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The psychological contract in social and health care: A narrative literature review

This article examines the psychological contract of social and health care workers. A psychological contract – a reciprocal unspoken contract between an employee and an organisation – is significant from the point of view of work behaviour and work attitudes. Earlier studies have shown that breaching a psychological contract decreases the employee's work dissatisfaction and weakens his/her commitment to the organisation. A fulfilled psychological contract, in turn, increases the employee's satisfaction, productivity, and commitment. The purpose of this literary review is to produce information on the content features of social and healthcare workers' psychological contract. In the content analysis, we draw attention to the descriptions of employees' expectations in relation to organisations presented in earlier studies. Based on the analysis, the psychological contract of social and health care workers is based on three factors: expertise, social cohesion, and involvement in the organisation. Both the employee's personal professional development and the development of the work community is essential in developing expertise. Expertise is strengthened by the employees' experience of reciprocal social cohesion, which is shown as a desire to work in a multi-professional way. The mutual support of colleagues is also important. Additionally, employees seek to be active in relation to the organisation. They expect the opportunity to participate in organisational development and decision-making. At the core of the social and health care worker's psychological contract is the employee's expertise, which is based on relations with the client.