of work life balance bit. The fact that if you have a bad day at work, you go home, and that's your kind of safe space...

usually home is my safe space. Whereas when I was working from home all of the time, there was nowhere to go. So, if I had a bad day at work, I just stayed in that space. And so, I didn't expect this kind of surprised me. But that lack of separation made it difficult to stop those worries" (I6)

It is therefore recommended that the balance between an employee's demands and resources is maintained, since, if not balanced, they can give rise to a process of deterioration of health that can lead, according to the studies, to experiencing burnout, exhaustion or discomfort in general. The resources mentioned in literature include work autonomy, feedback relating to performance, social support, supervision, coaching, and time control (Ingusci et al., 2021). For instance, a wish for "more tangible feedback on my performance" was expressed by interviewee 6 because "I find that very difficult not having that instant feedback" (I6). Another respondent shared that "working from home, it can feel quite isolated from your workplace, especially when you're new, sort of wondering whether am I doing...? Does anybody think I'm doing a good job? Does anybody think I'm doing a bad job? Who do I go to?" (I17). For this reason, the organisations are recommended to contribute to supporting such resources as they are beneficial for the engagement, wellbeing and therefore for the ultimate PC and organisational performance.

On the other hand, the wellbeing benefits of RW mentioned during the interviews were also profound and were mostly related to flexibility and increased control over one's time - the factors that are able to improve wellbeing at work even during such emergency as COVID-19 as is also established by the Ingusci et al. (2021) research. Having the possibility to experiment with control on daily life has positive outcomes for both the individual wellbeing and the organisation in terms of performance (Ingusci et al., 2021). In addition, such factors as lesser distractions from colleagues, no

commute time and associated expenses and more time spent with family members were among the advantages experienced by the academics: "I felt quite happy about [RW] in the end of the process because suddenly, I didn't need to commute anywhere, which was really good. And then suddenly, we were saving some money on that commute as well, we got used to that because my wife was in a similar position where she worked as a project manager, and then suddenly we were both working at home" (I17). However, the ability to cope with work-life challenges, such as separating job from personal life was influenced by whether an employee had a separate office space at home: "...my practical situation here was quite good - I've got a separate office at home, I've got all my equipment... and I guess that was a sort of psychological separation of saying to myself 'Okay, this is now work, this room is not now about booking holidays and talking to friends'... as a way of trying to separate out the rest of the house... because during the first part the two blended into each other" (I22).

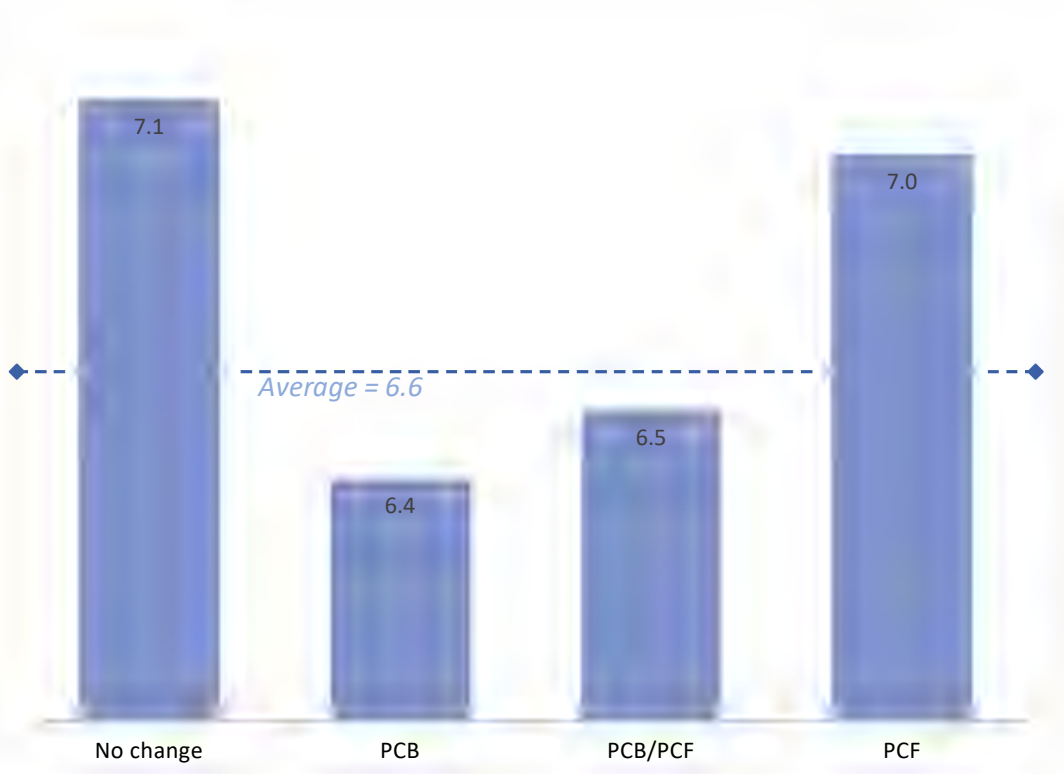
In general, the role of wellbeing was playing pivotal role in defining the employees' PC perceptions. However, the literature review revealed that the wellbeing was mostly treated as the dependent variable of the PC concept and the related outcomes and consequences (see for example Ahmad et al., 2018; Duran et al., 2019; Ahmed, 2014; Conway et.al, 2011; Wang et al., 2021;) that can also be confirmed by some narrations: "...if I hadn't had the personality that I had I would probably be weak right now with a mental breakdown because I'm really really struggling with my mental health really, this is not a healthy position, and I'm really unhappy with university about it" (I23). So, this is true for the current study as well, however the interviewing process has also established that wellbeing can take the role of a leading or independent variable in deciding which attitude and behaviour to adapt towards the organisations.

As in the above-described unique cases, some of such instances indicate that the state of PC can either be overlooked or the RW features can be attributed to the organisations (or both). Moreover, the ideological features of the PC can overtake the economic or socioemotional relationships so an employee would choose to tolerate short-term transactional breaches for longer-term ideological goals.

However, the general trend revealed is in line with the theoretical knowledge base developed so far, i.e., PCB has negative effect on the affective reactions and the ABOs and PCF exerts positive influences. So, if an organisation or employer promotes psychological contract fulfilment it thereby improves the wellbeing of the workforce, organisational behaviour and outcomes (Chen and Kao 2012 cited in Duran et al., 2019).

The above proposition is proved by the relationship found within the present dataset as shown by the Figure 32 below:

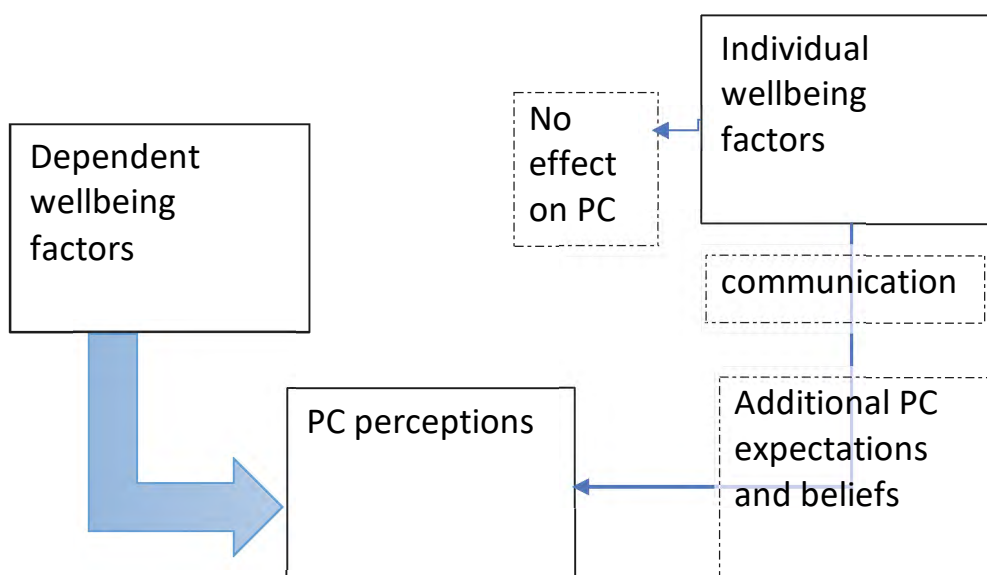
Figure 32. Likert scale Average Wellbeing Scores and PC based on the OHQ



Thus, the data reflects suggestions from the literature that PCF is associated with higher wellbeing levels and PCB with lower. So, the academics who reported PCB had the lowest level of wellbeing according to the Oxford wellbeing questionnaire. The academics who reported both PCB and PCF are in the middle of the wellbeing scores reached. And the highest wellbeing level within the sample – which is above the average of 6.6 - is found in the group who reported fulfilment of their psychological contracts.

At the same time, the reverse “PC-wellbeing” relationship cannot be excluded in the above chart presented, meaning the better the wellbeing is, the better the PC perceptions are. While the prevalent PC-wellbeing relationship was useful to understand the dominant trends, the researcher was also interested in developing the framework that would be able to explain the relationship where wellbeing does also affect PC as this was encountered during the interviews. So, the below model was developed on the basis of such relationships revealed:

Figure 33. PC-Wellbeing relationship



While analysing the narratives, the researcher noticed that there were two major groups of wellbeing factors reflected in the above model that are important in determining an employee's PC perceptions:

- **Dependent on the employers** – e.g., workload policies, access to collegiality, equipment or training support, adequate compensation etc – the employer's actions or inactions in such wellbeing related areas were having direct impact on how the interviewees felt and perceived their PCs with the employers: “[the managers] were fine, in terms of things like sick leave. So, I mean, obviously, if you had COVID, and whatever, that was fine. We were supported with having sick leave...but if it was anything other than COVID - it was not” (I24). The other example could be related to the introduction of hybrid teaching which was not timetabled and therefore increased the workload and induced psychological distress. No access to collegial support or social interactions with the colleagues aggravated the problem of isolation and the feelings of being detached from the university. Increased screen time caused some back and eyesight issues and because of the specifics of the profession the solutions i.e., equipment were expected to be provided by the employers: “...in terms of supporting us with the chair and the table, it was so much time consuming, such a hassle to get what I needed that just again, I gave up. And I requested a chair because I started physically suffering from sciatica while working from home on inappropriate desk and chair and the chair that [they] provided me was not at all adequate, it made it worse” (I9). Those are the examples of the areas of wellbeing that are perceived to be within the employer's influence and therefore they have direct impact on the PCs as is depicted above.

In contrast, the independent contextual factors e.g., care responsibilities, health conditions, home office settings, relationships with spouses etc. are playing important roles in the interviewees' reflections about their wellbeing

during the RW. At the same time the employees clearly understand that such areas that are key to the level of wellbeing are outside of the employer's direct control and therefore "I've never sought out any university help [with regard to my wellbeing], whatever I did, I did personally, I don't like to discuss my problems with my employer unless absolutely necessary" (I8). They constitute the second group of the wellbeing factors that can affect PC indirectly.

- **Individual wellbeing factors**, i.e., independent of the employers' actions or inactions – e.g., underlying health conditions, marital status, home settings, care responsibilities etc – these factors do not normally cause direct shifts in PCs. This second group of the independent wellbeing factors, as it can be inferred from the Figure 33 have either no effect or indirect effect on the PC perceptions. The cases where such circumstances had no effect on the PC were mostly associated with personality factors such as character, personal traits or upbringing, reluctance to be open because of "distant management", limiting the employment relationships to "professional matters only" etc.:

(1) "I'm quite resilient, naturally quite resilient. I think the impact of those around me not being as resilient had an impact on my own health. And so [I was] trying to stay positive, trying to stay focused, trying to stay upbeat, as a leader, as a team leader, as a mum - was really important" (I21).

(2) "...we were all trying to help the organisation to move forward. You know, I feel like rather than hindering my organisation, I was helping my organisation... I am maybe different case. But I didn't really ask for any help really to be honest with you. This is my duty. This is my responsibility" (I8).

In contrast, the interviewees who did expect their employers to be more proactive in these wellbeing areas normally explicitly disclosed the related circumstances. This is what is called "voice" in the PCT which normally takes

place when an employee is attempting to resolve the situation (Cassar et al., 2013; Rousseau, 1995): “I actually did put it in an email to the university, to my head of department. And I did say like, I'm sorry, I cannot do any more at the moment because for these reasons... it was such a difficult thing” (I29). Due to the private nature of those challenges the wish for more individualised approach, so called private checking in, was expressed by several employees who experienced negative wellbeing conditions that are of independent nature. Adequate communication strategies, listening to the staff as explained above would also have eased the pressure on the remotely working employees’ wellbeing: “Great deal of frustration of not being heard, of not being respected, of not having been acknowledged and not being seen and becoming really quite unwell with the stress of it. And having to fight to get back heard as well. So not only having to say, look, I'm working in a way that's damaging, but when that got past that point, and even with a new head of service, I had to sit him down and say quite strongly, at the back end of last year... I cannot do it, it's not something I can do, it is making me ill... So, it's quite a lot not being heard, I think” (I22).

Guest and Conway (2002) found that organisational communication could help control and manage psychological contract breach. Specifically, job-related (day-to-day work) and recruitment based (initial entry) communication had an impact on the employees’ psychological contract (Duran et al., 2019). Some recent findings also confirm the fact that maintaining communication in organisations - the style of which “has changed completely” (I9) - may help buffer the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on worker wellbeing (Hamouche, 2020). So, the overall wellbeing can be improved via the means of adjusted communication strategies which take into account the peculiarities of working remotely and especially remote workers over reliance on the ICTs as it

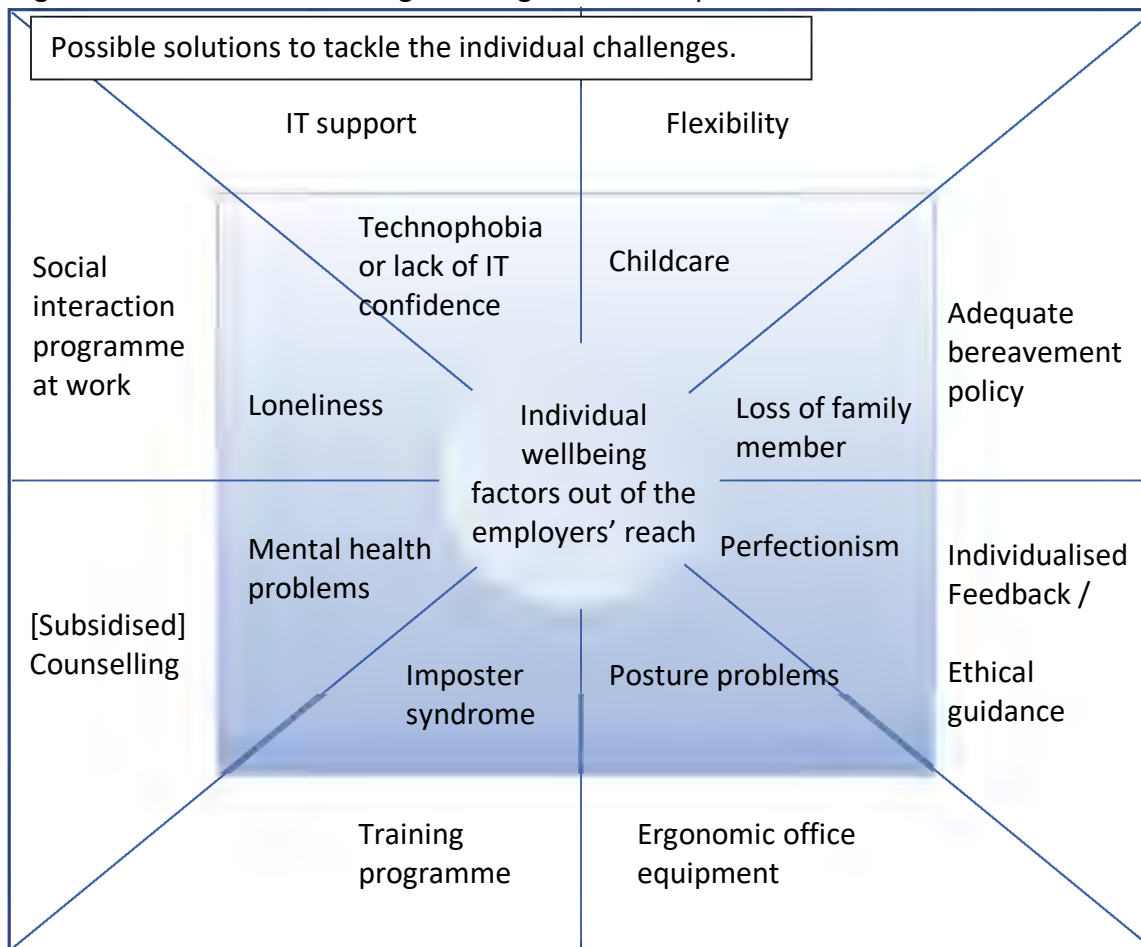
is not always a productive way to communicate compared to live interactions: “...you can write 15 emails and talk for 15 minutes, and it will achieve the same output. Yes, it's much more efficient sometimes to talk face to face. You will achieve a lot more in one-hour face to face meeting than you would in a one-hour teams meeting” (I9). Thus, the narratives put individual level communication which facilitates “voice” in the heart of building strong PCs during the crisis circumstances. This would facilitate further wellbeing focused response measures. It would also give the employer greater degree of power to implement some “adaptive management” or “intrusive management” (I30) decisions for the benefit of the reciprocal PC.

The measures on encouraging peer cohesion and improving lines of communication among employees and employer (Duran et al., 2019) have been implemented by the employees locally. As it was mentioned, some of the respondents shared the experience of initiating WhatsApp and Teams groups for staying connected and checking in with each other: “...we have these WhatsApp groups. Each line manager had a WhatsApp group to support their staff, but my WhatsApp group, you know, was very strong. We all spoke to each other every day every time it was somebody's birthday, we'd do something like this, we'd meet online, we had coffee afternoons, you know, we made it very social, and we supported each other very well. I don't think all the groups did that” (I25). This proved to have very positive impact on enhancing relationships between the colleagues: “...they didn't know each other but by the end of the first lockdown, they all knew each other very well” (I25). The outcome also resonates with the research by Crowe and Middleton (2012) and Waizenegger et al. (2016) who state that increased connectivity via mobile devices have positive impact on the work engagement and can be beneficial for isolated individuals.

University-wide communication was also crucial, especially during the 3rd stage of crisis when the re-emergence occurred. It is able to bring down the uncertainty and stress levels among the staff members by providing clear information to employees about what will happen post COVID-19, what are the main steps and milestones to resume organisational operations, and the potential impact of these actions on staff (Hamouche, 2020). So, it can be concluded that utilising mobile technology use and increasing transparency in the internal communication strategies would further improve the wellbeing and PC management via the expectations met leading to an increased level of organisational commitment.

Whilst outside of the employer's direct control the second group of wellbeing factors mentioned during the interviews if addressed by the employers would "make life much easier" and "wellbeing level a lot lot higher" (I11). The picture below shows the examples of the second group or individual wellbeing areas. The narratives showed that whilst beyond the direct employer's influence these areas can still be positively managed or, at least, helped with by the organisations. It answers the question triggered by the crisis RW on whether the universities are able to cater for the academics' wellbeing needs. The examples of solutions addressing the wellbeing challenges during RW are taken from the academics' interviews:

Figure 34. Individual Wellbeing Challenges and PC expectations



The interviewees have also shared some important and significant changes in their personal lives that they were going through during the pandemic. In addition to loss of a family member (3 cases) the respondents also mentioned going through divorce (1 case), birth of a child (2 cases) and marriage (1 case). Clearly, the levels of wellbeing were more affected – negatively or positively - for such cases. It is worth to note, that the positive influences of such areas as marriage or “lucky home setting” etc. were also evoking the feelings of “guilt for being happy” in some of the respondents: “...when everybody else was like in trauma, we felt a little bit guilty. We kept saying ‘Oh, we're having a lovely time, it was lovely weather’... Every lunch, we get outside in the sunshine. And then we all went back to work again. So, we

looked back on it and it was quite fond memories where so many people found it such a hard time” (I25). This proves that the overall negative context of the crisis was having negative impact on the people’s emotional wellbeing which explains these feelings of guilt found within the data. For instance, it was noted that the “survival mode” or “social hibernation” prevented people from exercising or doing something that was enjoyed before the pandemic, and this intensified the mental health problems experienced because of the crisis.

A common thread through the narratives was the repeated use of the phrase “mental+ health”. The NVivo text query yielded its mentioning among 17 participants. The search for the word “anxiety” showed that 7 participants experienced this feeling. The feeling of “depression” was mentioned by 3 participants as being experienced or witnessed: “I wasn't sleeping. I did go to the doctor's actually for some sleeping tablets, which I did use. I was depressed. I was prescribed antidepressants...” (I30). This confirms the findings that more educators (as well as students) meet the criteria for anxiety, depression, and trauma-issues as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic (Dabrowski, 2020).

Having children at home, especially home-schooling and obtaining information about COVID-19 were ranked lowest of all activities in terms of emotional experience as it was also established by the Lades et al. research (2020): “thankfully, I've not been face to face in those care homes but the impact or just getting those spreadsheets of deaths, week after week after week, plus hearing from the students the reality what those numbers meant...” (I22). The individuals were most struggling to achieve a balance between the home-based employment and the pre-existing roles of mothers and fathers: “I didn't like working from home at all, mainly because I had my toddler son at home... 24/7. So that was a major challenge for me...I was not efficient at all, I

stopped many of my research projects” (15). This in its turn has also created such negative feelings as guilt: “I felt sorry for my son because he was trapped at home... I felt that I couldn't prioritise him over work. And that made me feel guilty” (19); pity and other stress increasing emotions: “Psychologically, it was very hard for me to have two kids at home... they are running around, and at the same time we have to work, and they are not able to go out.... So, it was hard for them, you felt sorry for them as well” (18).

At the same time, such activities as caring for parents or pets, going for walks, pursuing hobbies like gardening, traveling, online investments, baking or online dating were the activities associated with the greatest wellbeing benefits for the UK academics.

In general, the answers to the question on the work-life balance during the pandemic RW were somewhat polarised. On the one hand, RW makes it easy for the work to “invade” the personal lives and implies increased workload, especially when it concerns remote teaching: “...we were actually working sometimes in the midnight. I found myself working... [at] 12 o'clock in the midnight...Because you carry on, you continue... you don't have the feeling of going home” (18). And this problem has affected mental health of the participants: “I was very anxious, depressed, physically unfit... that lack of separation [from work] made it difficult to stop those worries” (16).

On the other hand, the interviewees shared that they were able to spend more time at home with family members, pursue their hobbies and other interests and have not experienced any issues with the workload: “Never did I feel that my responsibility suddenly like, you know, magnify, so no, no, it was never an issue” (12). However, most of the interviewees noticed that they were able to adjust their working patterns to ensure that they can work more

efficiently: “I could work at night, for instance, after my son was sleeping...it was very efficient...people adjusted and changed their style of work...teaching and marking and exams - all that required extra effort, was significantly more time consuming... email traffic became a lot more because everything was in email and you couldn't have conversation” (I9).

The table below summarises the answers to the question on whether the RW weakened the work-life balance. As it can be inferred from the numerical answers presented the general perception is that the RW had rather a negative impact on the work-life balance and such imbalance was the source of additional stress.

Row Labels	Count of The remote working weakened my work-life balance Q14
10	8
8	4
5	4
2	3
3	3
9	3
1	3
4	1
6	1
Grand Total	30

Such stress was aggravated by the unclear guidelines around combining personal / family responsibilities and work-related duties. The perfectionist trait of the academics as noted by Watermeyer et al. (2021) research does not allow for some of the individuals to be absent from the screen during the office hours. So clear guidelines and greater flexibility to manage own times

would lift the additional stress created by this perception of the obligation to be constantly present online and working as was expressed during the interviews:

(1) “...you feel like you need permission to stick it out, almost feel like I'm being deceitful or misusing my time...” (I19).

(2) “...my line manager said... don't try to do too much. But perhaps, I don't know...maybe it's my style of working or my work ethics... I was not able

to adjust. Maybe I could have used this flexibility to not work five days a week just work two days a week, who would have known” (19).

It was also revealed during the interviews that several participants were starting new jobs during the pandemic. The answers to the questionnaire were asked to be related to the employer where he or she was working remotely for the longer period of time. However, the conversations naturally covered both experiences:

(1) “...starting a new job was really hard... much harder work than I thought it would be. It was difficult to build up relationships when everything was online... to work out who I needed to go to, with what questions... usually... you just tend to the person next to you and say - Well, how do I try to do this? How do you do it? You couldn't do that yet to book a meeting and then you know, they'd have to show you. And so that was kind of painful. And really very isolating. I missed the social dimensions, social aspects of work.... I find it more difficult to pick up knowledge” (16).

(2) “...relationships that were already strong pre remote working could survive and grow and could do well, as long as both sides supporting each other over the... remote working period. But actually, new relationships are much harder to build and much harder to develop” (17).

Hence the challenges of starting a new job during the pandemic were compounded by the remote mode of working when lack of live interactions hindered the process of inclusion in the group for the individuals. This social factor is also important for gaining confidence in a newly assumed role. In addition, there are the issues of organisational and personal identities and the integration processes done remotely that deserve closer attention.

Thus, this section has outlined the prevailing wellbeing concerns shared during the interview study and highlighted the role and relationships of this area for an employee's psychological contract. The next chapter is devoted to conclusions, discussion of findings, theoretical and practical implications of the present research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications of the Study

As inferred from the findings, the results of the research present a mixed picture, with some conclusions aligning with existing knowledge and others introducing new dynamics and models to understand the variables of psychological contract and wellbeing within the context of remote working. This chapter draws conclusions based on the study's aim and objectives and discusses the practical implications of these findings. The empirical study, involving 30 participants, has led to the development of a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing HRM policies in HE organisations through an informed, science-based approach to academics' psychological contracts. Psychological contracts are of great importance to management scholars and practitioners as they influence individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviours within organisations, providing the foundation for coordination and cooperation among employees, managers, executives, and business owners (Rousseau et al., 2013). In addition, the contribution to the theory is summarised by revisiting the gap in the literature and linking the findings with the theoretical base. Also, the limitations of the study are discussed and, finally, the areas for future research are then covered in this chapter.

5.1. Main Findings and Conclusions

This section summarises the main findings of the research and draws conclusions relative to the three main objectives.

The first Objective establishes if a change – PCB or PCF – has taken place during the RW.

Objective 1

The present research has established that there has been a significant change in the psychological contracts of academics during the crisis-induced remote working. In most cases, this change has been negative, which can be attributed to the nature of the crisis itself. However, it is important to note that the resulting psychological contracts have undergone essential transformations, acquiring new features and adjusting their contents to reflect both the negative and positive experiences of the academics. This can be seen as the emergence of a "new norm" psychological contract, indicating that the pre-pandemic psychological contracts may have limited relevance in the current context. The study has examined both the negative and positive experiences of the psychological contracts to determine which aspects to prioritize and how the negatives can be turned into positives.

The second Objective concludes the PC further in more details, more specifically it establishes the PC content components.

Objective 2

First and foremost, this research has contributed to the field by expanding the understanding of the psychological contracts of UK academics through a content-based approach. By focusing on the expectations and beliefs of academics, the study has provided insights into the profession-specific psychological contracts, particularly by incorporating ideology-infused values and identifying salient beneficiaries. This approach has proven to be the most suitable for capturing the perceptions and experiences of academics in a concise and scientific manner. In contrast, the traditional bidimensional framework, which categorizes psychological contracts as transactional or

relational, was found to be insufficient for capturing the complexities of the psychological contracts within this specific population and context.

Such expanded interpretive PC framework approach highlights the importance of the ethical dimensions of the PC and the salient beneficiaries for a better PC understanding and consequent management. The cognitive process of reconciling individual and organisational ethics and ideals given the nature of the RW is supposed to be supported by transparent ethical guidance and communication strategies specifically developed to meet the remotely working employees' needs. Such value-based PC management would enable the universities to establish sustainable and mutually beneficial relationships with the academics and by doing so to further benefit the ultimate beneficiaries such as students, professional academic communities, families and a wider society. This implies ripple effect that cannot be underestimated.

Furthermore, the modified Guest's model of the PC is useful for understanding the inner dynamics during the crisis circumstances. At the same time, the introduction of the time considerations based on the deeper analysis of such internal dynamics allowed to extrapolate the findings further and introduce what is called a "new norm" for the PC concept. The narrations show that it would be problematic to return to the pre-pandemic mode of working for some workers, especially when it concerns to flexibility considerations. It can also symbolize a drastic shift and transition to a future of remotely working in the higher education. Hence the results that are applicable to the after-pandemic circumstances indicate that the PC has undergone significant transformation during the enforced RW.

This is proved by the expectation of flexibility that is present within the participants' PC as it became central to their life when the crisis caused to reconsider and reassess the greater circle of life values. As a result, greater

importance to families and personal wellbeing was given. The RW and flexibility that comes with it was forced in the beginning of pandemic however now it is part of new normality and therefore requires a systematic way of embracing the results and organising the processes for the future of RW:

(1) “I do hope that your research gets read by policymakers and so on. I think this...nine to five, Monday to Friday is a thing of the past... the one thing that COVID has actually done or should do, or at least I hope people realise, including my employer is [that] the old age concept of physical work only is gone... I do believe that employees need to be given the choice...I think it's [RW] here to stay” (12).

(2) “I think it [crisis] has caused a shift in how we perceive working at the university” (15).

(3) “...now that we have the option best of both worlds [let's] keep those remote meetings...” (19).

From the perspective of the management practitioner interviewed this matter might cause significant distortions or mismatch in perceptions between the parties: “If somebody had said to me before COVID, that I could work a day a week at home, I'd been absolutely over the moon, it would have been fantastic. The trouble is now, people got so used to working from home all the time that almost the reverse is true”. The participant further shared that when a member of staff was asked to come into the office for a meeting he said, “if you want me to come in [for a meeting], you have to pay me some more money” and “that is a real mind shift” – concludes the participant: “Obviously, we didn't pay him” (17). This concern shared implies that if the HE sector does not look intricately into the matter, there is a potential of growing misunderstanding that is detrimental for the underlying PC and ultimate organisational performance.

So, the research emphasises the balanced approach, meaning that the principle of reciprocity - which is central to PC - has to be observed by all the parties concerned.

The next and the last Objective of this research discusses the role of wellbeing.

Objective 3

Two matters deserving of consideration emerge from the above analysis for the Objective 3.

Firstly, the complexity of the relationships between the universities and the academics as the employees has been compounded by the wellbeing considerations evoked and heightened because of the crisis. The concern expressed by the management representatives about “this wellbeing obsession” is understandable given such distortions that produce tensions with the potential to disrupt the organisation’s operations. Thus, the argument of Day and Qing (2009) that stress from the role is exacerbated by the fact that “many teachers work in environments that are hostile to their wellbeing” (Anna Dabrowski, 2020) finds some supportive evidence from the data gathered. So, a better understanding of the role of such wellbeing considerations within the PC equation is needed to be obtained so that the interests of the parties are balanced. The HE education workers are key to the institution as the institution is key to them so with every institutional shift that causes associated internal PC shift for the academics the balance must be re-established on new terms to benefit both sides.

The second consideration is reflected in the proposed wellbeing model with two-dimensional classification of the wellbeing factors which captures the revealed employer-employee relationships and accordingly sets grounds for

future PC and wellbeing related research. The findings suggest that the balance of interests is one of the highest priorities for such studies. This would imply utilising more optimistic view on the academics-university relationships with the focus on well-functioning PCs as the precedents of the balance reached. In spite the fact that such optimistic approach is more appealing for the researcher's personality the negative context of the crisis is clearly prevalent and therefore an allowance for that must be made when examining academics' narratives.

In support of the urge to consider wellbeing of the employees, the research summarises the wellbeing benefits and challenges of the remotely working academics within the PC context. As it was noted above wellbeing for the purposes of this research is considered in a broader sense and as such is comprised of aspects of feeling good (i.e., positive emotions, sense of purpose and meaning, positive relationships) and functioning well (i.e., feelings of engagement and achievement) (Seligman, 2011). Despite the notion that the individual PC related areas of wellbeing might prevent the employers from being proactive because of their highly private nature, the study introduces the solutions the employees envision themselves in such seemingly reserved areas.

It is important to note with this regard, that the factor of wellbeing is not only dependent on the PC but can also play an active and leading role by influencing the state of the PC and the subsequent ABOs as the findings suggest. So more proactive position of the employers facilitated by better communication strategies is what would have made a significant positive impact according to the respondents. The cases encountered and described as the unique or outlier cases, clearly represent the areas for further research.

Generally, as one of the interviewees told “...many universities haven't done a reflection, they just spent time survived. A good reflection is needed to see what have you done good? What could we have improved? In case hopefully, it will not happen again. But if we have something like that, what would we have done differently?” (I4). So, the research gives this opportunity for both the participants and the universities to make reflections on the past for the benefits of the future. That “huge level of uncertainty” (I7) encountered in the beginning of the crisis triggered such questions as “What should we do? What should happen here?” (I7) among the universities’ management which could be addressed by the means of such reflections and studies that yield science backed solutions. It became evident as a result of the reflections that “...all organisations need to rethink about their employment, i.e., employees and what they want, and how best to help people... manage the psychological contract, manage the working from home” (I20) as the latter is expected to persist.

In addition, the study provides valuable theoretical implications that enhance the current body of knowledge which are discussed in the next section.

5.2. Theoretical contributions

According to the psychological contract theory, PCs are individual-level cognitive structures that reflect how people think about their exchange relationships (Rousseau et al., 2013). The current research expands and deepens our understanding of the profession specific PC during the crisis prompted RW. The novelty of the pandemic related themes together with digital disruption it has created in the sector and the substantial impact on the

academics' psychological contracts and wellbeing necessitated this type of study. So, the research provides several theoretical contributions that enhance the associated literature as is described below.

First of all, the research established that only 1 of 30 participants have not experienced any change in his PC which supports the proposition of the PC's propensity to change because of the change in circumstances. Even within the emergency circumstances PCB does take place which somewhat contradicts the literature on PC as the latter has not distinguished between the various stages of the emergencies that affect the attribution of blame. So, the timing stages of disruptions are important in considering the PC as the earlier stages do support the theoretical propositions. However, after the initial period of "shock", "uncertainty" and quick actions the employees start to re-evaluate their PCs which then lead to breaches and violations.

Furthermore, the study expands our understanding of the profession specific psychological contract, in particular, it develops the content of the PC under the study. The expanded framework introduced for understanding the academics' PC content has proved to be the most appropriate than the traditional relational / transactional approaches for a deeper understanding. Traditional PC approach mostly operates with two definitions: PCs can either be limited to wholly economic terms as in a transactional psychological contract (e.g., an hourly wage for a temporary worker) or be as complex and broad as personal support and developmental investment as in a relational psychological contract (Rousseau et al., 2013). However, the analysis of the data gathered shows that the academics' PC expands beyond these two generally accepted concepts and because of that PCs can be breached or violated not only when the university abandons its obligations to provide economic and socioemotional support to the academics but also when it fails

to exemplify some principle or fulfil an implied ideological obligation (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003) such as caring for students and staff, for example. Therefore, the research puts greater emphasis on the ideology-infused framework developed by Thompson and Bunderson in 2003 and O'Donohue and Nelson in 2009 which considers wider salient beneficiaries and the ethical climate congruence as the central elements of the underlying PCs.

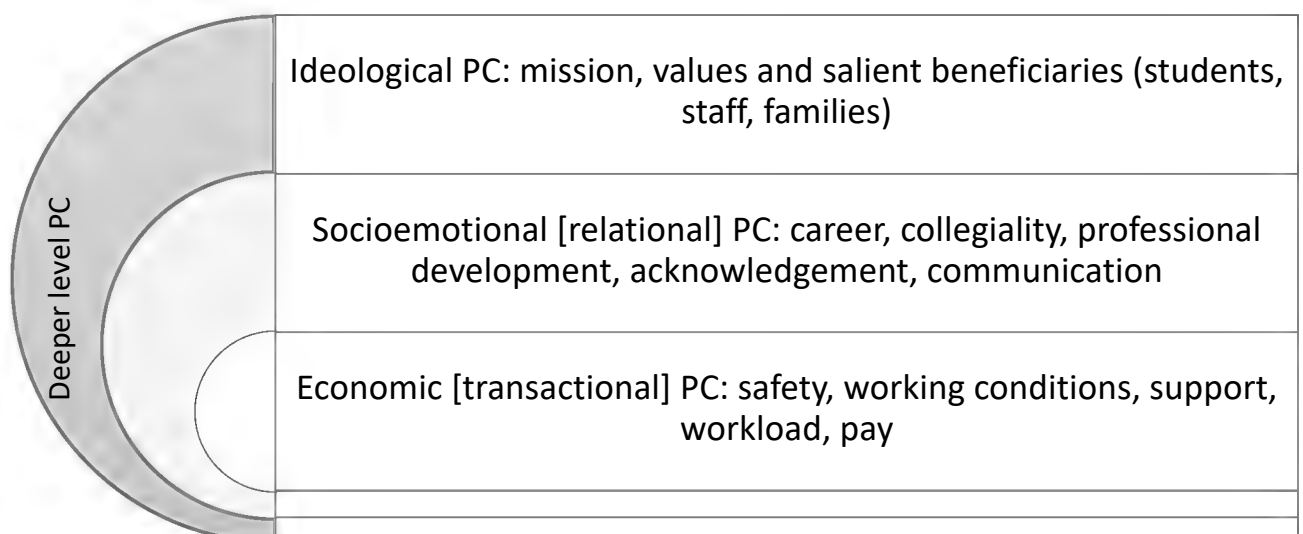
The academic interest in ideology as a core component of employment is still on the rise and the existing literature does not elaborate on how employment relationships premised on ideology differ from those that are not (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). Therefore, the research contributes to the theory by addressing this gap. More specifically, the empirical findings confirm that the academics were perceiving breach and alienation not because of any personal mistreatment of the employee but rather based on the perceived morality of the employer's actions or inactions and abandonment of 'cause'.

Moreover, the founders of the ideological PC state that transactional and relational aspects of the PC are independent yet both aspects can characterize the same contract adopted. They further state that the same multidimensional view is adopted with regard to ideology-based PC meaning that ideological obligations often represent one important dimension of a multidimensional contract (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). The current research enhances this proposition by emphasising the interdependent nature of all of the PC components revealed. For instance, even such transactional considerations as workload and pay were mentioned with an ultimate view of bringing value to the salient beneficiaries: "my aims at the beginning were to provide the same service... as much as we could, as we did face to face... [even though] we've had the squeezing of staff do more for the same money" (126). So, it can be hypothesised that transactional and relational PCs are rooted or

originate from the deeper ideological PC, therefore a breach thereof results in shallower transactional relationships, and this can be considered as a downgrading of the ideological PC.

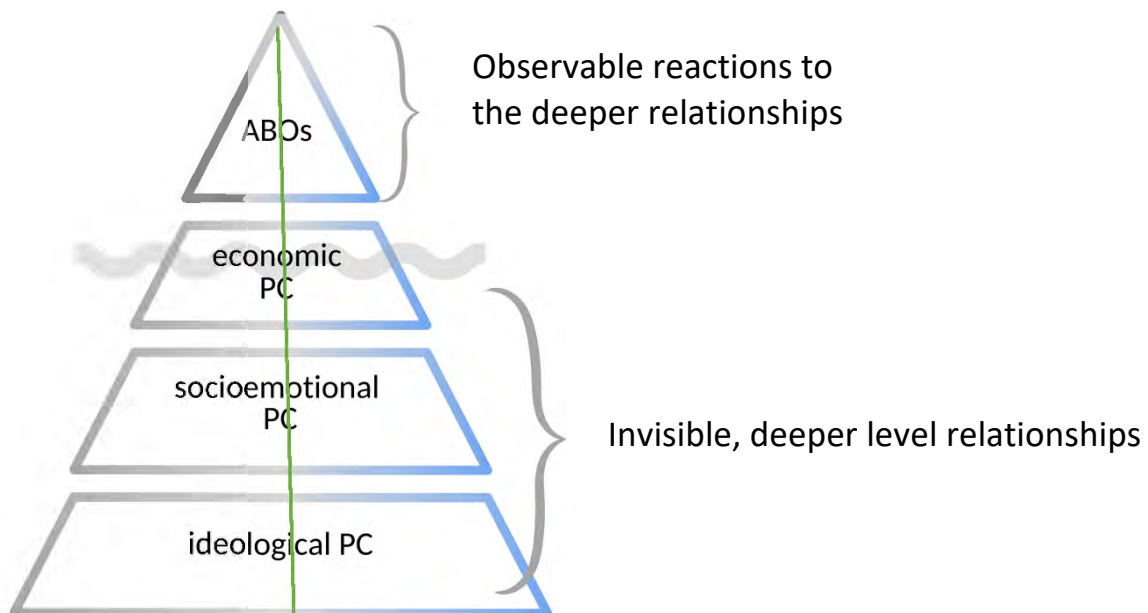
Thus, even though ideology-infused contracts usually also include economic and socioemotional components these 3 types of contracts are not coexisting at the same degree of importance but rather represent multi-layered and hierarchical relationships: ideology-infused PC lies deeper and therefore is of greater importance, transactional PC is egoistic according to Thompson and Bunderson (2003) and exerts lesser influence and socioemotional PC is in the middle. For this reason, i.e., due to the hierarchical relationship among the PCs, an ideological breach may result in downgrading to socioemotional or economic state of the PC. The opposite might be true as well, i.e., if an employer overdelivers in a relational PC then this can induce an employee to feel more obligated to contribute to the higher mission that the employer transmits and thus upgrade his or her PC to an ideological one. At the same time, the researcher suggests that the ideological PC fulfilment is not possible without satisfying – at least in the long run - the requirements of the economic and socioemotional PCs as they represent the pieces of one system:

Figure 35. PC Levels



If the above relationship is depicted with the help of an iceberg side view diagram, then the visible part of it would be represented by the ABOs and the relationship among different types of PC is then hierarchical:

Figure 36. PCs Hierarchy with ABOs: the PC Iceberg Diagram



The Figure 36 shows the hierarchical relationship among different types of PCs meaning that an employee’s PC incorporates various levels of PCs rather than “either [transactional] or [ideological]”. The academics’ PC studied originates from the deeper ideological PC as is represented by the green line on the ‘Iceberg Diagram’. However, if a PCB occurs this line could be damaged, and the ABOs could then be rooted in a shallower socioemotional or economic PC. This can be observed from the following quote of the academic whose PC was breached: “I don't know if I have any expectations anymore, other than just to pay me at the end of the month. It's awful, isn't it?” (I29). At the same time, the academic chooses to endure the breach because: “I just want to do the best job I can for my students, my students are the most important thing in my work, you know, they are the driving force to what I do” (I29). Since PC is applicable to any exchange relationships, it can be concluded that a breach of

PC with employer may lead an academic to focus on his or her own psychological contract with their students to ensure that students' values are observed. Indeed, this devotion to the higher cause or value such as benefiting students or colleagues was evident and strong throughout the narrations analysed.

Furthermore, this hypothesis on the hierarchical nature of PCs is able to explain why some academics choose to stay after PC breaches: as long as there is some PC basis the relationships can be continued. This can be supported by the theoretical notion that ideological currency takes the form of contributions toward the organisation's capacity to pursue the cause even in the form of some sacrifices resulted because of economic or socioemotional PCBs (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). Thus, the PC content presented below represents a hierarchy or system of PCs where relational and transactional components are reasoned by deeper values of ideological PC:

Table 14. Academics' Ideological, Transactional and Relational PC Content

Ideological PC	Transactional and Relational PCs
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support services
People / Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ IT services support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mental health and wellbeing support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equipment / material support
Ethical climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Training support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ University-wide communication level
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual-level communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team-level / collegial communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Workload

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bereavement policy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement in crisis response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-emerging from crisis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Acknowledgement and recognition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Smooth gradual return
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office spaces
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Health and safety of the workplaces
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hybrid TL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Autonomy
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Online meetings policy / workload
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ethical guidance

Hence the research completes the list of the PC content research performed by such authors as Barbieri (2018), Herriot et al. (1997), Turnley and Feldman (1999) and at the same time contributes by presenting the hypothesis on hierarchical nature of the PCs.

The study has also introduced 2 time dimensions that must be considered when examining the phenomenon: (1) stages and the associated allocation of responsibilities in a disrupted PC and (2) the notion of the “new norm” PC which suggests permanent nature of the transformation that the academics’ PC has experienced.

The research has also provided valuable insights into the role of wellbeing in an employee’s psychological contract. As PCT is a midrange theory addressing how individuals’ beliefs influence their judgments, affect, and behaviour in exchange arrangements (Rousseau et al., 2013) the research draws greater attention to the discipline and the role of wellbeing in light of the health crisis.

The body knowledge has a clear gap related to the place of wellbeing in an employee's PC working remotely so some of the instances encountered could not be explained based on the theory developed so far. For example, 1 of 16 participants who experienced breach was showing positive ABOs by overperforming and the respondent evidently expressed her high degree of satisfaction with the RW indicative of high level of wellbeing. This case - even the rare one and therefore can be considered as an outlier – may suggest that high level of wellbeing associated with RW can positively affect employee's ABOs in spite of a breach which is a novel implication that represents potential area for further investigation. Another outlier case, when the employee was underperforming and showing negative ABOs in spite of the fulfilment also supports the above proposition as his explanation to the underperforming can be summarised as a low level of wellbeing: "I was very anxious, depressed, physically unfit" (I6). So, via these two examples the study substantiates the notion that wellbeing variable can be of independent nature and sometimes play more decisive role in the PC than the facts of breach or fulfilment which does not resonate with the body knowledge. The literature reviewed shows that the authors so far has treated the level of wellbeing as an output, i.e., dependent variable in the PC equation.

At the same time, the idea developed by the PCT that people can pay attention selectively to only a portion of the information in their environments, attending to highly salient or easily accessible information partially explains the above proposition (Rousseau et al., 2013). So, it can be concluded that the employees with high level of wellbeing were selectively focusing on the positive sides of their employment and the reverse was true for those whose wellbeing suffered during the RW. Moreover, the PCT authors state that the employees tend to interpret events in a manner confirming their existing

beliefs which makes the PC a means of ensuring continuity and predictability in the employment relationship. Therefore, it is important to monitor and manage the employment related beliefs formation and development as PCs are subject to more systematic cognitive processes and revision especially when the circumstances change according to Rousseau et al. (2013).

In general, the study results confirm the theoretical finding that fulfilment is associated with higher level of wellbeing and breach with lower (Figure 32), however the relationship between wellbeing and PC can be different from what is commonly accepted in the PC theory. The novelty of this notion is apparent and is considered as a theoretical contribution which has to be examined further. The study further summarises the wellbeing challenges and benefits of the remotely working employees to inform such kind of studies and PC management policies.

It was evident from the data that communication strategies during the pandemic were of utmost importance for sustaining positive relationships, especially to identify and overcome dysfunctions in work arrangement. This conclusion is supported by the PCT as breach tends to be more prevalent in employment arrangements with limited interactions between employee and management representatives (Rousseau et al., 2013). RW naturally involves limited live interactions and lack of socialization which further increases the importance of communication for building satisfying relationships. The findings put 'communication' in the heart of the PC management strategies and by doing so emphasise its importance especially during the crisis RW circumstances which was evident from the interviewees' narrations. This idea has been highlighted by the analysis made during this study which revealed specific communication strategies that are able to impact the psychological

contracts and employment relationships in an extremely positive or negative way.

As part of the data analysis the research has developed the following models that would be of use for further theoretical explorations:

- expanded Guest's employee model applicable to crisis circumstances;
- PC-wellbeing relationship, where communication plays central role;
- Iceberg hierarchy of PCs: transactional, relational, ideological PCs and ABOs.

Lastly, this study contributes by raising questions because of the trends revealed within the data that have not been covered by the literature yet. So, it sets grounds for further explorations of the PC of the remotely working academics. The subsection below on the future research sheds more light on such areas.

5.3. Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this research provide opportunities for further explorations. First of all, it would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal study - due to the dynamic nature of the phenomenon revealed - to focus on the value-based aspect of the PC which is underrepresented in the existing literature. This oversight suggests the need to further refine our understanding of the academics-university relationship by paying closer attention to the ideological currency in the PC (Thompson and Bunderson, 2003). This would also allow capturing the transitioning periods as well as transformation of the ideological PC and give better explanations of the dynamics behind ideological breach and fulfilments. Such longitudinal study methodology could be enhanced by introducing diaries as one of the methods of data collection.

As an extension of the current investigation one of the obvious possibilities is to research the academics' PC using positivist survey-based approach to capture larger fraction of the population. The results of such quantitative approach can then be compared to the present conclusions to enhance our understanding about the academics' PC and wellbeing during the RW. This also implies that it would be interesting to examine the PC, wellbeing and RW equilibrium beyond the crisis circumstances. In addition, as it is stated above the independent role of wellbeing in the PC equation does also represent the gap which when filled would allow for new possibilities for the PC management to be created. E.g., rather than viewing wellbeing as a PC dependent variable it would be interesting to see if PC can be positively influenced via positively influencing the employees' wellbeing. Therefore, a positivist study on revealing the PC – wellbeing relationships with a larger sample size is the other potential area for research. The survey approach would allow gathering more generalisable data that would reveal the nature of the variables – dependent and independent – and their correlations. Previous research has established that the state of PC influences the wellbeing, however, the pandemic which caused mental shift towards health and wellbeing consideration might have changed this as the data suggests. Furthermore, as most initiatives target individual wellbeing alone, and fail to consider the need for organisational level wellbeing interventions (Dabrowski, 2020) a case study on enhancing the normative level wellbeing initiatives and their influence on the underlying PC would be useful to conduct.

In contrast to the above-suggested positivist approaches, qualitative in-depth studies would also benefit the body knowledge. For example, it would be beneficial to distinguish the influence of the personality factors in expressing feelings and reactions while working remotely. It is stated by the

PCT that breaches that engender emotions are more likely to be noticed which is an effect associated with certain personality traits (Rousseau et al., 2013). However, the remote working arrangements imply different way of expressing such emotions as it requires technological literacy and confidence in virtual environments, so this represents an interesting area for future investigations. Another potential area for in-depth investigation is the revealed gap represented by unexplainable - from the theoretical point - negative ABOs expressed while the fulfilment in PC was present.

Thus, the research raises interesting questions for potential investigations. The areas described in this section as the potential themes for further research can be extended by limitations of the study which when addressed would fill the gaps revealed by the researcher and, at the same time, augment future research. The next section discusses such limitations in more details.

5.3. Limitations

The author of the thesis acknowledges that there are several limitations to this study as described in this section.

The first and foremost limitation is that the study focuses on the academics and therefore the generalisation of conclusions to other remotely working professions must be made with caution. In addition, the geographical focus of the study on the UK makes its findings to a greater extent applicable to the UK realities. So, application of the research findings to other countries or territories must be made with caution as well. To overcome these limitations, it would be useful to conduct similar studies that would involve sampling from other professions and countries.

The other limitation may relate to the fact that managerial perspective in the sample is somewhat limited. Whilst it is not the focus of this study it would be interesting to engage with the managers or employer representatives to seek their opinions about the “deal” during the crisis RW. So, this is one of the potential areas for a qualitative inquiry that can be focused on the employers’ perspectives. In addition, it would be useful to hear their feedback about the conclusions and recommendations of the research, more specifically on the practicality thereof.

Due to the nature of the profession under the study which implies busy schedules sometimes it was not possible to have longer interviews when it was needed. The interviews were normally scheduled for 1 hour and the calendars of the participants were marked accordingly. However, during the course of some of the interviews it was revealed that longer duration scheduled for several participants (I11, I12 and I19) would have produced longer uninterrupted narrations. This could have benefited the study by allowing even deeper examination of the phenomenon. However, it was not the case for all the participants, i.e., in the majority of cases the time scheduled has proved to be sufficient.

And the last limitation observed was that the researcher operated with the wider definition of PC throughout the study. As is described in the literature review chapter, while the narrow definition of PC includes obligations and promises only, the wider definition also includes non-promissory expectations and beliefs. The focus on the wider definition of PCs was done to ensure inclusivity of all the experiences that might be relevant to the subject matter. Such inclusivity implies that the researcher places greater importance on the individual experiences which in its turn, provides deeper and richer data for the subsequent analysis and interpretations. It is necessary

to admit that adherence to the narrower definitions of PC has a potential to produce somewhat different results.

The next section concludes this chapter by providing practical implications of this research via detailed recommendations and discussions of the findings that the universities as the employers and other interested bodies might find useful.

5.4. Practical implications

The present research makes its contribution by providing deeper insights into the academics' psychological contract and its content during the crisis RW. It reveals the basic underlying framework for analysing the PC that takes into account the main factors contributing to the PC formation and development within this particular population. It was established that the academics' PC is intensely influenced by the perceptions about salient beneficiaries and the ethical values of the universities. This implies that the PC under the study surpasses the traditional transactional / relational approach and therefore the HRM and management strategies are recommended to be focused on the wider i.e., ideals-infused approach. This needs to be communicated clearly. Hence the crucial message of the academics' psychological contracting process is to make the best effort a university can towards catering for the salient beneficiaries and the ethics.

Furthermore, given the increased importance of wellbeing considerations in light of the pandemic crisis, this factor also was proved to have impact on the PC irrespective of whether the challenges faced are out of the employer's direct influence i.e., irrespective of the attribution of responsibilities. The link that connects those personal areas with the PC is communication. So, the research provides the respective model for analysing

this PC-wellbeing relationship (Figure 33) where the role of communication is reflected.

Thus, the practical implications and the associated recommendations include improving the communication strategy with the remotely working employees. The literature reviewed contains some strategies identified by teleworkers, that may help to overcome the challenges of teleworking. These strategies encompass continuous communication with co-workers and supervisors, during teleworking, about expectations, work progress and availability. (Hamouche, 2020). This is due to the fact that physical presence allows the employees to communicate frequently and get the guidelines, directives, monitoring, and other instant advice that ensure that the employee interests are met spontaneously. However, the educators while working remotely need additional and practical communication strategies that will offer the required support to contribute to improved academic performance. This will be realized by meeting the interests of the employees through the employer-employee balance of interests. Therefore, implementing effective communication strategies forms the basis for meeting the paradigm shift regarding remote working and the challenges and opportunities that this shift presents.

In fact, the communication is established to play vital role as it informs the employees about the assignment of responsibilities and, more importantly, allows for the relationships to be more sustainable and creates more “affection”: “You have a more of a love for your employer than you do, if that makes sense, and affection” (I18). The latter definition, used by one of the interviewees, evidences that academic-university relationships can be viewed through the lens of personal relationships. This can be supported by the PC theory which states that the concept of PC is applicable to any exchange

relationship wherein two parties trade things of value including marital relationships (Rousseau et al., 2013). This implies greater degree of affection possible and, at the same time, increased probability of leaving the relationships in case a breach or violation happens.

In addition, the research highlights the fact that the university-academic relationships have undergone transformation due to the prolonged impact of the pandemic provoked RW. Flexibility experienced during the lockdown is now an integral part of the academics' PC. It is expected now that the administrative and research tasks of the academic work will be performed remotely, while the teaching part is almost unanimously said to be beneficial ("enjoyed", "fun") when conducted face to face.

Having said that, the researcher emphasises throughout this work the importance of maintaining the balance of interests between the parties as it is essential for sustainability of any relationships. This especially concerns the relationships where the ethical guidelines are not pronounced yet as is the case with being unseen or not being physically present during the RW. With the flexibility requirement being prominent within the after-pandemic PC the matter of developing such ethical guidelines is one of the crucial factors to ensure greater trust and transparency. For this reason, it is one of the main recommendations developed as a result of this study.

Notably, it is imperative that the ethical guidelines be developed and implemented to align with the elements of remote working. The ethical guidelines must promote professionalism, establish professional boundaries, and establish working relationships that can contribute to addressing the academic challenges that are associated with remote delivery of educational content to help the sector thrive and meet the targeted goals.

Next, the current findings show that academics have mixed experiences with regard to productivity while working remotely. For instance, some educators surpassed their targets due to working remotely. On the other hand, other academics reported remote working as a paradigm shift that created imbalances and therefore should not be ignored and must be incorporated into the updated work policies. So, the research highlights the common grounds on which such policies can be based on.

In addition, the employers must consider the aspects of job satisfaction, work-life balance, morale, stress and other elements of PC that can contribute to cultivating high- quality socioemotional relationships at work as the cases examined showed that an array of challenges might emanate from working from home. Most importantly, it is expected that such common salient beneficiaries as students and colleagues and the ethical values of fairness and trust as well as need for sustaining flexibility are catered for. Therefore, while responding to the paradigm shift to virtual delivery of the educational content in a HE setting, the grounds for which the learners will benefit must also be considered. Improving the PC between the employers and the educators would have a positive side effect of addressing the concerns for the learners. The focus put on PC for the educators would also consider the barriers and challenges to learning and delivery of content virtually which should not be another obstacle that affects the morale, satisfaction, and self-esteem for the educators. The overall goal is to create a seamless working and learning environment for the involved stakeholders (Palumbo, 2020). Thus, incorporating the paradigm shift and the new perspectives about an ideal workplace for the academics while considering the other stakeholders should inform the development of work policies.

Academics are the universities' crucial asset, yet it may remain untapped or ill-understood (Millward and Kyriakidou, 2004) especially when the transition and change in the industry dynamics are not properly captured in the management procedures. Therefore, the universities must remain open to adjusting their policies to reflect the new demands.

One way to do this is through understanding the psychological contracts of the employees which serves a mediating role and therefore is able to reconcile the parties when the perspectives and trajectory shift as a result of disruptions like COVID-19 pandemic. The data gathered proved that employees find it complicated to go back to physical offices fully after tasting virtual work. At the same time, an institution is able to reach more students all over the world beyond those who can attend the institutions physically. So, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the predicted shift into the virtual delivery of higher education and for every transition to be effective, there is the need to know what is needed to make the transition beneficial for all the parties concerned. The current research's underlying objective is to assist in this process of further transitioning by providing research evidence and greater clarity about the academics' psychological contracts to manage those PCs so that the education sector enjoys the benefits of the remote employment arrangements.

The other consideration stems from the fact that an individual's PC represents perception-based and therefore highly subjective experience (Rousseau et al., 1996; Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003). For this reason, it needs to be managed and maintained on an individual level which has been repeatedly emphasised by the participants. Individualized response to PC shifts based on subjective experience should consider the working environment that is created from the remote working station and a physical location. The findings of the present research can be confirmed by the

diverse findings about the impact and benefits of working remotely among the employees (e.g., Hamouche, 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Watermeyer et al., 2021 and others). The differences in experiences invoke the need for individualized or personalized working relations between the educational institutions and the involved educator. It is important to do so to eliminate the risks of a blanket approach to developing work policies that do not reflect the diversity of the PC contextualities inherent in an academic's situation.

The collective or normative level management as set by Millward and Kyriakidou (2004) should establish and facilitate a general framework for these deeper individual level interactions especially throughout the crisis when wellbeing becomes a cornerstone theme in people's everyday agenda. The normative level measures aimed at improving PC must be, first of all, reflected in all three aspects of recovery phase of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as in preparation for future crises:

1. Workplace disaster preparedness which should be reflected in the emergency plans according to the World Health Organisation.
2. Supportive workplace policies and resilience programs.
3. Social capital which implies improvement of wellbeing via positive relationships, trust and reciprocity (Pacheco et al., 2020).

In the after-crisis circumstances, the appropriate policies would decrease the chances of unfair instances that are detrimental to trust and the overall PC and thus improve the HR strategies of the universities by making them more just and PC or relationship oriented.

Flexible working, as one of the greatest demands expressed allows employees to make changes in tasks, the environment, and work roles, to be proactive, and to engage in self-directed behaviours which improves workplace

wellbeing and reduce stress (Ingusci et al., 2021). However, it does require adequate management to ensure balance of interests which involves addressing such issues revealed as, for instance, degree of autonomy of the remote workers, ethics of taking breaks while being unseen, response times, appropriate timetabling of the increased workload, online meetings etc. In the light of the recent biggest ever UK university staff strikes (as of November-December 2022) this study represents a timely and demanded findings that are meant to ease the challenges of the employers to maintain high PC standards with their academics and thus ease accumulated tension.

Summary

The present research makes a significant contribution to the existing knowledge on the psychological contract of remote workers, specifically focusing on the unprecedented nearly two-year-long period of enforced remote working experienced by such a labour-intensive professions as higher education academics. The primary aim of this study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between academics and universities during this crisis-induced remote working period. Through the collection and analysis of qualitative data within the PC framework, this research successfully achieves its objective.

A key contribution of this study is the identification and exploration of the PC content of academics, which is based on an expanded framework. By adopting an ideology-infused approach inspired by Thompson and Bunderson (2003), the study captures the depth and breadth of the collected data, surpassing the limitations of traditional bidimensional approaches. Furthermore, this research addresses a critique raised by previous literature

regarding the prevalence of positivist methodologies, providing an in-depth examination that fills this epistemological void.

The data analysis reveals a transformation in the academics' PC, shedding light on the foundations and components of the "new norm" PC that extends beyond crisis circumstances. The study's conclusions acknowledge the challenges of meeting employees' expectations, particularly in areas outside the direct control of organisations highlighting the importance of distinguishing areas that influence the attribution of responsibilities, as suggested by the PC theory. Therefore, an informed and balanced approach is recommended, emphasizing effective communication and dialogue to maintain high PC standards. Additionally, the research investigates the role of wellbeing in the PC, highlighting the challenges and benefits experienced in this context.

Thus the findings of this study provide a science-backed basis for developing short-, mid-, and long-term plans for higher education institutions, including crisis response measures. In contrast to previous research that primarily focused on transactional and relational approaches, this study shifts the spotlight to the value-based approach. This perspective effectively captures and explains the phenomenon under study and offers empirical insights that can inform policy, practice, and further research in the field of higher education and beyond.

References

1. Abdalla, M.J., Said, H., Ali, L., Ali, F., Chen, X., 2021. COVID-19 and unpaid leave: Impacts of psychological contract breach on organizational distrust and turnover intention: Mediating role of emotional exhaustion. *Tourism Management Perspectives* 39, 100854. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100854>
2. Abdullah, N.A.A., Rahmat, N.H., Zawawi, F.Z., Khamsah, M.A.N., Anuarsham, A.H., 2020. Coping with post-COVID: can work from home be a new norm? *European Journal of Social Sciences Studies* 5. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejsss.v5i6.933>
3. Abu-Doleh, J.D., Hammou, M.D., 2015. The impact of psychological contract breach on organizational outcomes: the moderating role of personal beliefs. *Journal of Competitiveness Studies* 23, 34–55.
4. Ahmad, M.I., Firman, K.P., Smith, H.P., Smith, A.P., 2018. Psychological Contract Fulfilment and Well-being. *ASSRJ* 5. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.512.5758>
5. Ahmed, E., 2014. Effects of Psychological Contract Breach, Ethical Leadership and Supervisors' Fairness on Employees' Performance and Wellbeing. *WJM* 5, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.21102/wjm.2014.09.52.01>
6. Ahmed, J.U., Ahmed, K.U., Shimul, Md.A.S., Zuñiga, R., 2015. Managing Strategies for Higher Education Institutions in the UK: An Overview. *Higher Education for the Future* 2, 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631114558189>
7. Alomyan, H., 2021. The Impact of Distance Learning on the Psychology and Learning of University Students during the Covid-19 Pandemic. *INT J INSTRUCTION* 14, 585–606. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14434a>
8. Anderson, A.J., Kaplan, S.A., Vega, R.P., 2015. The impact of telework on emotional experience: When, and for whom, does telework improve daily affective well-being? *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 24, 882–897. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2014.966086>
9. Anna Dabrowski, 2020. Teacher Wellbeing During a Pandemic: Surviving or Thriving? *SER* 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.37256/ser.212021588>
10. Anstiss, T., Passmore, J., 2017. *The Routledge Companion to Wellbeing at Work* Ed. by Cooper C. and Leiter M. Taylor & Francis.
11. Argyris, C., 1960. *Understanding organizational behavior*. Dorsey, Oxford, England.

12. Ariel Cascio, Lee, E., Vaudrin, N., Freedman, D., 2019. A Team-based Approach to Open Coding: Considerations for Creating Intercoder Consensus. *Field Methods* 31. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X19838237>
13. Aristeidou, M., Cross, S., 2021. Disrupted distance learning: the impact of Covid-19 on study habits of distance learning university students. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning* 36, 263–282. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2021.1973400>
14. Armitage, A., Keeble-Ramsay, D., 2015. High Performance and Wellbeing at Work – what can HRD learn about the links?
15. Arunachalam, T., 2020. The interplay of psychological contract breach, stress and job outcomes during organizational restructuring. *Industrial and Commercial Training* 53, 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-03-2020-0026>
16. Aselage, J., Eisenberger, R., 2003. Perceived organizational support and psychological contracts: a theoretical integration. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 24, 491–509. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.211>
17. Avey, J., Luthans, F., Youssef M., C., 2010. The Additive Value of Positive Psychological Capital in Predicting Work Attitudes and Behaviors. *Journal of Management* 36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308329961>
18. Baptiste, R.N., 2008. Tightening the link between employee wellbeing at work and performance: A new dimension for HRM. *Management Decision* 46, 284–309. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740810854168>
19. Barbieri, B., 2018. One perception, two perspectives: measuring psychological contract dimensionality through the psychological contract content questionnaire. 25, 27.
20. Barua, A., 2013. Methods for decision-making in survey questionnaires based on Likert scale. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research* 5.
21. Bellou, V., 2006. Psychological contract assessment after a major organizational change: The case of mergers and acquisitions. *Employee Relations* 29, 68–88. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01425450710714487>
22. Bergdahl, N., Nouri, J., 2021. Covid-19 and Crisis-Prompted Distance Education in Sweden. *Tech Know Learn* 26, 443–459. [https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09470-](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-020-09470-6)

23. Blau, P., 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Wiley, New York, NY, USA.
24. Botha, L., Steyn, R., 2020. Psychological contract breach and innovative work behaviour: Systematic literature review. *The Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management* 12.
<https://doi.org/10.4102/sajesbm.v12i1.333>
25. Braganza, A., Chen, W., Canhoto, A., Sap, S., 2020. Productive employment and decent work: The impact of AI adoption on psychological contracts, job engagement and employee trust. *Journal of Business Research*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.08.018>
26. Brooks, S.K., Webster, R.K., Smith, L.E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., Rubin, G.J., 2020. The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet* 395, 912–920. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)
27. Burns, S., Cruikshanks, D.R., 2017. Evaluating Independently Licensed Counselors' Articulation of Professional Identity Using Structural Coding. *TPC* 7, 185–207.
<https://doi.org/10.15241/sb.7.2.185>
28. Cappelli, P., 2000. *The New Deal at Work* 76, 27.
29. Carey, J., Pera, A., Balica, R., 2020. Emotional Fatigue, Psychological Distress, and Clinically Significant Depression Associated with Being a COVID-19 Frontline Healthcare Worker. *Psychosoc. Issues Hum. Resour. Manag.* 8, 27–36.
<https://doi.org/10.22381/PIHRM8220203>
30. Carson, D., Gilmore, A., Perry, C., Gronhaug, K., 2001. *Qualitative Marketing Research*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209625>
31. Cassar, V., Buttigieg, S. (Alexandra), 2014. Psychological contract breach, organizational justice and emotional well-being. *Personnel Review*.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2013-0061>
32. Cassar, V., Buttigieg, S.C., Briner, R.B., 2013. Causal explanations of psychological contract breach characteristics. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal* 16, 85–106.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0094949>
33. Chanana, N., Sangeeta, 2021. Employee engagement practices during COVID-19 lockdown. *Journal of Public Affairs* 21, e2508. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.2508>

34. Chaudhry, A., Tekleab, A., 2013. A Social Exchange Model of Psychological Contract Fulfillment: Where Do Promises, Expectations, LMX, and POS Fit In? *Organization Management Journal* 10, 158–171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15416518.2013.831701>
35. Chong, S., Huang, Y., Chang, C.-H. (Daisy), 2020. Supporting interdependent telework employees: A moderated-mediation model linking daily COVID-19 task setbacks to next-day work withdrawal. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 105, 1408. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000843>
36. Collins, A.M., Cartwright, S., Hislop, D., 2013. Homeworking: negotiating the psychological contract. *Human Resource Management Journal* 23, 211–225. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2012.00200.x>
37. Conway, N., Briner, R., 2011. Understanding Psychological Contract at Work: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Research. *Understanding Psychological Contracts at Work: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Research* 1–244. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199280643.001.0001>
38. Conway, N., Briner, R.B., 2005. *Understanding Psychological Contracts at Work: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Research*. OUP Oxford.
39. Coyle-Shapiro, J., Kessler, I., 2000. Consequences Of The Psychological Contract For The Employment Relationship: A Large Scale Survey*. *Journal of Management Studies* 37, 903–930. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6486.00210>
40. Coyle-Shapiro, J., Parzefall, M.-R., 2008. *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Behavior: Volume One: Micro Approaches*. SAGE.
41. Coyle-Shapiro, J.A.-M., 2002. A psychological contract perspective on organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 23, 927–946. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.173>
42. Coyle-Shapiro, J.A.-M., Pereira Costa, S., Doden, W., Chang, C., 2019. Psychological Contracts: Past, Present, and Future. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 6, 145–169. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012218-015212>
43. Creswell, J., 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Third ed. ed. SAGE Publications.

44. Creswell, J., Poth, C., 2016. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design [WWW Document]. SAGE Publications Ltd. URL <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/qualitative-inquiry-and-research-design/book246896> (accessed 3.7.21).
45. Creswell, J.W., 2012. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. SAGE Publications.
46. Croasmun, J.T., Ostrom, L., 2011. Using Likert-Type Scales in the Social Sciences 4.
47. Cropanzano, R., Mitchell, M.S., 2005. Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management* 31, 874–900.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602>
48. Crowe, R., Middleton, C., 2012. Women, Smartphones and the Workplace. *Feminist Media Studies* 12, 560–569. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.741872>
49. Cruise, S., Lewis, C., Mc Guckin, C., 2006. Internal consistency, reliability, and temporal stability of the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire short-form: Test-retest data over two weeks. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal* 34, 123–126. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2006.34.2.123>
50. Cullinane, N., Dundon, T., 2006. The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews* 8, 113–129.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2006.00123.x>
51. Daneci-Patrau, D., 2011. Formal Communication in Organisation. *Economics, Management, and Financial Markets* Volume 6(1), 487–497.
52. Daniels, K., 2000. Measures of five aspects of affective well-being at work. *Human Relations* 53, 275–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/a010564>
53. Danna, K., Griffin, R., 1999. Health and Well-Being in the Workplace: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature. *Journal of Management - J MANAGE* 25, 357–384.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639902500305>
54. Davidson, A.R., Jaccard, J.J., Triandis, H.C., Morales, M.L., Diaz-Guerrero, R., 1976. Cross-cultural model testing: toward a solution of the etic-emic dilemma. *International Journal of Psychology* 11, 1–13.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00207597608247343>
55. Davidson, J., 2000. A phenomenology of fear: Merleau-Ponty and agoraphobic life-worlds: This paper is dedicated to Jim Davidson, 1965–2000. *Sociology of Health & Illness* 22, 640–660. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9566.00224>

56. Dawes, J., 2008. Do Data Characteristics Change According to the Number of Scale Points Used? An Experiment Using 5-Point, 7-Point and 10-Point Scales. *International Journal of Market Research* 50, 61–104.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/147078530805000106>
57. Daymon, C., Holloway, I., 2002. *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communications*. Routledge. Taylor and Francis Group. London and New York
58. Deas, A., Coetzee, M., 2022. A value-oriented psychological contract: Generational differences amidst a global pandemic. *Frontiers in Psychology* 13.
59. DelCampo, R.G., 2007. Understanding the psychological contract: a direction for the future. *Management Research News* 30, 432–440.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/01409170710751926>
60. Dennerlein, J.T., Burke, L., Sabbath, E.L., Williams, J.A.R., Peters, S.E., Wallace, L., Karapanos, M., Sorensen, G., 2020. An Integrative Total Worker Health Framework for Keeping Workers Safe and Healthy During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Hum Factors* 62, 689–696. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018720820932699>
61. Denzin, N., Lincoln, Y., 2011. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research*. Fourth edition. Thousand Oaks : SAGE, [2011] ©2011.
62. Dhanpat, N., 2021. Psychological Contract Psychological contracts: What to Expect?, in: Coetzee, M., Deas, A. (Eds.), *Redefining the Psychological Contract in the Digital Era: Issues for Research and Practice*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 9–36. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-63864-1_2
63. Diab-Bahman, R., Al-Enzi, A., 2020. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on conventional work settings. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 40, 909–927. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-07-2020-0262>
64. Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., Sanders, L., 2012. The challenge of defining wellbeing. *Intnl. J. Wellbeing* 2, 222–235. <https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v2i3.4>
65. Dulock, H.L., 1993. Research Design: Descriptive Research. *J Pediatr Oncol Nurs* 10, 154–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104345429301000406>
66. Duran, F., Woodhams, J., Bishopp, D., 2019. An Interview Study of the Experiences of Police Officers in Regard to Psychological Contract and Wellbeing. *J Police Crim Psych* 34, 184–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9275-z>

67. Dutton, J.E., Dukerich, J.M., 1991. Keeping an eye on the mirror: Image and identity in organizational adaptation. *Academy of Management Journal* 34, 517–554.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/256405>
68. Eisner, E.W., 2017. *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Inquiry and the Enhancement of Educational Practice*. Teachers College Press.
69. Elmagrhi, M.H., Ntim, C.G., 2022. Vice-Chancellor Pay and Performance: The Moderating Effect of Vice-Chancellor Characteristics. *Work, Employment and Society* 09500170221111366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221111366>
70. Encyclopedia Britannica [WWW Document], 2021. Philosophy | Definition, Systems, Fields, Schools, & Biographies, Encyclopedia Britannica. URL <https://www.britannica.com/topic/philosophy> (accessed 3.23.21).
71. Fisher, C.D., 2014. Conceptualizing and Measuring Wellbeing at Work, in: *Wellbeing*. American Cancer Society, pp. 1–25.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118539415.wbwell018>
72. Flood, A., 2010. Understanding phenomenology [WWW Document].
<https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2010.01.17.2.7.c7457>
73. Franken, E., Bentley, T., Shafaei, A., Farr-Wharton, B., Onnis, L., Omari, M., 2021. Forced flexibility and remote working: opportunities and challenges in the new normal. *Journal of Management & Organization* 27, 1131–1149.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2021.40>
74. Freese, C., Schalk, R., 2008. How to Measure the Psychological Contract? A Critical Criteria-Based Review of Measures. *South African Journal of Psychology* 38, 269–286. <https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800202>
75. Frijda, N.H., 1988. The laws of emotion. *American Psychologist* 43, 349–358.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.43.5.349>
76. Giacalone, R.A., Rosenfeld, P., 2013. *Impression Management in the Organization*. Psychology Press.
77. Goulding, C., 1999. Grounded Theory: some reflections on paradigm, procedures and misconceptions. *Grounded Theory* 26.
78. Gouldner, A.W., 1960. The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement. *American Sociological Review* 25, 161–178. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2092623>

79. GOV.UK report, 2021. Remote education research [WWW Document]. GOV.UK. URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/remote-education-research/remote-education-research> (accessed 12.12.21).
80. Gracia, F., Peiro, J., Ramos, J., Caballer, A., Silla, I., Guest, D., De Witte, H., De Cuyper, N., 2007. Psychological Contracts across Employment Situations, PSYCONES: Final report.
81. Grácio, A.J. dos S., Grácio, M.A.A., 2017. Plague: A Millenary Infectious Disease Reemerging in the XXI Century. *BioMed Research International* 2017, e5696542. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/5696542>
82. Greenberg, N., 2020. Mental health of health-care workers in the COVID-19 era. *Nat Rev Nephrol* 16, 425–426. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41581-020-0314-5>
83. Groenewald, T., 2004. A Phenomenological Research Design Illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3, 42–55. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690400300104>
84. Groves, R.M., Singer, E., Corning, A., 2000. Leverage-Saliency Theory of Survey Participation: Description and an Illustration. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 64, 299–308.
85. Guest, D.E., 2004. The Psychology of the Employment Relationship: An Analysis Based on the Psychological Contract. *Applied Psychology* 53, 541–555. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2004.00187.x>
86. Guest, D.E., 1998. Is the psychological contract worth taking seriously? *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 19, 649–664. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(1998\)19:1+<649::AID-JOB970>3.0.CO;2-T](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(1998)19:1+<649::AID-JOB970>3.0.CO;2-T)
87. Guest, D.E., Conway, N., 2002. Communicating the psychological contract: an employer perspective. *Human Resource Management Journal* 12, 22–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2002.tb00062.x>
88. Guest, G., Bunce, A., Johnson, L., 2006. How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods* 18, 59–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
89. Gulliver, A., Farrer, L., Bennett, K., Ali, K., Hellsing, A., Katruss, N., Griffiths, K.M., 2018. University staff experiences of students with mental health problems and their

- perceptions of staff training needs. *Journal of Mental Health* 27, 247–256.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2018.1466042>
90. Guoyan, S., Khaskheli, A., Raza, S.A., Khan, K.A., Hakim, F., 2021. Teachers' self-efficacy, mental well-being and continuance commitment of using learning management system during COVID-19 pandemic: a comparative study of Pakistan and Malaysia. *Interactive Learning Environments* 0, 1–23.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2021.1978503>
91. Hamouche, S., 2020. COVID-19 and employees' mental health: stressors, moderators and agenda for organizational actions. *Emerald Open Research* 2, 15.
<https://doi.org/10.35241/emeraldopenres.13550.1>
92. Hansen, S., 2020. Does the COVID-19 Outbreak Constitute a Force Majeure Event? A Pandemic Impact on Construction Contracts. *Journal of the Civil Engineering Forum* 6, 201. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jcef.54997>
93. Hasson, F., Keeney, S., McKenna, H., 2000. Research guidelines for the Delphi survey technique. *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 32, 1008–1015.
<https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.t01-1-01567.x>
94. Henderson, D., Wayne, S., Shore, L., Bommer, W., Tetrick, L., 2008. Leader-Member Exchange, Differentiation, and Psychological Contract Fulfillment: A Multilevel Examination. *The Journal of Applied Psychology* 93, 1208–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012678>
95. Hernandez, Y.A.T., 2020. Remote Workers. What are we Missing and Why is it Important during the Covid19 Lockdown? *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* Publish Ahead of Print. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000002018>
96. Herrera, J., De Las Heras-Rosas, C., 2021. The Organizational Commitment in the Company and Its Relationship with the Psychological Contract. *Frontiers in Psychology* 11.
97. Herriot, P., Manning, W.E.G., Kidd, J.M., 1997. The Content of the Psychological Contract. *British Journal of Management* 8, 151–162. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.0047>
98. HESA Bulletin, 2023. Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK, 2021/22 | HESA (Statistical Bulletin). URL: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/17-01-2023/sb264-higher-education-staff-statistics#how-many> (accessed 06.16.2022)

99. Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK, 2018/19 | HESA [WWW Document], n.d. URL <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/23-01-2020/sb256-higher-education-staff-statistics> (accessed 10.18.21).
100. Hills, P., Argyle, M., 2002. The Oxford Happiness Questionnaire: a compact scale for the measurement of psychological well-being. *Personality and Individual Differences* 33, 1073–1082. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869\(01\)00213-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-8869(01)00213-6)
101. Howard, E., Khan, A., Lockyer, C., 2021. Learning during the pandemic: review of research from England [WWW Document]. GOV.UK. URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-during-the-pandemic/learning-during-the-pandemic-review-of-research-from-england> (accessed 11.8.21).
102. Howitt, D., 2016. Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods in Psychology eBook PDF. Pearson Higher Ed.
103. Hycner, R.H., 1985. Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. *Hum Stud* 8, 279–303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142995>
104. Ingusci, E., Signore, F., Giancaspro, M.L., Manuti, A., Molino, M., Russo, V., Zito, M., Cortese, C.G., 2021. Workload, Techno Overload, and Behavioral Stress During COVID-19 Emergency: The Role of Job Crafting in Remote Workers. *Frontiers in Psychology* 12.
105. Irawanto, D.W., Novianti, K.R., Roz, K., 2021. Work from Home: Measuring Satisfaction between Work–Life Balance and Work Stress during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia. *Economies* 9, 96. <https://doi.org/10.3390/economies9030096>
106. Jaiswal, A., Arun, C.J., 2020. Unlocking the COVID-19 Lockdown: Work from Home and Its Impact on Employees (preprint). In Review. <https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-34556/v1>
107. Jick, T.D., 1979. Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 24, 602–611. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2392366>
108. Jones, A., 2001. Some experiences of professional practice and beneficial changes derived from clinical supervision by community Macmillan nurses. *European Journal of Cancer Care* 10, 21–30. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2354.2001.00209.x>

109. Karani, A., Deshpande, R., Mall, S., Jayswal, M., 2021. Testing the link between psychological contract, innovative behavior and multidimensional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 42, 509–525. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-02-2021-0032>
110. Katou, A.A., Budhwar, P.S., 2012. The Link Between HR Practices, Psychological Contract Fulfillment, and Organizational Performance: The Case of the Greek Service Sector. *Thunderbird Int'l Bus Rev* 54, 793–809. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21504>
111. Kernohan, D., 2020. Which universities are moving to remote teaching. WONKHE. URL: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/which-universities-are-moving-to-remote-teaching/> (accessed 11.26.2021)
112. Keyes, C.L.M., 2002. The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 43, 207–222. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197>
113. Khan, S.N., 2014. Qualitative Research Method - Phenomenology. *ASS* 10, p298. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v10n21p298>
114. Kossek, E.E., Gettings, P., Misra, K., 2021. The Future of Flexibility at Work.
115. Kost, D., Fieseler, C., Wong, S.I., 2020. Boundaryless careers in the gig economy: An oxymoron? *Human Resource Management Journal* 30, 100–113. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12265>
116. Lades, L.K., Laffan, K., Daly, M., Delaney, L., 2020. Daily emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. *British Journal of Health Psychology* 25, 902–911. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12450>
117. Lambert, L.S., Edwards, J.R., Cable, D.M., 2003. Breach and Fulfillment of the Psychological Contract: A Comparison of Traditional and Expanded Views. *Personnel Psychology* 56, 895–934. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00244.x>
118. Landi, F., Barillaro, C., Bellieni, A., Brandi, V., Carfi, A., D'Angelo, M., Fusco, D., Landi, G., Lo Monaco, R., Martone, A.M., Marzetti, E., Pagano, F., Pais, C., Russo, A., Salini, S., Tosato, M., Tummolo, A., Benvenuto, F., Bramato, G., Catalano, L., Ciciarello, F., Martis, I., Rocchi, S., Rota, E., Salerno, A., Tritto, M., Sgadari, A., Zuccalà, G., Bernabei, R., 2020. The New Challenge of Geriatrics: Saving Frail Older

- People from the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic Infection. *J Nutr Health Aging* 1–5.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12603-020-1356-x>
119. Langdridge, D., 2008. Phenomenology and Critical Social Psychology: Directions and Debates in Theory and Research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 2, 1126–1142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00114.x>
120. Lee, H.-W., Liu, C.-H., 2009. The relationship among achievement motivation, psychological contract and work attitudes. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal* 37, 321–328. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.2009.37.3.321>
121. Levinson, H., Price, C.R., Munden, K.J., Mandl, H.J., Solley, C.M., 1962. *Men, Management, and Mental Health*: Harvard University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674424746>
122. Lindorff, M., Worrall, L., Cooper, C., 2011. Managers' well-being and perceptions of organizational change in the UK and Australia*. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 49, 233–254. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1038411111400264>
123. Longhurst, R., 2016. Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups. In: Clifford N., Cope M., Gillespie T., French S. ed *Key Methods in Geography*. Edition 3. SAGE.
124. Lopez, K.A., Willis, D.G., 2004. Descriptive Versus Interpretive Phenomenology: Their Contributions to Nursing Knowledge. *Qual Health Res* 14, 726–735. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638>
125. Lopez, P.D., Fuiks, K., 2021. How COVID-19 is shifting psychological contracts within organizations. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 14, 45–49.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2021.59>
126. López Peláez, A., Erro-Garcés, A., Pinilla García, F.J., Kiriakou, D., 2021. Working in the 21st Century. The Coronavirus Crisis: A Driver of Digitalisation, Teleworking, and Innovation, with Unintended Social Consequences. *Information* 12, 377. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info12090377>
127. Lund, S., Madgavkar, A., Manyika, J., Smit, S., 2020. What's next for remote work: An analysis of 2,000 tasks, 800 jobs, and nine countries. McKinsey Global Institute.

128. Lutgen-Sandvik, P., 2003. The Communicative Cycle Of Employee Emotional Abuse: Generation and Regeneration of Workplace Mistreatment. *Management Communication Quarterly* 16, 471–501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318903251627>
129. Mala, W.A., 2020. How COVID-19 Changes the HRM Practices (Adapting One HR Strategy May Not Fit to All). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3736719>
130. Matthews, A., McLinden, M., Greenway, C., 2021. Rising to the pedagogical challenges of the Fourth Industrial Age in the university of the future: an integrated model of scholarship. *Higher Education Pedagogies* 6, 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2020.1866440>
131. Matua, G.A., Van Der Wal, D.M., 2015. Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches. *Nurse Res* 22, 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.7748/nr.22.6.22.e1344>
132. Melnick, H., Darling-Hammond, L., 2020. Reopening Schools in the Context of COVID-19: Health and Safety Guidelines From Other Countries (Policy Brief). Learnign Policy Institute, CA, USA.
133. Merriam, S.B., 1988. Case study research in education: A qualitative approach, *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, US.
134. Mi, L., Zhao, J., Xu, T., Yang, H., Lv, T., Shang, K., Qiao, Y., Zhang, Z., 2021. How does COVID-19 emergency cognition influence public pro-environmental behavioral intentions? An affective event perspective. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling* 168, 105467. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2021.105467>
135. Millward, L., Kyriakidou, O., 2004. Linking pre- and post-merger identities through the concept of career. *Career Development International* 9, 12–27. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410518110>
136. Mishra, L., Gupta, T., Shree, A., 2020. Online teaching-learning in higher education during lockdown period of COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Educational Research Open* 1, 100012. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2020.100012>
137. Molino, M., Ingusci, E., Signore, F., Manuti, A., Giancaspro, M.L., Russo, V., Zito, M., Cortese, C.G., 2020. Wellbeing Costs of Technology Use during Covid-19 Remote Working: An Investigation Using the Italian Translation of the Technostress Creators Scale. *Sustainability* 12, 5911. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12155911>

138. Morgan, D.L., 1998. Practical strategies for combining qualitative and quantitative methods: applications to health research. *Qual Health Res* 8, 362–376. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973239800800307>
139. Morrison, E.W., Robinson, S.L., 1997. When Employees Feel Betrayed: A Model of How Psychological Contract Violation Develops. *The Academy of Management Review* 22, 226–256. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259230>
140. Morrison-Smith, S., Ruiz, J., 2020. Challenges and barriers in virtual teams: a literature review. *SN Appl. Sci.* 2, 1096. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42452-020-2801-5>
141. Morsch, J., van Dijk, D., Kodden, B., 2020. The Impact of Perceived Psychological Contract Breach, Abusive Supervision, and Silence on Employee Well-being. *JABE* 22. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jabe.v22i2.2799>
142. Nardi, B.A., Whittaker, S., Bradner, E., 2000. Interaction and outeraction: instant messaging in action, in: *Proceedings of the 2000 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work - CSCW '00*. Presented at the the 2000 ACM conference, ACM Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States, pp. 79–88. <https://doi.org/10.1145/358916.358975>
143. Nemoto, T., Beglar, D., 2014. Developing Likert-Scale Questionnaires 8. in N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2013 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.
144. Neuwirth, L.S., Jović, S., Mukherji, B.R., 2020. Reimagining higher education during and post-COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education* 1477971420947738. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971420947738>
145. Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E., Moules, N.J., 2017. Thematic Analysis: Striving to Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, 1609406917733847. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>
146. O'Donohue, W., Nelson, L., 2009. The Role of Ethical Values in an Expanded Psychological Contract. *J Bus Ethics* 90, 251–263. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0040-1>
147. Office for National Statistics, 2020. Coronavirus and homeworking in the UK [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employment>

andemployeetypes/bulletins/coronavirusandhomeworkingintheuk/april2020
(accessed 3.18.21).

148. Oliveira, Á.F., Gomide Júnior, S., Poli, B.V.S., 2020. ANTECEDENTS OF WELL-BEING AT WORK: TRUST AND PEOPLE MANAGEMENT POLICIES. *RAM, Rev. Adm. Mackenzie* 21, eRAMD200105. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-6971/eramd200105>
149. Pacheco, T., Coulombe, S., Khalil, C., Meunier, S., Doucerain, M., Auger, É., Cox, E., 2020. Job security and the promotion of workers' wellbeing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic: A study with Canadian workers one to two weeks after the initiation of social distancing measures. *International Journal of Wellbeing* 10.
150. Palinkas, L.A., Horwitz, S.M., Green, C.A., Wisdom, J.P., Duan, N., Hoagwood, K., 2015. Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Adm Policy Ment Health* 42, 533–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
151. Palumbo, R., 2020. Let me go to the office! An investigation into the side effects of working from home on work-life balance. *International Journal of Public Sector Management* 33, 771–790. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPSM-06-2020-0150>
152. Pereira, V., Behl, A., Jayawardena, N., Laker, B., Dwivedi, Y.K., Bhardwaj, S., 2022. The art of gamifying digital gig workers: a theoretical assessment of evaluating engagement and motivation. *Production Planning & Control* 0, 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537287.2022.2083524>
153. Pfefferbaum, B., North, C.S., 2020. Mental Health and the Covid-19 Pandemic. *New England Journal of Medicine* 383, 510–512. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJMp2008017>
154. Porter, L.W., Pearce, J.L., Tripoli, A.M., Lewis, K.M., 1998. Differential perceptions of employers' inducements: implications for psychological contracts. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 19, 769–782. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(1998\)19:1+<769::AID-JOB968>3.0.CO;2-1](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(1998)19:1+<769::AID-JOB968>3.0.CO;2-1)
155. Radice, H., 2013. How We Got Here: UK Higher Education under Neoliberalism. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 12, 407–418.
156. Riaz, A., 2013. Does Psychological Contract Breach Cause Exit or Voice in elearning Environment? Integrating Social Exchange Theory and Hirschman EVLN

- Theory (1970) in Virtual Environment. 3rd International Conference for e-learning and distance education. Riyadh 2013
157. Robinson, S.L., 1996. Trust and Breach of the Psychological Contract. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41, 574. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2393868>
 158. Robinson, S.L., Rousseau, D.M., 1994. Violating the psychological contract: Not the exception but the norm. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 15, 245–259. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030150306>
 159. Rodwell, J., Ellershaw, J., Flower, R., 2015. Fulfill psychological contract promises to manage in-demand employees. *Personnel Review* 44, 689–701. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-12-2013-0224>
 160. Rousseau, D., 1995. *Psychological Contracts in Organizations: Understanding Written and Unwritten Agreements*. Thousand Oaks, California. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452231594>
 161. Rousseau, D., McLean, P., 1993. The contracts of individuals and organizations. *Research in organizational behavior* 1–43.
 162. Rousseau, D., Tomprou, M., Montes, S., 2013. Psychological Contract Theory, in: *Encyclopedia of Management Theory*. SAGE Publications, Pace University, p. pp.635-639.
 163. Rousseau, D.M., 1990. New hire perceptions of their own and their employer's obligations: A study of psychological contracts. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 11, 389–400. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030110506>
 164. Rousseau, D.M., 1989. Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employ Respons Rights J* 2, 121–139. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01384942>
 165. Rousseau, D.M., Ridolfi, E., Hater, J., 1996. Changing the Deal while Keeping the People [and Executive Commentary]. *The Academy of Management Executive* (1993-2005) 10, 50–61.
 166. Rousseau, D.M., Tijoriwala, S.A., 1998. Assessing psychological contracts: issues, alternatives and measures. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 19, 679–695. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1379\(1998\)19:1+<679::AID-JOB971>3.0.CO;2-N](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1379(1998)19:1+<679::AID-JOB971>3.0.CO;2-N)
 167. Ryff, C.D., Keyes, C.L.M., 1995. The Structure of Psychological Well-Being Revisited 9. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1995, Vol. 69, No. 4, 719–727

168. Saldana, J., 2015. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* | SAGE Publications Inc, third. ed. Arizona State University, USA.
169. Sandelowski, M., 2000. Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis Techniques in Mixed-Method Studies. *Research in Nursing & Health* 23, 246–255. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X\(200006\)23:3<246::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-H](https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-240X(200006)23:3<246::AID-NUR9>3.0.CO;2-H)
170. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2019. *Research Methods for Business Students*. Pearson.
171. Saunders, M., Lewis, P., Thornhill, A., 2015. *Research Methods for Business Students PDF EBook*. Pearson Education, Limited, Harlow, UK.
172. Schall, M.C., Chen, P., 2022. Evidence-Based Strategies for Improving Occupational Safety and Health Among Teleworkers During and After the Coronavirus Pandemic. *Hum Factors* 64, 1404–1411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018720820984583>
173. Seligman, M.E.P., 2011. *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*, Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being. Free Press, New York, NY, US.
174. Sevastos, P., Smith, L., 1992. Evidence on the reliability and construct validity of Warr's (1990) well-being and mental health measures. *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology* 65, 33–49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8325.1992.tb00482.x>
175. Shen, Y., Schaubroeck, J.M., Zhao, L., Wu, L., 2019. Work Group Climate and Behavioral Responses to Psychological Contract Breach. *Frontiers in Psychology* 10.
176. Shirmohammadi, M., Au, W.C., Beigi, M., 2022. Remote work and work-life balance: Lessons learned from the covid-19 pandemic and suggestions for HRD practitioners. *Human Resource Development International* 25, 163–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2022.2047380>
177. Shore, L., Tetrick, L., 1994. The Psychological Contract as an Explanatory Framework in the Employment Relationship. *Trends in Organizational Behaviour* 1.
178. Singh, S., Wassenaar, D., 2016. Contextualising the role of the gatekeeper in social science research. *South African Journal of Bioethics and Law* 9, 42–46. <https://doi.org/10.7196/SAJBL.2016.v9i1.465>

179. Slade, M., Oades, L., Jarden, A., 2017. *Wellbeing, Recovery and Mental Health*. Cambridge University Press.
180. Soares, M.E., Mosquera, P., 2019. Fostering work engagement: The role of the psychological contract. *Journal of Business Research* 101, 469–476.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.01.003>
181. Stroebe, M., Schut, H., 2021. Bereavement in Times of COVID-19: A Review and Theoretical Framework. *Omega (Westport)* 82, 500–522.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222820966928>
182. Survey reveals the mental and physical health impacts of home working during Covid-19 [WWW Document], 2021. URL <https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/survey-reveals-the-mental-and-physical-health-impacts-of-home-working-during-covid-19.html> (accessed 1.26.22).
183. Swain, V.D., Saha, K., Abowd, G.D., Choudhury, M.D., 2020. Social Media and Ubiquitous Technologies for Remote Worker Wellbeing and Productivity in a Post-Pandemic World, in: 2020 IEEE Second International Conference on Cognitive Machine Intelligence (CogMI). Presented at the 2020 IEEE Second International Conference on Cognitive Machine Intelligence (CogMI), pp. 121–130.
<https://doi.org/10.1109/CogMI50398.2020.00025>
184. Swedberg, R., 2020. Exploratory Research, in: Elman, C., Gerring, J., Mahoney, J. (Eds.), *The Production of Knowledge: Enhancing Progress in Social Science*. Cambridge University Press.
185. Tabasum, F., Ghosh, N., 2021. Reinventing employee morale during Covid Pandemic: Study of psychological contract and job satisfaction of healthcare professionals. *International Journal of Financial, Accounting, and Management* 3, 259–274. <https://doi.org/10.35912/ijfam.v3i3.596>
186. Teddlie, C., Yu, F., 2007. Mixed Methods Sampling: A Typology With Examples. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 1, 77–100.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689806292430>
187. The Flex Study by Fuze, 2021. *The Flex Study: Global Findings on the Future of Flexible Work* [WWW Document]. URL https://www.fuze.com/files/documents/EN_Flex_report.pdf (accessed 1.26.22).

188. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Report, 2020. Supporting Resource: How UK higher education providers managed the shift to digital delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. URL: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/how-uk-higher-education-providers-managed-the-shift-to-digital-delivery-during-the-covid-19-pandemic.pdf> (accessed 11.08.2021)
189. Thompson, J.A., Bunderson, J.S., 2003. Violations of Principle: Ideological Currency in the Psychological Contract. *The Academy of Management Review* 28, 571–586. <https://doi.org/10.2307/30040748>
190. Tietze, S., Nadin, S., 2011. The psychological contract and the transition from office-based to home-based work. *Human Resource Management Journal* 21, 318–334. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2010.00137.x>
191. Turnley, W.H., Bolino, M., Lester, S., Bloodgood, J., 2003. The Impact of Psychological Contract Fulfillment on the Performance of In-Role and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. *Journal of Management* 29(2), 187–206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920630302900204>
192. Turnley, W.H., Feldman, D.C., 1999. The Impact of Psychological Contract Violations on Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect. *Human Relations* 52, 895–922. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001872679905200703>
193. UUK Report, 2021. Higher education in numbers [WWW Document]. Universities UK. URL <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/latest/insights-and-analysis/higher-education-numbers> (accessed 11.26.21).
194. Van de Ven, A.H., 2016. Grounding the research phenomenon. *Journal of Change Management* 16, 265–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2016.1230336>
195. Vantilborgh, T., Bidee, J., Pepermans, R., Willems, J., Huybrechts, G., Jegers, M., 2012. Effects of ideological and relational psychological contract breach and fulfilment on volunteers' work effort. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* iFirst, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2012.740170>
196. Veal A. J., 2005. *Business Research Methods: A Managerial Approach.*, 2nd ed. Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Education Australia.

197. Velavan, T.P., Meyer, C.G., 2020. The COVID-19 epidemic. *Trop Med Int Health* 25, 278–280. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tmi.13383>
198. Waizenegger, L., Thalmann, S., Sarigianni, C., Eckhardt, A., Kolb, D., 2016. From Isolation to Collaboration - How the Increasing Diffusion of Mobile Devices has Changed Practices of Knowledge Sharing in Non-Office Settings 19. *AISeL Research Papers*. 62.
199. Wallace, J., 2022. Making a healthy change: a historical analysis of workplace wellbeing. *Management & Organizational History* 17, 20–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449359.2022.2068152>
200. Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J., Parker, S.K., 2021. Achieving Effective Remote Working During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Work Design Perspective. *Applied Psychology* 70, 16–59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apps.12290>
201. Watermeyer, R., Crick, T., Knight, C., Goodall, J., 2021. COVID-19 and digital disruption in UK universities: afflictions and affordances of emergency online migration. *High Educ* 81, 623–641. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-020-00561-y>
202. Welsh, E., 2002. Dealing with Data: Using NVivo in the Qualitative Data Analysis Process. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3. <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-3.2.865>
203. Whitener, E.M., 1997. The impact of human resource activities on employee trust. *Human Resource Management Review* 7, 389–404. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822\(97\)90026-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-4822(97)90026-7)
204. Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., Charles, V., 2006. Anonymity and Confidentiality. Presented at the ESRC Research Methods Festival, University of Oxford, p. 17.
205. Williams, M., Moser, T., 2019. The Art of Coding and Thematic Exploration in Qualitative Research - ProQuest [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.proquest.com/openview/1fd39ea96611dee5025714c30820dc83/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=28202> (accessed 9.16.22).
206. Wilson, D.M., Punjani, S., Song, Q., Low, G., 2021. A Study to Understand the Impact of Bereavement Grief on the Workplace. *Omega (Westport)* 83, 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222819846419>

207. Wojnar, D.M., Swanson, K.M., 2007. Phenomenology: An Exploration. *J Holist Nurs* 25, 172–180. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0898010106295172>
208. Wong, P.T., Weiner, B., 1981. When people ask “why” questions, and the heuristics of attributional search. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 40, 650–663. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.40.4.650>
209. Wood, S., 2021. Is working from home the future of workplace wellbeing? [WWW Document]. Royal Society for Public Health [online]. URL <https://www.rsph.org.uk/about-us/news/is-working-from-home-the-future-of-workplace-wellbeing.html> (accessed 2.28.21).
210. Wright, T.A., Doherty, E.M., 1998. Organizational Behavior “Rediscovered” the Role of Emotional Well-Being. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 19, 481–485.
211. Yang, W., Chao, L., 2016. How Psychological Contract Breach Influences Organizational Identification and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Psychological Capital. *AJIBM* 06, 922–930. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2016.68089>
212. Zhao, H., Wayne, S.J., Glibkowski, B.C., Bravo, J., 2007. The Impact of Psychological Contract Breach on Work-Related Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. *Personnel Psychology* 60, 647–680. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00087.x>

Appendix A. Letter of Ethical Approval



College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom
www.brunel.ac.uk

25 March 2021

LETTER OF CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 25/03/2021 AND 31/12/2022

Applicant (s): Mrs Gulzhan Rysbekova

Project Title: Understanding the PC and wellbeing of the remotely working professionals during the disruptive period (of COVID-19) in the UK

Reference: 27600-LR-Mar/2021- 31914-1

Dear Mrs Gulzhan Rysbekova

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- **A14 – Recruitment – When sending out invitations to participate by email, ensure that you only use contact information which is publicly available or contact information which is available to you as part of your personal contacts/social media or professional network that you belong to. Please do not send mass recruitment emails.**
- **A18 - You should state what PC stands for at the start of your Participant Information Sheet.**
- **A18.1 – Consent - You do not need to include a Witness Statement section on your consent form unless your participants are unable to give informed consent e.g. if they are under 18 or otherwise vulnerable, neither of which appear to apply to your project.**
- **You are not required to resubmit your BREO form after making the changes listed above. Please make the changes and proceed with your research.**
- **Approval is given for remote (online/telephone) research activity only. Face-to-face activity and/or travel will require approval by way of an amendment.**
- **The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.**
- **In addition to the above, please ensure that you monitor and adhere to all up-to-date local and national Government health advice for the duration of your project.**

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, postars, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.



Professor David Gallear

Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Brunel University London

Appendix B. Demographic and Screening Questionnaire

1. Age ___under 25 ___25-35 ___35-45 ___45-55 ___over 55
2. Gender _____M _____F _____other
3. Ethnicity _____ religion _____
4. Occupation and position _____
5. Discipline you teach _____
6. How long have you worked at this organisation? _____years _____ months
7. Total duration of your remote working during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - _____ months
8. How long does your commuting to work usually take during the normal times?
 - _____ hours _____ minutes a day (both way)
9. Do you have any care responsibilities at home (e.g., childcare)?
 - _____ Yes _____ No
10. Are you living with your partner? ___ Yes ___ No _____ other
11. What personality do you think you have - more positive (optimistic, socially connected, stable, high self-esteem etc.) or more negative (pessimistic, socially disconnected, unstable, low self-esteem etc.)?
 - _____ more positive _____ more negative
12. Do you think the remote working arrangement during the COVID-19 was due to the uncontrollable and unforeseeable by the employer outside circumstances?
_____ Yes _____ No
13. Do you agree with the following statement "I am consciously aware and strongly believe that my employer is obliged to fulfil particular obligations and commitments in return for my efforts at work"?
 - _____ agree _____ do not agree

Appendix C. Likert Scale Questionnaire

Please indicate if the statements below feel true to you on a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 means 'Not at all' and 10 means 'Extremely'.

1	I feel proud to work in this organisation	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
2	My employer is a good employer and is committed to the wellbeing of employees	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
3	I have trust and confidence in my employer	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
4	The management is managing the organisation well	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
5	In general, I have a good psychological contract ¹ with my employer	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
6	I feel as if my psychological contract has been affected negatively (or breached) because of the remote working	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
7	My expectations and beliefs have been met by my employer	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
8	The promises made by my employer have been fulfilled	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
9	I have fulfilled the expectations and beliefs my employer had about me	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
10	The changes in my psychological contract with my employer have been impacting my wellbeing while working remotely	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
11	I was satisfied (enjoy / feel happy about) with my enforced remote working	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
12	I got a sense of achievement while working remotely	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
13	I felt negative emotions (stress, anxiety etc) while working remotely	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
14	The remote working weakened my work-life balance	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
15	I feel I have enough psychological, social and physical resources to meet my psychological, social and/or physical challenges of remote working	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_

¹ The term 'psychological contract' refers to unwritten / informal / implied individuals' expectations and beliefs e.g. "if I work from home my internet expenses should be compensated", or "if I get this done I will be promoted", or "if I work longer hours my efforts must be [somehow] acknowledged" etc.

Please consider yourself while working remotely and indicate to what extent the following statements feel true to you (1 meaning “not at all” and 10 – “Extremely”):

16	I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
17	I am intensely interested in other people	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
18	I feel that life is very rewarding	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
19	I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
20	I rarely wake up feeling rested	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
21	I am not particularly optimistic about the future	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
22	I find most things amusing	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
23	I am always committed and involved	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
24	Life is good	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
25	I do not think that the world is a good place	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
26	I laugh a lot	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
27	I am well satisfied about everything in my life	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
28	I don't think I look attractive	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
29	There is a gap between what I would like to do and what I have done	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
30	I am very happy	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
31	I find beauty in some things	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
32	I always have a cheerful effect on others	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
33	I can fit in everything I want to	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
34	I feel that I am not especially in control of my life	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
35	I feel able to take anything on	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
36	I feel fully mentally alert	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
37	I often experience joy and elation	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
38	I do not find it easy to make decisions	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
39	I do not have a particular sense of meaning and purpose in my life	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
40	I feel I have a great deal of energy	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
41	I usually have a good influence on events	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
42	I do not have fun with other people	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_

43	I don't feel particularly healthy	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_
44	I do not have particularly happy memories of the past	1_2_3_4_5_6_7_8_9_10_

Appendix D. Interview Questions

1. Describe your experience of remote working during the COVID-19 lockdown rules in the UK.
2. How has your psychological contract been affected during the remote working?
 - I. Describe your relationships with your employer during your remote working. Do you feel they have changed? Could you please explain this change that you feel? Has there been any breach?
 - II. Did the employer make you any explicit or implicit promises while you were on a remote working arrangement? If “Yes” what kind of promises and have they been fulfilled?
 - III. What expectations and beliefs did you have with regard to your employer while working remotely? Have they been met?
3. How did your psychological contract (expectations, beliefs and promises) during the pandemic differ from your psychological contract during the normal times?
4. What would you have done differently if you were your employer?
5. How did you feel about your effectiveness and in general about your fulfilment of the PC?
6. How did you feel about your wellbeing while working from home? Explain your emotions, attitudes, and behaviours.
7. How had the change in your psychological contract affected your wellbeing level?
8. In terms of RW what are your hopes for future?

Appendix E. Participant Recruiting Letter

Dear Prospective Research Participant,

My name is Gulzhan Rysbekova, I am a Doctoral Researcher at the Brunel Business School, Brunel University London, UK. I am currently performing research on remote working academics' psychological contract and wellbeing. Psychological contract is an implied, unwritten agreement between an employee and his or her employer which conveys reciprocal beliefs, expectations and promises. This study will seek to understand how employees experience remote working during the disruptive period of COVID-19 in the UK and how this impacted their psychological contract with their employers and their wellbeing.

By taking part in this research, you will help to advance knowledge in the area of business psychology and provide better understanding of how the companies can improve psychological contract and wellbeing of those who work remotely. The research methodology suggests conducting 60-min interviews, given the current circumstances they will be held online. The interview will be audio-recorded and will be anonymised immediately afterwards, so it would be impossible to identify you unless you instruct otherwise. You will be given an opportunity to be heard during the interview and to express your personal opinion on the experience that you have had during the lockdown.

There are fixed participation criteria for a person to be eligible to participate, he or she must: (1) normally work on campus (2) have worked remotely during the COVID-19 restrictions in the UK (3) be a member of academic staff within the higher education setting.

If you meet the above criteria and wish to participate please contact me via my email gulzhan.rysbekova@brunel.ac.uk and I will provide further details. Please feel free to share this letter with your friends or colleagues who are eligible and might be interested in taking part in this research.

Thank you very much,

Gulzhan

Appendix F. Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title

Psychological contract and wellbeing of the UK higher education academics during the COVID-19 prompted remote working

Invitation Paragraph

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me/us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the study?

The main aim of this study is to examine the psychological contract of the academics and their workplace wellbeing during the COVID-19 crisis prompted remote working.

The following 3 objectives have been identified to pursue this aim:

- Identify any changes in the psychological contract content due to the disruption and the subsequent remote working.
- Analyse the resulting psychological contract content of the remotely working academics: expectations with regard to both sides of the contract - the employer and the employee - from the employee's perspective.
- Establish if the identified expectations were met or unmet by the employer based on the employee's perceptions, i.e., if any psychological contract breach has occurred and how this along with disruption and remote working arrangements impacted on the workplace wellbeing.

Why have I been invited to participate?

The selection criteria for this research are as follows:

- Must be employed within a higher education setting,

- Must have worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK AND
- Must be physically working in the workplace environment during the normal times.

To the best of my knowledge, you satisfy all of the above criteria and therefore you have been invited to take part in this study. A sample of 30 participants is needed for this qualitative study.

Do I have to take part?

As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time up until 31/12/2022 and without having to give a reason. You can withdraw your data after your involvement has ended by the point at which your data is anonymised (this is because after anonymisation it would be impossible to identify your data).

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be interviewed once, and it will take about 50-60 minutes or longer but only if you decide so during the course of the interview. We will arrange time and date for our online interview which will be audio recorded. The data will be anonymised immediately after the interview.

Are there any lifestyle restrictions?

No, there are no any lifestyle restrictions.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no anticipated disadvantages or risks associated with taking part in this study. In case your remote working experience was unpleasant you may feel unpleasant emotions and discomfort when discussing the issue.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There is no intended benefit to the person from taking part in the study apart from being given an opportunity to be heard during the interview where you can reflect on your past

experience and share some thoughts or feelings.

Indirect benefits may include advancing the knowledge through your participation in the fields of business psychology, wellbeing, crisis management.

What if something goes wrong?

In a very unlikely situation if something goes wrong, the person to be contacted if you wish to complain about the experience should be the Chair of the College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (relevant contact details are provided – please see details at the end of this document)

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes, all information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential for the whole duration of the study. Any information about you which leaves the University will have all your identifying information removed. It would be impossible to identify any individual participant.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?

Yes, the interview will be recorded by the recording application on my computer. The recording will then be anonymised and the content analysis for the above outlined research purposes will be performed via the NVIVO software. The intended use of the recording is confined to the aims and objectives of the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be written up as part of my studies. They also can be used on future publications. You will not be identified in any report or publication unless you specifically request it.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by myself Gulzhan Rysbekova in conjunction with Brunel University London.

What are the indemnity arrangements?

Brunel University London provides appropriate insurance cover for research which has received ethical approval.

Who has reviewed the study?

University Research Ethics Committee Chair – Dr Derek Healy (Derek.Healy@brunel.ac.uk)

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee Chair – Professor David Gallear (David.Gallear@brunel.ac.uk)

Research Integrity

Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research.

Contacts:

Researcher name and details: Gulzhan Rysbekova (gulzhan.rysbekova@brunel.ac.uk)

Supervisors names and details: John Aston (john.aston@brunel.ac.uk) and Weifeng Chen (weifeng.chen@brunel.ac.uk)

Chair of the Research Ethics Committee: Dr Derek Healy (Derek.Healy@brunel.ac.uk)

Chair College of the Research Ethics Committee of Business, Arts and Social Sciences: Professor David Gallear (David.Gallear@brunel.ac.uk)

Appendix G. Consent Form

Psychological contract and wellbeing of the UK higher education academics during the COVID-19 prompted remote working

prepared by Gulzhan Rysbekova

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN 03/05/2021 AND 31/12/2023

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet.		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you understand that:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are free to withdraw your data from this study before it is anonymised • You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing • Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your rights • You can withdraw from this study at any time before 31/12/2022 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my interview being audio recorded	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been disclosed to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to take part in this study	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signature of research participant:	
Print name:	Date:

