

New Scholars

**“UNION YES”: THE MODERATING EFFECTS OF
UNION INSTRUMENTALITY ON PSYCHOLOGICAL
CONTRACT VIOLATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

Few empirical studies of psychological contracts have examined the role of unions and unfulfilled psychological contracts. This study has developed and tested a model proposing that union instrumentality moderates the relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and psychological contract violations (PCVs), and has investigated the mediating effects of such violations on the relationships between PCB and union commitment and trust in management ($n = 215$). Moderated regression analyses revealed that there was a significant interaction between PCB and union instrumentality in predicting PCVs. Specifically, the positive relationship between PCB and PCVs was weakened among employees endorsing high union instrumentality. Further, PCVs were associated with increased union commitment and decreased trust in management. Analyses also revealed that PCVs partially mediated the relationships between PCB and union commitment and trust in management. The importance of the findings is discussed and recommendations for future research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Psychological contracts are conceptualized as individual expectations regarding a possible future relationship between oneself and one's employer (McFarlane, Shore, & Tetrick, 1994; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1990, 1995). These expectations develop through interactive processes that include promises made during

the recruitment process, in addition to various human resource practices such as performance reviews, compensation systems, training and development, personnel manuals, and benefits (Rousseau & Greller, 1994; Sutton & Griffin, 2004). In short, psychological contracts are perceptions of mutuality and agreement regarding the conditions of the employment relationship (DelCampo, 2007). It is, however, important to recognize that multiple contract makers communicate these promises, in addition to the worker and the employing organization. These multiple contract makers include, for example, recruiters, managers, coworkers, or union representatives (Rousseau, 1995).

Although union density in the United States has reached record lows in recent years, with private sector union memberships currently at approximately 7% (Hirsch & McPherson, 2013), many sectors of the U.S. economy exhibit higher union density: these sectors include, for example, manufacturing, education, and the health care sector. Union density also varies greatly within the United States, with some states in the 30–40% range in certain private sectors, while public sector union density has remained relatively stable at around 40% since the late 1970s. Additionally, unionization and third-party representation continue to remain integral parts of the employment relationship in other parts of the world. In economies that not only rival but also exceed the United States in economic growth and development, union density remains high. Recent numbers put out by the Organization for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) indicate that union density remains steady at between 50% and 70% in the Scandinavian countries, at around 20% in Germany, and at almost 30% in Canada (OECD, 2013).

Only a few empirical studies of psychological contracts appear to have examined the role of unions with regard to unfulfilled contracts and the outcomes associated with them. Turnley et al. (2004) found in their study of 109 union employees that psychological contract breach was positively related to union commitment. Their study also revealed that union instrumentality moderated the relationship between psychological contract breach and union commitment, indicating that the relationship between psychological contract breach and union commitment is stronger when individuals perceive that their union is highly instrumental in protecting their rights and benefits. Further, De Witte et al. (2008) used a psychological contract perspective to examine the relationship between job insecurity, union support, and intention to resign from union membership. The authors found that job insecurity was perceived as a psychological contract violation and was associated with decreased support for unions among workers in three of the four European nations they sampled. The results of these studies should have triggered a series of studies examining the union's role in shaping the psychological contract, but that has not been the case.

As a result, the psychological contract literature remains incomplete without an understanding of how unions contribute to the formation of contracts, and how unions contribute to perceptions of contract breach. Research on psychological

contracts should also be of interest to scholars interested in unions and labor relations. The psychological contract construct offers unique opportunities to capture expectations and promises that are not included in the traditional employment contract, and this lens may help explain underlying, indiscernible, but critical benefits of union membership. The aim of this article is therefore to build on previous findings, but also to disentangle the relationship between psychological contract breach and violations. Specifically, this study examines how third-party representation impacts perceptions of psychological contract breach and violations, and how such violations impact worker trust in management and commitment to unions.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Psychological Contract Breach/Violations and Union Instrumentality

The psychological contract represents workers' beliefs about the reciprocal obligations that exist between them and their employing organization. The obligations are based on perceived promises and may or may not be recognized by agents of the organization (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Hence, the psychological contract represents a subjective interpretation of the employment relationship (Rousseau, 1995) and should not be confused with legal interpretations of what most people consider a contract. Nevertheless, psychological contracts are believed to influence both attitudes and behaviors at work (Wade-Benzoni, Rousseau, & Li, 2006). As noted by Cullinane and Dundon (2006), there has been an incredible surge of interest in psychological contracts in recent years, thanks to Rousseau's (1989, 1995, 2001) work. The construct, however, is not new and can be traced to Argyris's (1960) text on organizational behavior and a series of seminal works on social relations and social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1965, 1978).

Psychological contract breach (PCB) and psychological contract violations (PCVs) have been subjects of particular interest over the last couple of decades. While PCB is a cognitive recognition that a psychological contract has not been fulfilled by the organization (Rousseau, 1995), a PCV represents an emotional response that results from unmet contract expectations (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). PCB and PCVs are closely related constructs. Whereas PCB is the individual's recognition that promises, explicitly stated or implicitly communicated through organizational practices, have not been upheld, a PCV is an emotional response or feeling of injury that results from the employer's failure to comply with what the worker perceives to have been promised and may or may not follow the cognitive recognition of breach (Rousseau, 1995).

Researchers have examined the impact of PCB and PCVs on a vast number of organizational or individual outcomes. The findings of Gakovic and Tetrick

(2003) suggest that organizational failures to fulfill obligations are sources of emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction. Other studies have linked PCB and/or PCVs to outcomes such as detrimental organizational citizenship behaviors, increased intention to quit, and reduced organizational commitment, among others (e.g., Blomme, van Rheede, & Tromp, 2010; Chen, Tsui, & Zhong, 2008; Dulac et al., 2008; Grimmer & Oddy, 2007; Orvis, Dudley, & Cortina, 2008; Rigotti, 2009; Suazo, 2009; Turnley et al., 2003, 2004; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Since previous conceptual and empirical research on psychological contracts has focused almost entirely on management actions and decisions as the primary source of and influence upon workers' psychological contracts, it is unclear to what extent unions can influence perceptions of PCB and PCVs. Third-party representation brings an additional element to the employment relationship, which the current psychological contract literature to a great extent has ignored.

Union instrumentality is the degree to which an individual believes a union can improve the employment relationship and the workplace with respect to both "traditional" (e.g., wages, benefits) and "non-traditional" (e.g., job satisfaction) work conditions (Gordon, Barling, & Tetrick, 1995) and is believed to be one of the strongest predictors of union support among workers. According to Turnley et al. (2004: 423), "union instrumentality describes the extent to which a union is perceived to be able to put pressure on an employer to fulfill the psychological contract."

The belief that the union can be instrumental in improving work conditions suggests that the individual worker thinks that the union can rectify wrongs that have occurred in the employment relationship. In other words, if workers believe that the union can "right a wrong," they may be less likely to have the cognitive recognition of PCB taking place turn into an affective negative response, that is, a PCV. However, without a union to represent the individual worker, the PCB may be more likely to be turned into a PCV, as the workers do not enjoy the benefits of having third-party representation and protection. Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that perceptions of union instrumentality will impact how PCB translates into PCVs. Thus,

H1a: Consistent with previous findings, psychological contract breach will be positively associated with psychological contract violations.

H1b: Union instrumentality will moderate the relationship between psychological contract breach and psychological contract violations, making the relationship weaker in the presence of high union instrumentality.

PCVs and Trust in Management and Union Commitment

In order to generate a work environment where workers know what is expected of them and perform in such a way that organizational goals are supported, it is

crucial that each party should have confidence that the other party will deliver on their promises (Rousseau, 1989). Trust is therefore an integral part of the psychological contract and the employment relationship.

Trust can be viewed as a precursor of cooperation (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006), as well as being viewed as the result of cooperative relationships (Oxenbridge & Brown, 2004). It is a psychological state with both cognitive and affective components, and can be considered essential to efficient organizational performance (Kramer, 1999). It is indeed recognized as an important precursor of cooperation in organizations (Deery et al., 2006; Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995), and a lack of it may lead to less cooperative relationships in organizational settings (McAllister, 1995).

Once the individual worker experiences an emotional response to the cognitive recognition (i.e., PCB) of not having received what was promised, he/she will most likely develop both cognitions and affects that are not conducive to developing or maintaining trust in the organization or its management. Robinson and Rousseau (1994) suggested that a PCV is an antecedent of decreased trust in management, and it has since been found to be associated with decreased organizational commitment (Grimmer & Oddy, 2007). Given that the cognitive recognition has to precede the affective reaction, it would be natural to expect that PCVs will be associated with decreased trust in management, and that such violations will mediate the relationship between PCB and trust in management. This is consistent with the findings of Suazo (2009), who found that PCVs fully mediated the relationships between PCB and other employment-related outcomes such as employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit, perceived organizational support, and organizational citizenship behavior. Hence,

H2a: Psychological contract violations will be associated with decreased trust in management.

H2b: Psychological contract violations will mediate the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust in management.

Gordon and colleagues (1980) defined *union commitment* as individual union members' loyalty to the union, their responsibility toward the union and willingness to work for it, and their belief in unionism. As highlighted in Newton and Short's (1992) model of union membership, union commitment goes beyond tangible rewards and reflects a "positive and intense orientation toward the union" (Newton & Short, 1992: 278) coupled with an ideological and value-sharing attitude toward unionism. Union commitment is a critically important outcome in studies of labor relations, as the union represents one mechanism through which workers can attempt to restore equity to the employment relationship (Brett, 1980).

Turnley et al. (2004) suggested, and confirmed empirically, that union commitment is likely to increase in instances of PCB as unions could force an employer to meet its obligations. Consistent with Brett (1980), they argued that individual workers recognize (a cognitive process) that they do not have enough power to get their organizations to change unsatisfactory workplace practices on their own.

The experience of negative affective responses (i.e., PCVs) following PCB may make individuals embrace the ideologies that underlie unionism and potentially lead them to recognize the values that unions represent as protectors of the worker in the employment exchange and develop favorable attitudes toward unions. This would, theoretically, be consistent with the meta-analytical findings of Zhao et al. (2007), which revealed that affect mediates the relationship between breach and attitudinal outcomes. Thus,

H3a: Psychological contract violations will be associated with increased union commitment.

H3b: Psychological contract violations will mediate the relationship between breach and union commitment.

The proposed full model is presented in Figure 1.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The participants in this study consisted of 215 (response rate: 75%) unionized workers from a manufacturing firm located in the mid-Atlantic region of the

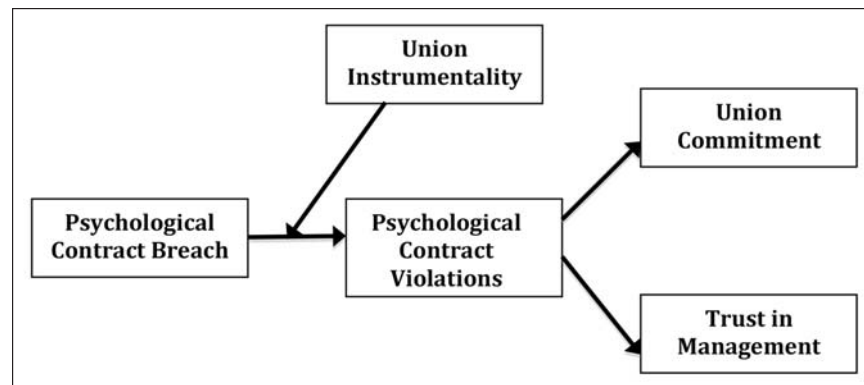


Figure 1. Proposed full model.

United States. The firm employs 287 full-time union workers and has been in operation for almost 50 years. Both management and union representatives described the relationship as “historically solid” but with frequent “tension and elements of bitterness.” The subjects were told that the study aimed to achieve a better understanding of their relationship with their employer and their union. Of the respondents, 58% were male and 42% were female. The mean age was approximately 46 years ($SD = 9.3$) and the respondents had an average tenure of 17.3 years.

Measures

Psychological contract breach was measured with a scale based on Robinson and Morrison’s (2000) five-item scale. The items included “almost all the promises made by my employer over the course of the last couple of years have been kept” (reverse scored), “I feel that my employer has come through in fulfilling the promises made to me when I was hired” (reverse scored), “my employer has done an excellent job of fulfilling its promises” (reverse scored), “I have not received everything promised to me in exchange for my contributions,” and “my employer has broken many of its promises to me even though I’ve upheld my end of the deal.” Responses were made on a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.89.

Psychological contract violation was measured with an eight-item scale developed by the research team and based on Morrison and Robinson’s (1997) definition of psychological contract violations. Consistent with Arshad and Sparrow (2010), the respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they had experienced the following emotions: “betrayal,” “anger,” “resentfulness,” “shock,” “insecurity,” “lack of trust,” “unfairness,” and “disappointment” as a result of unmet expectations from the employment relationship, using a five-point scale ranging from 1=*none at all* to 5=*very strong*. The items included “Please indicate the extent to which you feel or have felt anger as a result of unmet expectations” and “Please indicate the extent to which you feel or have felt resentful toward your employer as a result of unmet expectations.” Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.83.

Union instrumentality was measured with a combination of two scales used by Hammer, Bayazit, and Wazeter (2009). The first is referred to as “union instrumentality for non-wage outcomes” and the other as “union instrumentality for wages.” Both scales consisted of three items. The first measured union members’ satisfaction “with your local association’s role in improving job security,” “getting the employer to improve the physical work environment,” and “making work more intrinsically enjoyable.” Union instrumentality for wages was measured with the following three items: “the local association has helped us obtain fair pay,” “the local association has helped us get better and

more competitive wages,” and “the local association has helped us get better fringe benefits for members.” The items were assessed with a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly dissatisfied* to 5 = *strongly satisfied*. Cronbach’s α for these scales were 0.80 and 0.85, respectively.

Union commitment was measured with a nine-item scale adapted from Bayazit, Hammer, and Wazeter’s (2004) study, which itself had been adapted from Friedman and Harvey (1986) and Gordon et al. (1980). This union commitment scale included items measuring loyalty to the union, responsibility toward the union, and willingness to work for the union. The items were assessed with a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.86.

Trust in management was measured with a six-item scale adapted from Cook and Wall (1980) and Den Hartog, Shippers, and Koopman (2002). The items included “one can trust management’s ability to make the right decisions regarding the future of our organization” and “I can rely on management to help me if necessary.” The items were assessed with a five-point scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. Cronbach’s α for this scale was 0.87.

Two control variables were used in the analyses. Although most studies indicate that gender does not appear to impact psychological contracts, some studies have identified gender differences with respect to contract types (e.g., transactional, relational elements: see, e.g., Bal & Kooij, 2011). Hence, employee gender was included as a control variable (0 = *male*, 1 = *female*). Organizational tenure was also included as a control variable because it could be associated with the extent to which a worker may have experienced unfulfilled expectations within the organization.

RESULTS

The means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities for all the variables in this study are provided in Table 1. Cronbach’s α values for the scaled variables are also included in this table.

Consistent with previous studies, PCB and PCVs were strongly correlated ($r = 0.59$, $p < 0.05$) and remained statistically significant in the regression analysis ($\beta = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$)*. Hence, Hypothesis 1a was supported. With respect to the proposed moderation of union instrumentality on the relationship between PCB and PCVs in Hypothesis 1b, the results supported the hypothesis after a moderated regression had been performed. Consistent with Aiken and West (1991), the variables used in the interaction were centered at their means in order to make the results more interpretable. As shown in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 2, the effects of PCB on perceptions of PCVs varied across levels of union instrumentality. Consistent with Hypothesis 1b, there was a significant interaction between PCB and union instrumentality in predicting PCVs ($\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, Scale Reliabilities, and Correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	0.42	0.49							
2. Organizational tenure	17.3	6.60	-0.07						
3. Breach	3.81	0.56	-0.04	0.16*	(0.89)				
4. Violations	3.55	0.88	0.03	0.14*	0.59*	(0.83)			
5. Union commitment	3.88	0.80	0.06	0.21*	0.39*	0.45*	(0.86)		
6. Trust in management	2.57	0.63	-0.02	0.07	-0.34*	-0.40*	-0.24*	(0.87)	
7. Union instrumentality	3.57	0.56	-0.07	0.16*	0.11	0.18*	0.56*	-0.33*	(0.83)

Notes: Cronbach’s alpha (α) appears along the diagonal in parentheses. Gender is coded 0 = male; 1 = female.
* $p < 0.05$.

Table 2. Results of Regression Analyses (Hypothesis 1)

Dependent variable	Psychological contract violation	Psychological contract violation
Control variables		
Gender	0.03	0.03
Organizational tenure	0.09	0.09
Main effects		
Union instrumentality		-0.29*
Breach	0.52*	0.49*
Interaction		
Instrumentality \times breach		-0.31*
<i>F</i>	20.01*	24.61*
Overall R^2	0.54	0.75
Adjusted R^2	0.47	0.64

Note: Two-tailed hypothesis test.
* $p < 0.05$.

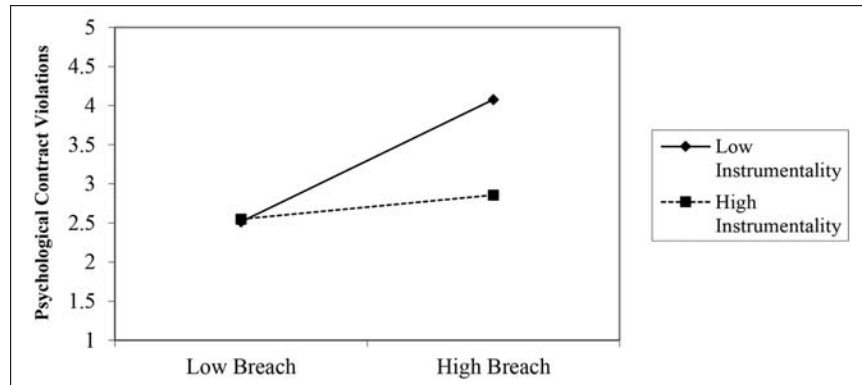


Figure 2. Moderation effect of psychological contract breach on psychological contract violations at low and high levels of union instrumentality.

As Figure 2 illustrates, the positive relationship between PCB and PCVs was weakened among employees endorsing high union instrumentality. The slope analysis confirmed this. Individuals with low union instrumentality experiencing low PCB scored on average 2.51 on PCVs, while individuals with low union instrumentality experiencing high PCB scored on average 4.08 ($t = 7.25, p < 0.05$) on PCVs. However, individuals with high union instrumentality experiencing low PCB scored on average 2.55 (a score that was almost identical to that of the low-instrumentality/low PCB subjects), while individuals with high union instrumentality experiencing high PCB scored on average 2.86 ($t = 0.85, p < 0.81$). In other words, whereas when PCB was low there were minimal differences in terms of PCVs between individuals with different degrees of union instrumentality, the gap widened significantly as PCB increased. Specifically, there were statistically insignificant differences on the PCV scores between high and low levels of PCB among the high instrumentality subjects.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test Hypothesis 2a. This hypothesis proposed that there would be a negative relationship between psychological contract violations and trust in management. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3. Consistent with the hypothesis, the relationship between violations and trust in management was negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.51, p < 0.05$). Hence, Hypothesis 2a was supported.

A series of multiple regression analyses was used to test Hypothesis 2b, which suggested that PCVs would mediate the relationship between PCB and trust in management. Consistent with Baron and Kenny (1986), three separate statistical analyses were conducted: (1) raw correlations among the three variables (PCB, PCVs, and trust in management) were calculated; (2) a multiple regression

Table 3. Results of Regression Analyses:
Violations and Trust in
Management (Hypothesis 2a)

Dependent variable	Trust in management
Control variables	
Gender	0.04
Organizational tenure	0.12
Main effects	
Violations	-0.51*
<i>F</i>	19.81*
Overall <i>R</i> ²	0.69
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.61

Note: Two-tailed hypothesis test.
**p* < 0.05.

was run where the mediator (PCVs) was the DV and the IV (PCB) was the IV in the regression; and (3) a simultaneous inclusion multiple regression was run where the IV (PCB) and the mediator (PCVs) were the IVs and the DV (trust in management) was the DV in the regression. The results revealed partial mediation where the standardized coefficients of PCB on trust in management were -.501 (direct) and .232 (indirect). Sobel’s *z*-value was 15.7 (sign = .001), which indicates a significant mediation since the beta coefficients remained high and significant in the indirect model, as indicated in Figure 3.

Multiple regression analysis was also used to test Hypothesis 3a. This hypothesis proposed that there would be a positive relationship between PCVs and union commitment. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 4. Consistent with the hypothesis, the relationship between PCVs and union commitment was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.05$).

A series of multiple regression analyses was used to test Hypothesis 3b, which suggested that PCVs would mediate the relationship between PCB and union commitment. Three separate statistical analyses were conducted: (1) raw correlations among the three variables (PCB, PCVs, and union commitment) were calculated; (2) a multiple regression was run where the mediator (PCVs) was the DV and the IV (PCB) was the IV in the regression; and (3) a simultaneous inclusion multiple regression was run where the IV (PCB) and the mediator (PCVs) were the IVs and the DV (union commitment) was the DV in the regression. The results revealed partial mediation where the standardized coefficients of breach on union commitment were -.390 (direct) and -.189 (indirect). Sobel’s

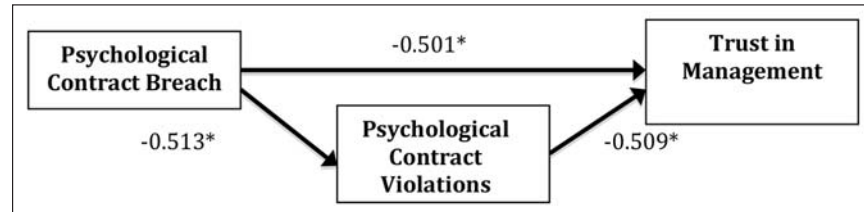


Figure 3. Standardized path estimates from the hypothetical model (Hypothesis 2b).

Table 4. Results of Regression Analyses: Violations and Union Commitment (Hypothesis 3a)

Dependent variable	Union commitment
Control variables	
Gender	0.03
Organizational tenure	0.07
Main effects	
Violations	0.45*
<i>F</i>	24.67*
Overall <i>R</i> ²	0.71
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.65

Note: Two-tailed hypothesis test.

**p* < 0.05.

z-value was 12.5 (sig = .001), which indicates a significant mediation since the beta coefficients remained high and significant in the indirect model, as indicated in Figure 4.

DISCUSSION

Implications

This study extends previous research by Turnley et al. (2004), which suggested that union commitment is likely to increase in instances of psychological contract breach. By testing the model in a firm with third-party representation, the present study allowed for an examination of the moderating effects of union instrumentality. The results confirmed that high levels of union instrumentality weaken the PCB-PCV link.

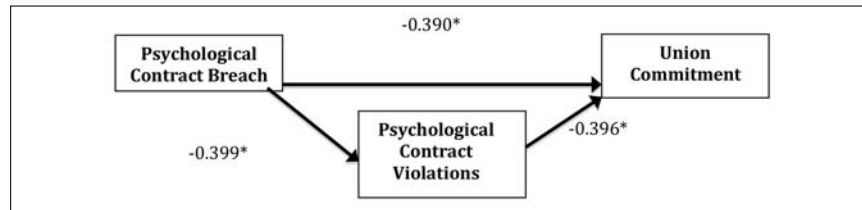


Figure 4. Standardized path estimates from the hypothetical model (Hypothesis 3b).

Further, the study confirmed that psychological contract violations partially mediate the relationship between psychological contract breach and union commitment. The results suggest that an affective response explains some of the increase in union commitment that follows the cognitive awareness of unfulfilled promises and/or expectations. Finally, the study also examined the extent to which psychological contract breach and violations impact trust in management. The results indicate that breach is associated with decreased trust, and that this relationship is partially mediated by psychological contract violations.

Whereas previous scholars have examined the impact of contract breach and violations on a vast number of organizational or individual outcomes, such as organizational citizenship behaviors, job satisfaction, intention to quit, and organizational commitment (e.g., Blomme et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2008; Dulac et al., 2008; Grimmer & Oddy, 2007; Orvis et al., 2008; Rigotti, 2009; Suazo, 2009), very few studies have utilized the psychological contract framework in unionized settings. This study therefore adds to the labor and workplace rights literature by examining the consequences of violation of promises and the role of the union in moderating these relationships. The following four conclusions should be of interest, and possibly bring some encouragement, to labor organizers and activists.

First, the findings suggest that workers are relatively unperturbed by PCB if they have high union instrumentality. Specifically, the results indicate that high union instrumentality appears to significantly weaken the relationship between breach and violations. Whereas PCB is a cognitive comparison of what has been promised and received, a PCV is a strong affective reaction to unfulfilled expectations that could lead to adverse outcomes among workers, such as anger, disappointment, resentment, feelings of wrongful harm, and other forms of emotional distress (Conway & Briner, 2005; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). It should be a great “selling point” to workers that not only do unions represent a medium through which to “to put pressure on an employer to fulfill the psychological contract” (Turnley et al., 2004: 423) but they may also reduce the negative affective reactions associated with broken promises.

Second, the findings suggest that unions should pay attention to *day-to-day* matters among their members. This may be easily forgotten in a time when social movement unionism has become increasingly important. Specifically, the findings indicate that unions need to be aware that their members turn to their unions in the hope of resolving unsatisfactory workplace practices as a response to both cognitive awareness and the corresponding affective responses. Whereas there were negligible differences in PCVs between workers with high and low union instrumentality when PCB was low, the gap widened significantly as PCB increased and those with low union instrumentality experienced significantly higher PCVs.

Third, the results confirm, consistent with Turnley et al. (2004), that union commitment, individual union members' loyalty to the union, their responsibility toward the union and willingness to work for it, and their belief in unionism, will increase in instances of psychological contract breach. This is also consistent with a long series of studies on union instrumentality suggesting that when workers believe that unions are and can be instrumental in improving both "traditional" (e.g., wages, benefits) and "non-traditional" (e.g., job satisfaction) work conditions they tend to increase their support for their unions or for unionization in general (Gordon, Barling, & Tetrick, 1995). The results of this study, however, further suggest that the affective reaction to PCB explains the increased commitment to the union. Hence, unions should recognize that it is to some extent the emotional "damage" to workers that "drives" them to the union. Unions should therefore recognize that they have an important role to play in securing the well-being of their members when their employers have wronged them.

Fourth, the results also confirm that PCB and PCVs are associated with decreased trust in management. This should be considered consistent with an increase in union commitment, as broken promises generate adversarial employment relationships and decreased trust. Although this is considered a dependent variable in the proposed model, one may want to recognize that it is an iterative process in which prior experiences impact current attitudes. McAllister (1995) pointed out that a lack of trust will lead to less cooperative relationships in the future, which is consistent with the work of Robinson and Rousseau (1994), who suggested that a psychological contract violation will be an antecedent of decreased trust in management. Unions should recognize and take advantage of the knowledge that, while union commitment increases following PCVs, trust in management decreases. Unions should strive to articulate to workers that they are trying to improve working conditions when workers' trust in the employing organization deteriorates.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study has contributed to the labor literature by clarifying how union instrumentality impacts the relationship between psychological contract

breach and violations and the impact of breach and violations upon union commitment and trust in management, there were limitations that should be addressed. The data were collected cross-sectionally through self-reports, so the results could be biased due to common-method variance (CMV). Consistent with suggestions regarding design techniques made by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Conway and Lance (2010), the study tried to address some of these issues by utilizing existing instruments that have been proven to be both reliable and valid in previous studies. CMV was also calculated based on procedures described by Podsakoff et al. (2003), in order to determine whether biases represented a significant problem in the data. The results revealed that the average variance explained by the common-method construct was less than 1%, which is considered both acceptable and fair (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The study was also designed to protect respondent anonymity and utilized counterbalancing question order. One remaining concern is the utilization of self-reporting, but since psychological contracts deal with subjective perceptions of the employment relationship it would be difficult to utilize multiple respondents in order to reduce biases.

Future Studies

This study did not address causality, due to its use of cross-sectional data, so there is a possibility that those most involved within the union (i.e., scoring high on union instrumentality) are more aware of the policies, programs, and practices “promised” by the organization and therefore more susceptible to becoming cognitively aware of “unfulfilled” promises. Future research would benefit from longitudinal data and/or data from multiple sources, such as peers. Although the sample was of moderate size, future studies could benefit from the use of larger samples and possibly a larger variety of organizations.

It would also be beneficial to replicate this study and compare the instrumentality of unions to the instrumentality of other third-party representatives. One may look at the use of an ombudsman, a mediator, or a grievance committee to see whether these would influence the PCB-PCV relationship in the same way as unions or differently from them.

Finally, future studies may also consider examining the potential impact of “historical” perceptions of breach, as employees may bring with them experiences from other organizations that may impact their ratings of PCB, PCVs, and union instrumentality. Even though tenure with the current organization did not appear to impact these ratings, it is possible that tenure with previous organizations could do so.

CONCLUSION

This study has contributed to the psychological contract literature and our understanding of the employment relationship in an environment with third-party representation. Specifically, the findings indicate that psychological contract

violations partially mediate the relationships between psychological contract breach and union commitment and trust in management. The analyses also revealed that union instrumentality moderates the relationship between PCB and PCVs. Specifically, the positive relationship between PCB and PCVs was weakened among employees endorsing high union instrumentality. Further, PCVs were associated with increased union commitment and decreased trust in management. This study therefore adds to the labor and workplace rights literature through its clarification of the consequences of violation of promises (e.g., increased union commitment and decreased trust in management) and the role of the union in moderating these effects. The results indicate that unions play an important role with respect to workers' psychological contracts as they may reduce the negative affective reactions associated with broken promises.

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