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Perceived organizational support and work outcomes: The mediating role of psychological contract violation

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Perceived organizational support and work outcomes

Psychological
contract
violation

The mediating role of psychological contract violation

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper was to examine the mediating role of psychological contract (PC) violation on the relationship between perceived organizational support (POS) and a set of work-related affects (trust), attitudes (job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and intention to leave) and individual effectiveness (civic virtue).

Design/methodology/approach – Two independent studies were conducted ($N = 162$ and $N = 242$). To test the mediating effect, the procedure of Baron and Kenny (1986) was used in both studies.

Findings – Overall, in both studies, data reported the same pattern. While PC violation played a partial mediating role between POS and affect (i.e. trust in organization) and attitudes (i.e. commitment, satisfaction and intention to leave), PC violation failed to mediate the relationship between POS and individual effectiveness (i.e. civic virtue).

Practical implications – The results suggest that the implementation of supportive actions may help employees overcome frustrations tied to their perception that the PC has been broken.

Originality/value – This study contributes to PC literature. Given that violation was less examined than breach, this paper contributes to greater understanding by addressing the relationship between violation, POS and a set of work outcomes.

Keywords Trust, Job attitudes, Employee participation, Perceived organizational support, Violation

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Psychological contract (PC) and perceived organizational support (POS) are both rooted in the social exchange framework (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003; Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; Rousseau, 1989; Tekleab *et al.*, 2005). While PC is “a way of representing the employment relationship in the mind of the employee” (Furnham and Taylor, 2004, p. 8), POS refers to an employee’s belief that the employer values his/her contribution and demonstrates concern for his/her well-being at work (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). Consistent with the rule of reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) applied to the work context, in exchange for the fulfillment of obligations and promises by their employer and through perceived organizational support, employees are more committed, more satisfied, less prone to leave and, finally, more willing to make extra efforts that go beyond the job duties (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber, 2011; Zhao *et al.*, 2007). The ideal situation involves a context where an employer is able to fulfill their obligations and support staff.



It has been stated that the failure to fulfill promises seems to be the rule than the exception (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). Typically, literature on PC distinguishes breach and violation as two forms of failure to fulfill obligations. While PC breach reflects a perceived mismatch between promises and fulfillment (Bordia *et al.*, 2008), PC violation reflects affective response to the cognitions that major discrepancy produces (Zhao *et al.*, 2007). Despite this distinction, in current literature on PC, less emphasis has been put on studying variables related to violation (Conway and Briner, 2005). Therefore, the remainder of this paper stresses on violation rather than breach.

Adopting the employee's point of view, it is often difficult to ascertain whether a promise was neglected voluntarily by the employer or whether the employer was unable to fulfill what had been promised (Robinson and Morrison, 2000). In some instances, even when the employer seeks to respect its engagements toward staff, events outside the control of the organization (Parzefall and Coyle-Shapiro, 2011), such as external economic pressures or market difficulties, may impact on its willingness to respect its obligations or prior promises. However, whatever the actions, decisions and the gestures performed by the organization to reduce the employee's feeling that the former does not respect its obligations, it is important to take into account the subjective nature of PC. Conway and Briner (2005, p. 29) have argued that "certain terms of the psychological contract are more open to subjectivity than others". This statement is based on two main arguments. First, in certain cases, the organization and the employee show their inability to understand their respective intentions. Second, despite the apparent objectivity of terms tied to the implicit contract, the content of these terms is often interpreted by the parties concerned. According to Conway and Briner (2005), misunderstanding and interpretation contribute to foster the emergence of the subjectivity that may lead to the feeling that the other party is failing to respect its obligations. Furthermore, Morrison and Robinson (1997, p. 227) have indicated that "the experience of violation can have serious individual and organizational implications". When individuals feel that violation has occurred, the perception of failure of promises raises the question of whether they should remain with their current employer (Paillé and Dufour, 2013). The decision to quit may come rapidly in response to PC violation. Turnover literature has highlighted a deep discrepancy between the thought of leaving a current employer and actually terminating the employment relationship. For example, for a given employee the exit option in response to violation may be an appropriate solution if he/she perceives alternative job opportunities (Turnley and Feldman, 1999).

For these different reasons, it is important for the employer to demonstrate its goodwill by taking supportive actions toward employees. Tekleab *et al.* (2005) have reported a significant negative effect of POS on PC violation, and found that PC violation played a mediating role on the relationship between POS and job satisfaction. Recent results from two independent meta-analyses on PC violation (Zhao *et al.*, 2007)[1] and on POS (Riggle *et al.*, 2009) suggest that examining these constructs together adds a predictive value in a context of social exchange. These findings indicate that PC violation and POS have an impact on the same variables (i.e. trust in organization, job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, intention to leave the organization and individual effectiveness). Interestingly, for each relationship, when PC violation impacts negatively, POS impacts positively; conversely, when PC violation impacts positively, POS impacts negatively. Thus, these findings lead to the following question: to what

extent does PC violation have an indirect effect on the relationship between POS and the shared consequences? The present research proposes to address this issue.

In so doing, current literature on PC is extended in three ways. First, POS and PC violation typically appear in the early stage of the exchange process between employees and an employer. Tekleab *et al.* (2005) have demonstrated that PC violation plays a mediating role between POS and job satisfaction. Such mediating effect on commitment to the organization, intention to leave the organization or individual effectiveness (civic virtue in the present research) remains an overlooked issue in the relevant literature. The present study adds to current literature by showing that PC violation plays a mediating role between POS and its salient consequences such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, intention to leave the organization and civic virtue. Second, according to Zhao *et al.* (2007), a distinction can be made between affective reactions (i.e. trust in their study), job attitudes (i.e. job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and intention to leave in their study) and individual effectiveness (i.e. civic virtue) to examine how employees react when they believe that a PC violation occurs leading to their perception that their employer has not respected its obligations. Affects and job attitudes reflect emotional experience and evaluation, respectively. Zhao *et al.* (2007) conclude that while affects are more proximal consequences of psychological contract, job attitudes and individual effectiveness are more distal consequences. Unfortunately, based on the findings of Zhao *et al.* (2007), it remains difficult to determine how exactly PC violation affects these consequences. The present research provides results helping to clarify these consequences. Third, most previous research has focused on the effect of PC breach. Prior research reported that when PC violation is entered in a regression analysis, the relationship between PC breach and intention to leave the organization becomes less significant (Dulac *et al.*, 2008) or non-significant (Raja *et al.*, 2004; Suazo *et al.*, 2005; Suazo, 2009). These findings reflect a translation effect between PC breach and PC violation (Raja *et al.*, 2004). Despite existing findings, PC violation has been examined less than PC breach (Conway and Briner, 2005). Thus, the present study focuses on PC violation rather than on PC breach.

The study begins with a literature review leading to three hypotheses, directed in particular at links between PC violation, POS and related consequences. While the first two hypotheses have been examined previously in relevant literature, the third hypothesis proposed testing original relationships. The results of two field studies are then presented. Finally, the findings are discussed in the light of relevant literature.

Literature and hypotheses

The consequences of PC violation

This section gives brief explanations on how violation results in each of these consequences. Trust in organization (affect), job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and intention to leave the organization (job attitudes) and individual effectiveness have been stated as major consequences of PC violation by Zhao *et al.* (2007).

As a negative event, PC violation erodes trust (Robinson and Rousseau, 1994). Trust refers to the:

[...] willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party (Mayer *et al.*, 1995, p. 712).

As such, trust is based on the belief that the parties (e.g. an employer and an employee) involved in a relationship abide by and fulfill their mutual engagements and commitments (Robinson, 1996) and on the assumption that the intentions of each party are based on reciprocal benevolence (Donney and Cannon, 1997). Consistent with the premises of social exchange theory, trust is an important mechanism that contributes to the long-term maintenance of the equilibrium between entities implied in the given relationship (Blau, 1964). However, the inability to honor past promises and obligations can disrupt the equilibrium between an employer and its employees. Meta-analytic findings by Zhao *et al.* (2007) report a significant positive relationship between PC violation and mistrust ($r = 0.71$; $k = 2$; $N = 275$).

As proposed by Guzzo *et al.* (1994, p. 625), “the psychological contract appears to be a construct useful for understanding membership in and commitment to an organization”. Commitment to the organization reflects the extent to which an employee is tied to his/her employer. Commitment to the organization occurs when the employee shares the values of the organization and adheres to its objectives (Mowday *et al.*, 1979). Based on previous meta-analyses relating to commitment to the organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990), findings suggest that the greater the fit between the values and objectives of employees and those of the employer, the greater the likelihood that work outcomes will contribute to organizational performance. Committed employees appear to be less prone to withdrawing voluntarily, exhibiting low employee lateness, low absenteeism and low desire to leave. Committed employees are also more likely to work hard in terms of job performance and extra effort in their job (Hoffman *et al.*, 2007) and less likely to develop counterproductive behaviors such as non-ethical behavior, sabotage, theft and so on (Furham and Taylor, 2011). Therefore, an important challenge for employers is to maintain high levels of employee commitment toward the organization. However, the perception that expected obligations have not been fulfilled by the employer may generate personal disaffection (Furnham and Taylor, 2004) and lead the employees to restore the imbalance by reducing their commitment to the organization (Suazo, 2009). Based on previous meta-analytic findings by Zhao *et al.* (2007), when PC violation occurs, employees tend to become less committed ($r = -0.68$, $k = 4$, $N = 2,276$).

Job satisfaction is the result of an employee’s evaluation of his or her work (Bowling *et al.*, 2006; Judge *et al.*, 2000; Weiss, 2002). Consistent with this orientation, it could be said that the state of job satisfaction is merely the result of an evaluation process through which employees value, or are dismissive of, their work. A negative evaluation of the workplace environment engenders employee dissatisfaction. On the other hand, a positive evaluation leads to a feeling of employee satisfaction toward his or her job. In the latter case, employees express gratitude toward the organization and feel the need to build a relationship based on the desire for reciprocity (MacKenzie *et al.*, 1998). Based on the meta-analytic findings of Zhao *et al.* (2007), when the employer fails to respect their promises and obligations, the employee’s satisfaction toward the job decreases ($r = -0.68$, $k = 4$, $N = 2,276$).

In addition to the above findings, Zhao *et al.* (2007, p. 652) reported a moderate significant negative relationship between PC violation and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) ($r = -0.28$, $k = 4$, $N = 2,464$), and indicated that “employees are less likely to engage in OCB when they perceive a negative relationship with their employer”. Using Organ’s (1988) definition, Zhao *et al.* defined OCB as discrete behaviors that go

beyond the employee's job requirements. Zhao *et al.* (2007) examined OCB as a whole rather than its main dimensions such as helping others (i.e. cooperative and spontaneous behaviors that involve providing assistance to other employees; Smith *et al.* (1983), sportsmanship (individual tolerances toward excessive work flows; Organ, 1990) and civic virtue. In the following, the focus has been put on civic virtue because the topic of this paper stresses the relationship between the employer (i.e. the organization) and its employees. Using critical incident technique, Herriot *et al.* (1997) reported that employees can withhold treating organizational property with care when they perceive a failure by their employer to respect its obligations. Protecting organizational property is one aspect of civic virtue (Graham and Van Dyne, 2006). Civic virtue refers to a mindset reflecting the individual's "participation in the political life of the organization" (Graham, 1986, p. 11). Civic virtue is expressed in a variety of ways, including assiduous and voluntary involvement in representation activities (for example, conferences, trade fairs and workshops, etc.) and the defense of the interests, property or image of the organization. As such, civic virtue depends on active and voluntary participation and requires individuals who want to be involved in activities such as decision-making by formulating new ideas, suggesting improvements in seminars or meetings or protecting the organization (Organ *et al.*, 2006). In so doing, employees demonstrate a deep interest in the political life of the organization. Robinson and Morrison (1995, p. 296) found that "employees were less likely to report displaying civic virtue behavior when they felt that their organization had failed to provide promised relational obligations". Further findings have shown that during corporate restructuring, employees continue to defend their employer to outsiders if the latter indicates no intention to renege on its obligations in the future (Turnley and Feldman, 1998). In view of the above findings, the following relationships can be predicted:

- H1. PC violation will be negatively related to (a) trust in the organization, (b) commitment to the organization, (c) job satisfaction, (d) civic virtue and will be positively related to intention to leave the organization.

The consequences of POS

For employees, POS reflects the extent to which an employer is committed to them. However, as suggested by support theory, the feeling of being supported by the organization implies that supportive action must be voluntary and not imposed by a government decision or as a result of negotiations with a union (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). For example, if the actions of the employer are imposed by a union (i.e. after a round of negotiations, the organization takes action that improves the return to work after a long period of sick leave), employees will tend not to believe that the organization provides support. Conversely, if the actions of the employer are voluntary (e.g. introduction of a program to promote fitness or health among employees), employees will tend to feel supported. Recent meta-analytic findings by Riggie *et al.* (2009) indicated that POS negatively influences intention to leave the organization ($r = -0.49$, $k = 37$, $N = 12,825$), and positively influences job satisfaction ($r = 0.61$, $k = 65$, $N = 30,690$), commitment to the organization ($r = 0.71$, $k = 112$, $N = 42,874$), and contextual performance ($r = 0.26$, $k = 48$, $N = 20,175$). Typically, as indicated by LePine and VanDyne (2001), contextual performance includes a wide range of behaviors, and some of them are related to OCB such as helping others or defending organizational objectives (reflecting civic virtue). Given that Riggie *et al.* (2009) did not provide

conceptual cues indicating which definition they used for contextual performance, in their paper, it remains difficult to determine whether POS is related to civic virtue or other behaviors. Nevertheless, field studies reported a positive direct effect between POS and civic virtue (Bell and Menguc, 2002; Ehigie and Otukoya, 2005; Masterson *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, based on these previous findings, we can predict the following relationships:

- H2.* POS will be positively related to (a) trust in the organization, (b) commitment to the organization, (c) job satisfaction, (d) civic virtue and will be negatively related to (e) intention to leave the organization.

POS, PC violation and work outcomes

Drawing on previous research, the foregoing discussion concerning *H1* and *H2* suggests that PC violation may play a mediation role on the relationship between POS and work outcomes. Few studies have explored such a mediating effect.

Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) have proposed a theoretical integration between PC and POS to promote their respective usefulness in the examination of work outcomes under the social exchange process. Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) have pointed out similarities and differences between them. The employer contributes to meeting employees' social needs when the employer fulfills its promises and provides resources to improve well-being at work. As such, PC and POS reflect a kind of signal of the manner in which an employer treats its employees. Differences between PC and POS may be explained by the existence of promises made at a given time in the past. Employees seem to differentiate obligations related to PC and POS. Whereas during the recruiting process, discussions on the career development of the employee (in terms of responsibilities, salary progression, planned promotion, etc.) may give rise to specific expectations for the future, the presentation of discretionary existing human resources practices provides the framework of how the employer manages people and indications of the favorable nature of job conditions. Another notable difference is explained by individual vs global perceptions. While PC is rooted in subjectivity by implying the belief in a set of individual promises, POS is more related to facts whereby the employer has demonstrated engagement toward staff. As stated by scholars (Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995), under specific circumstances, it is sometimes difficult for employers to respect obligations toward their employees. In such a context, similarities and differences contribute to enhancing the understanding of employee reactions. High POS may help employees "to be more lenient in judging whether the employer has fulfilled his obligations" (Aselage and Eisenberger, 2003, p. 503).

By supporting this contention, Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) provided additional findings that contribute to understanding how POS and PC are related. Considering the two main components of PC (i.e. inducements and obligations), Coyle-Shapiro and Conway (2005) reported findings showing that perceived inducements increase POS and, in turn, that POS decreases perceived obligations. These findings indicate that POS may contribute to overcome individual frustration generated by the perceived lack of fulfillment of prior promises. More recently, Montes and Zweig (2009) reported data suggesting that employees are less concerned with the perception of failure of prior promises and more attentive to what their organization delivers. Finally, Suazo (2009) first reported a mediating effect of POS on the relationship between breach and

violation, indicating that PC violation is affected by POS. Therefore, the following relationships can be predicted:

- H3. PC violation will mediate the relationship between POS and (a) trust in the organization, (b) commitment to the organization, (c) job satisfaction, (d) civic virtue and (e) intention to leave the organization.

Method

Samples and participants

Two independent samples were used to test the research hypotheses. The intention was to offer a replication of the findings. Rather than conduct a cross-validation by splitting one sample to form an initial analysis and a replication group (Camilleri, 2006; Whitley, 1999), in accordance with previous research (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003; Jawahar and Hemmasi, 2006), two independent studies were conducted. The collection of two sets of data contributes to avoid the potential sampling errors from a single sample divided into two subsamples (Murphy, 1983).

In addition, data have been gathered using nonprofessional (Sample 1) and professional employees (Sample 2). We recognize that these two different samples may influence the expected findings of replication (Easley *et al.*, 2000). Given the growing number of professional employees working in organizations (Barley, 1996), this choice offers an interesting insight for addressing to what extent nonprofessionals and professionals react in the same manner when promises have not been fulfilled by their organization.

Data have been collected via a survey Web site (Survey Monkey®). The survey Web site contained introductory pages providing information on the study and a consent statement. In both samples, the same procedure was followed. Briefly, a representative of a professional association sent an e-mail invitation to participate. The e-mail provided a URL link to the survey Web site. Once the survey was completed by a participant, the related file was automatically entered into a database. In so doing, anonymity was preserved.

Sample 1. Survey questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 1,000 members of an MBA association, all alumni of a large Canadian university. Of these, 262 responses were returned, for a response rate of 26.2 per cent. After reading the invitation to participate (which presented the overall objectives of the study) and the consent form (which summarized the ethical guidelines), nine individuals withdrew from the study (The survey Web site gave this information). Given the high level of missing data, 91 surveys were discarded. The final sample included 162 participants of which 77.7 per cent were male (consistent with the membership percentage reported by the MBA association). Average age was 41.1 years ($SD = 7.6$). Average organizational tenure was 8.9 years ($SD = 6.3$).

Sample 2. Survey questionnaires were sent to 1,000 registered guidance counselors randomly selected from the membership of the Association of Guidance Counselors of Quebec. Of these, 277 responses were returned, for a response rate of 27.7 per cent. After reading the invitation to participate (which presented the overall objectives of the study) and the consent form (which summarized the ethical guidelines), all individuals agreed to participate in the study. Finally, 35 respondents were removed given the number of missing data. The final sample included 242 participants of which 81.7 per cent were female (consistent with the membership percentage reported by the Association of

Guidance Counselors). Average age was 37.8 years (SD = 8.7). Average organizational tenure was 9.3 years (SD = 6.7).

Measurement

PC violation. PC violation was measured with a four-item scale (e.g. I feel extremely frustrated by how I have been treated by my organization) developed by Robinson and Morrison (2000). The scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.93$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.92$).

Perceived organizational support. POS was measured with a short form of four items (e.g. My organization really cares about my well-being at work) (Paillé *et al.*, 2010). In the present study, the scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.84$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.89$).

Trust in the organization was measured based on a selection of three items (e.g. I feel quite confident that my organization will always try to treat me fairly) from the scale created by Cook and Wall (1980). In the present study, the scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.93$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.91$).

Commitment to the organization. Commitment to the organization was measured using a three-item scale (e.g. I am proud to belong to “name of company”) developed by Bentein *et al.* (2002). In the present study, the scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.91$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.89$).

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured based on a selection of three of the five items of the Hackman and Oldham (1975) scale (e.g. I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this organization). Following Shaffer *et al.* (2001), and to avoid confusion with intention to quit, the two items referring to thoughts of quitting were eliminated. In the present study, the scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.90$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.92$).

Intention to leave the organization. The three-item scale developed by Lichtenstein *et al.* (2004) was used to measure intention to leave the organization (e.g. There is a good chance that I will leave this organization in the next year). In the present study, the scale provided good reliability (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.94$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.92$).

Civic virtue. A three-item scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1994) was used to measure civic virtue (e.g. I attend functions that are not required but help the company image). In the present study, the scale provided good reliability only for Sample 1 (Sample 1, $\alpha = 0.70$; Sample 2, $\alpha = 0.61$). We should recognize that in Sample 2, the reliability is below the threshold of 0.70 recommended by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). However, a low α value is regularly reported for this scale (Coyne and Ong, 2007; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Yoon and Suh, 2003).

Finally, based on a Likert-type scale, all items were measured on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (disagree completely) to 7 (agree completely).

Results

Common method variance was checked before examining the relationships among the variables in both Samples 1 and 2. As a frequently used technique (Carson *et al.*, 2003; Fullagar *et al.*, 1995; Khatri and Ng, 2000), Harman’s single-factor test recommends factorial analysis on the pool of items used in the study. Although there are no specific guidelines (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003), the assumption underlying the test is that if there is a substantial amount of common method variance in the data, a single factor will emerge

from the factor analysis when all variables are entered together (Parkhe, 1993). In addition, these items should load on different factors. The results indicated first that the items load on seven different factors and second that no “general factor” emerges from the preliminary analysis. The results of factor analyses with varimax rotation revealed seven factors explaining, respectively, 81.9 per cent of the variance (Sample 1) and 82.1 per cent of the variance (Sample 2) with eigenvalues greater than one. We may infer that common variance bias was not a significant concern for Samples 1 and 2.

Table I reports means, standard deviations and correlations between variables for Samples 1 and 2. Given that age and tenure were not correlated with the other variables, they have been disregarded in subsequent analyses. In addition, except for the correlation between POS and trust in Sample 1 ($r = 0.77, p < 0.01$) and Sample 2 ($r = 0.79, p < 0.01$), all correlations were below the problematic cut-off of 0.75 (Ashford and Tsui, 1991).

To avoid potential problems with multicollinearity, two structures were compared using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). In the first structure (one-factor), the POS and trust items were aggregated. In the second structure (two-factor), the POS and trust items were loaded on their respective factors. The chi-square statistic was used to interpret the data. The lowest value reflects the best fit of the data. In addition, several indices were calculated. Also relevant for examining the results of CFA (Byrne, 2010),

Samples	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Sample 1 (N = 162)</i>									
1. Age	–								
2. Tenure	0.72**	–							
3. POS	0.41**	0.27	–						
4. PC violation	0.35**	0.19	–0.52**	–					
5. Trust	0.23**	0.22	0.77**	–0.54**	–				
6. Satisfaction	0.18**	0.31	0.33**	–0.28**	0.26**	–			
7. Commitment	0.30**	0.26	0.67**	–0.51**	0.63**	0.47**	–		
8. Leave organization	–0.22**	–0.13	–0.28**	0.42**	–0.31**	–0.48**	–0.42**	–	
9. Civic virtue	0.32**	0.09	0.04**	–0.02**	–0.00**	0.25**	0.25**	–0.12	–
Mean	41.1	8.9	20.6	7.4	13.7	17.7	16.0	7.4	15.1
SD	7.6	6.3	5.1	5.0	4.5	3.0	3.9	5.0	3.6
<i>Sample 2 (N = 242)</i>									
1. Age	–								–
2. Tenure	0.85**	–							
3. POS	0.42**	0.31**	–						
4. PC violation	0.23**	0.19**	–0.57**	–					
5. Trust	0.14**	0.22**	0.79**	–0.60**	–				
6. Satisfaction	0.34**	0.18**	0.46**	–0.39**	0.39**	–			
7. Commitment	0.27**	0.18**	0.61**	–0.49**	0.55**	0.55**	–		
8. Leave organization	–0.19**	–0.23**	–0.37**	0.40**	–0.44**	–0.50**	–0.55**	–	
9. Civic virtue	0.31**	0.10**	0.29**	–0.04	0.14	0.33**	0.46**	–0.24**	
Mean	37.8	9.3	19.6	7.9	12.6	16.3	15.3	9.6	14.9
SD	8.7	6.7	5.3	5.2	4.8	3.6	4.3	6.1	4.0

Notes: ** $p < 0.01$; SD = Standard deviation

Table I.
Correlation matrix

comparative-fit-index (CFI) and non-normed-fit-index (NNFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and Akaike's information criterion (AIC) were chosen. For CFI and NNFI, values above 0.95 are recommended (Hu and Bentler, 1999). For RMSEA, although values between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel *et al.*, 2003), some scholars recommend a value below 0.05 (Browne and Cudeck, 1992). Finally, for AIC, a small value should be expected (Hu and Bentler, 1999). Regressions and confirmatory factor analyses were performed using SPSS software and AMOS software, respectively.

As reported in Table II, while the one-factor structure provided a poor fit of the data [Sample 1: $\chi^2(13, N = 162) = 50.83, p < 0.000, CFI = 0.95, NNFI = 93, RMSEA = 0.13$; Sample 2: $\chi^2(13, N = 242) = 124.73, p < 0.000, CFI = 0.91, NNFI = 86, RMSEA = 0.18$], the two-factor structure yielded a good fit of the data [Sample 1: $\chi^2(12, N = 162) = 25.50, p < 0.01, CFI = 0.98, NNFI = 97, RMSEA = 0.08$; Sample 2: $\chi^2(12, N = 242) = 42.46, p < 0.000, CFI = 0.97, NNFI = 96, RMSEA = 0.08$]. Therefore, the results suggest that POS and trust are distinct constructs in Samples 1 and 2.

H1 predicted a negative relationship between PC violation and trust in the organization; commitment to the organization; job satisfaction; civic virtue; and a positive relationship between PC violation and intention to leave the organization. Table I reports that PC violation was negatively related to trust in the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.62, SE = 0.038, t \text{ student} = -10.09, p < 0.001, R^2 = 58$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.54, SE = 0.049, t \text{ student} = -10.07, p < 0.001, R^2 = 29$ per cent); job satisfaction (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.40, SE = 0.05, t \text{ student} = -5.519, p < 0.001, R^2 = 16$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.28, SE = 0.037, t \text{ student} = -4.64, p < 0.001, R^2 = 08$ per cent); and commitment to the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.52, SE = 0.057, t \text{ student} = -7.701, p < 0.001, R^2 = 27$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.51, SE = 0.043, t \text{ student} = -9.36, p < 0.001, R^2 = 26$ per cent), and positively related to intention to leave the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.45, SE = 0.082, t \text{ student} = 6.529, p < 0.001, R^2 = 21$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = 0.42, SE = 0.064, t \text{ student} = 7.23, p < 0.001, R^2 = 17$ per cent). Finally, no signification relationship was found between PC violation and civic virtue (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.02, SE = 0.060, t \text{ student} = 0.288, p = 0.774, R^2 = 01$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.01, SE = 0.046, t \text{ student} = -1.094, p = 0.276, R^2 = 00$ per cent). Thus, while H1a, H1b, H1c and H1e were supported, H1d was not.

H2 predicted a positive relationship between POS and trust in the organization; commitment to the organization; job satisfaction; civic virtue; and a negative relationship between POS and intention to leave the organization. Table I reports that

Samples	Chi-square	df	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA	AIC
<i>Sample 1 (N = 162)</i>						
One-factor	50.83***	13	0.95	0.93	0.13	80.30
Two-factor	25.50*	12	0.98	0.97	0.08	57.50
<i>Sample 2 (N = 242)</i>						
One-factor	124.73***	13	0.91	0.86	0.18	154.74
Two-factor	42.46***	12	0.97	0.96	0.08	74.46

Table II. Overall fit indices for trust in organization and POS

Notes: *** $p = 0.000$; * $p = 0.01$; CFI (comparative fit index); NNFI (non-normed fit index); df (degrees of freedom); RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation); AIC (Akaike Index Criterion)

POS was positively related to trust in the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.79$, $SE = 0.046$, t student = 16.74, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 63$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = 0.77$, $SE = 0.037$, t student = 18.80, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 59$ per cent); job satisfaction (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.48$, $SE = 0.049$, t student = 6.97, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 23$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = 0.33$, $SE = 0.032$, t student = 5.43, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 11$ per cent); commitment to the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.64$, $SE = 0.053$, t student = 10.69, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 41$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = 0.67$, $SE = 0.037$, t student = 14.06, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 45$ per cent); and civic virtue (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.33$, $SE = 0.059$, t student = 4.49, $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 11$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = 0.05$, $SE = 0.045$, t student = 0.77, ns, $R^2 = 00$ per cent), and negatively related to intention to leave the organization (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.42$, $SE = 0.087$, t student = -5.90 , $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 17$ per cent; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.28$, $SE = 0.066$, t student = -4.62 , $p < 0.001$, $R^2 = 08$ per cent). Therefore, $H2a$, $H2b$, $H2c$ and $H2e$ were supported. Finally, while POS was positively related to civic virtue only for Sample 1, $H2d$ was partially supported.

$H3$ predicted a mediating role of PC violation on the relationship between POS and work outcomes. To test the mediation effect of PC violation on the relationship between POS and its consequences, the approach developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) was used. For each step, a regression calculation was performed. For explanatory purposes, POS, PC violation and intention to leave the organization were regarded. First, the mediation test requires a significant relationship between the independent variable (POS) and dependent variable (intention to leave the organization). Second, the mediation test requires a significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediator (PC violation). Third, after controlling the effect of the independent variable, the mediation test requires a significant relationship between the mediator and the dependent variable. Finally, partial mediation is supported if the magnitude of the regression coefficient (β) between the independent variable and the dependent variable decreases but remains significant. In addition, the statistical test of mediation is performed using the Sobel (1982) test, which must be significant to support the mediation.

Tables III-V present the findings for trust (affect), job satisfaction, commitment and intention to leave (attitudes) and individual effectiveness (civic virtue), respectively. $H3$ implied five outcomes. The following results present details for each of these five outcomes.

Sample	DV	Sobel test statistic	IV \rightarrow mediator	IV \rightarrow DV	Mediator \rightarrow DV	IV \rightarrow DV; mediator controlled
Sample 1 ($N = 162$)	Trust in organization	3.58***	-0.572^{***}	0.796***	-0.606^{***}	0.639***
Sample 2 ($N = 242$)	Trust in organization	3.68*	-0.521^{***}	0.775***	-0.190^{***}	0.676***

Notes: All paths are β s; IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table III.
Testing the
mediating effect of
PC violation on the
relationships
between POS and
affect

Affect

Table III reports findings for the mediating effect of PC violation on the relationships between POS and affect. The decreased magnitude of the regression coefficient of POS (Sample 1: from $\beta = 0.796, p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.639, p < 0.001$; Sample 2: from $\beta = 0.775, p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.676, p < 0.001$) and the significance of PC violation (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.606, p < 0.001$; Sample 2: $\beta = -0.190, p < 0.001$) indicate that PC violation partially mediated the relationship between POS and trust in the organization. The results of the Sobel test confirmed that the indirect effect of POS on trust (Sample 1, $Z = 3.58, p < 0.001$; Sample 2, $Z = 3.68, p = 0.02$) through PC violation was significantly different from zero. In addition, the inclusion of PC violation explained an additional portion of variance in trust in the organization (Sample 1: 27.5 per cent; Sample 2: 33.3 per cent). Thus, *H3a* was supported.

Attitudes

Table IV reports findings for the mediating effect of PC violation on the relationships between POS and job attitudes. The decreased magnitude of the regression coefficient of POS (Sample 1: from $\beta = 0.464, p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.366, p < 0.001$; Sample 2: from $\beta = 0.331, p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.275, p < 0.001$) and the significance of PC violation (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.391, p < 0.001$, Sample 2: $\beta = -0.288, p < 0.001$), indicate that PC violation partially mediated the relationship between POS and job satisfaction. The results of the Sobel test confirmed that the indirect effect of POS on job satisfaction (Sample 1, $Z =$

Table IV.
Testing the mediating effect of PC violation on the relationships between POS and job attitudes

Sample	DV	Sobel test statistic	IV → mediator	IV → DV	Mediator → DV	IV → DV; mediator controlled
Sample 1 (N = 162)	Commitment	2.62***	-0.572***	0.618***	-0.494***	0.491***
	Satisfaction	4.35***	-0.572***	0.464***	-0.391***	0.366***
	Intention to leave	-4.43***	-0.572***	-0.374***	0.407***	-0.186*
Sample 2 (N = 242)	Commitment	6.37***	-0.521***	0.676***	-0.507***	0.570***
	Satisfaction	1.99*	-0.521***	0.331***	-0.288***	0.275***
	Intention to leave	-4.71***	-0.521***	-0.282***	0.437***	-0.110ns

Notes: All paths are β s; IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; * $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.001$

Table V.
Testing the mediating effect of PC violation on the relationships between POS and individual effectiveness

Sample	DV	Sobel test statistic	IV → mediator	IV → DV	Mediator → DV	IV → DV; mediator controlled
Sample 1 (N = 162)	Civic virtue	0.51ns	-0.572***	0.295***	-0.047ns	0.414***
Sample 2 (N = 242)	Civic virtue	0.00ns	-0.521***	0.046ns	-0.015ns	0.051ns

Notes: All paths are β s; IV = independent variable; DV = dependent variable; *** $p < 0.001$; ns, non-significant

2.00, $p = 0.04$; Sample 2, $Z = 1.99$, $p = 0.04$) through PC violation was significantly different from zero. In addition, the inclusion of PC violation explained an additional portion of variance in job satisfaction (Sample 1: 9 per cent; Sample 2: 5.6 per cent). Thus, *H3b* was supported.

The decreased magnitude of the regression coefficient of POS (Sample 1: from $\beta = 0.618$, $p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.491$, $p < 0.001$; Sample 2: from $\beta = 0.676$, $p < 0.001$ to $\beta = 0.570$, $p < 0.001$) and the significance of PC violation (Sample 1: $\beta = -0.494$, $p < 0.001$, Sample 2: $\beta = -0.507$, $p < 0.001$) indicate that PC violation partially mediated the relationship between POS and commitment to the organization. The results of the Sobel test confirmed that the indirect effect of POS on commitment to the organization (Sample 1, $Z = 2.62$, $p = 0.008$; Sample 2, $Z = 6.37$, $p < 0.001$) through PC violation was significantly different from zero. In addition, the inclusion of PC violation explained an additional portion of variance in commitment to the organization (Sample 1: 16.2 per cent; Sample 2: 23.5 per cent). Thus, *H3c* was supported.

The decreased magnitude of the regression coefficient of POS (Sample 1: from $\beta = -0.374$, $p = 0.000$ to $\beta = -0.186$, $p = 0.04$; Sample 2: from $\beta = -0.282$, $p < 0.001$ to $\beta = -0.107$, ns) and the significance of PC violation (Sample 1: $\beta = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$, Sample 2: $\beta = 0.437$, $p = 0.000$) indicate that PC violation partially mediated the relationship between POS and intention to leave the organization. The results of the Sobel test confirmed that the indirect effect of POS on intention to leave the organization (Sample 1, $Z = -2.97$, $p = 0.002$; Sample 2, $Z = -4.71$, $p < 0.001$), through PC violation was significantly different from zero. In addition, the inclusion of PC violation explained an additional portion of variance in intention to leave the organization only for Sample 1 (2.3 per cent). Finally, a full mediation is suggested for Sample 2. Thus, *H3d* was supported.

Individual effectiveness

Finally, [Table V](#) reports no mediating effect of PC violation on the relationship between POS and civic virtue. Given that for Samples 1 and 2, the Sobel test was not significant, one can conclude that PC violation does not mediate the relationship between POS and civic virtue. Therefore *H3e* was not supported.

Discussion

This study extends prior research in several ways. First, regarding direct relationships, overall data for both studies are consistent with previous findings. PC violation impacts negatively on trust in the organization ([Dulac et al., 2008](#)), and job attitudes such as job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and intention to leave the organization. In accordance with findings reported by [Suazo \(2009\)](#), POS impacts positively on trust in the organization ([Tan and Tan, 2000](#)) and the three job attitudes ([Riggle et al., 2009](#)). Contrary to previous results which reported a significant negative relationship between PC violation and civic virtue ([Robinson and Morrison, 1995](#)), indicating that the more an individual believes that a violation occurs, the less he or she seeks to protect his or her organization; findings of the present research suggest that, in both samples, PC violation did not impact civic virtue. However, it was found that POS positively influenced civic virtue (although no significant effect was found in Sample 1). As a form of OCB, civic virtue refers to the degree to which individuals demonstrate they are engaged toward their organization by defending its reputation or its image ([Organ et al., 2006](#)). Adopting

social exchange framework as a theoretical grid, OCB reflects a repayment in exchange for favorable treatment (Konovsky and Pugh, 1994) such as support by the employer (Masterson *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, this means that the perception of a broken contract (real or not) does not necessarily lead to employees being less engaged in civic virtue if they feel supported by their employer. Very few works have examined to what extent PC violation diminishes employee willingness to perform civic virtue behavior. The difference between Morrison and Robinson's (1997) results and our findings remains difficult to interpret. However, it may be explained by the measurement choices made. While Morrison and Robinson (1997) measured PC violation focusing on the content of violation (i.e. relational and transactional in their paper), PC violation has been operationalized in the present research by capturing the reactions tied to the individual's feeling of being betrayed (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). Given the choice made to measure the feeling of violation rather than its content, it is plausible that respondents in both studies were not able to identify exactly which aspects of the PC had not been respected by their employer.

Second, consistent with results reported by Tekleab *et al.* (2005), in Samples 1 and 2, it was found that PC violation partially mediates the relationship between POS and job satisfaction. The results of the present study are also consistent with those reported by Zhao *et al.* (2007) who suggest that affects (i.e. trust in this paper) are more proximal to PC violation than attitude (i.e. job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and intention to leave the organization) and individual effectiveness (civic virtue in this paper). Their conclusions are drawn from a meta-analysis. In the present paper, a similar pattern was found for PC violation as in the field studies. The findings reported in the present research indicate that taking into account PC violation and POS together contributes to explain an additional portion of variance of trust in the organization (27.5 per cent in Sample 1; 33.3 per cent in Sample 2), commitment to the organization (16.2 per cent in Sample 1, and 23.5 per cent in Sample 2), job satisfaction (9.0 per cent in Sample 1, and 5.6 per cent in Sample 2) and intention to leave the organization (2.3 per cent in Sample 1). Finally, in Samples 1 and 2, no significant added portion of variance was found for civic virtue. The examination of an added portion of variance provides interesting insights. Findings indicate that the more a given consequence is proximal, the more it may be explained by the combination of POS and PC violation, and the more a given consequence is distal the less it may be explained by this combination. These results suggest a regulation process by which affects (trust in the present paper) limit the spread effect related to perception of PC violation. Employees may impute lack of respect of obligations to external reasons outside the control of their employer if the latter is willing to explain why discrepancies occur by providing relevant information. For example, the immediate manager makes the decision to give an excessive work-load unfairly allocated[2], whereas, at the same time, the employer may wish to maintain existing programs related to employee well-being. Despite its inability to respect prior promises or obligations, by showing concern for staff, an employer demonstrates that it is trustworthy. This interpretation is compatible with primary statements by Aselage and Eisenberger (2003). In their theoretical paper, Aselage and Eisenberger suggest that an added value to predict work outcomes may be the result of integration between POS and PC.

In addition, the results of this research indicate no effect of POS on civic virtue. This finding may be explained by the complex nature of civic virtue. As such, this

explanation adds to the argument given above in the previous section. Based on proposals by [Graham and Van Dyne \(2006\)](#), civic virtue can take the two following forms: gathering information (including participating in meetings and organizational functions, reading newsletters and announcements, etc.) and exercising influence (expressing opinions, recommending modifications in policies or procedures, etc.). Among the set of predictors they used, only one (i.e. commitment to the organization) is relevant to our purpose. [Graham and Van Dyne \(2006\)](#) found that commitment to the organization explained gathering information but failed to explain exercising influence. Therefore, it seems plausible to explain the lack of effect in this paper by the choice made for the measurement of civic virtue.

Third, based on the data collected for the needs of their meta-analytic paper, [Zhao et al. \(2007\)](#) indicate that the majority of research has focused on the consequences of PC breach. Because it was noted above that PC violation remains less examined than PC breach, in the present study we focused on PC violation. The present paper reports findings that improve knowledge of the direct consequences of PC violation. For example, regarding the particular relationships with relevant job attitudes, contrary to prior field research reporting that PC violation predicted intention to leave better than commitment to the organization ([Dulac et al., 2008](#); [Suazo, 2009](#)) and job satisfaction ([Suazo, 2009](#)), in both Studies 1 and 2 findings indicated that PC violation predicted commitment to the organization better than job satisfaction and intention to leave the organization. This means that if employers are unable to respect their obligations, employees are first more prone to reduce their commitment toward the organization before becoming less satisfied by the job they hold or before considering leaving. This difference with previous research may not be explained by gender (majority of men in Sample 1 vs majority of women in Sample 2) or the content of the job (non-professional employee in Sample 1 vs professional employee in Sample 2). In fact the difference seems to be more related to how the relationship between employers and employees evolves, in the mind of the latter. By disrupting the sense of relationship based on the sharing of values with the organization, the experience of the violation of perceived obligations sends a signal that the employer is not trustworthy.

Finally, by using two different samples composed of non-professional (Sample 1) and professional employees (Sample 2), the present research extends the PC literature. However, this added value concerns professional employees rather than non-professional employees. Previous research on PC involving professional employees has emphasized the importance of breach ([Orvis et al., 2008](#)). In contrast, few papers have focused on violation (for a notable exception see [Sutton and Griffin, 2004](#)). Overall, no significant differences were found between our two samples, suggesting that non-professional and professional employees react to PC violation in a similar way.

Managerial implications

[Conway and Briner \(2005\)](#) stated that it is somewhat surprising to note that no practical guidance for managing PC is available in the current literature. Despite this lack of knowledge about managerial practices, [Conway and Briner \(2005\)](#) proposed the development of monitoring and prevention as main ways of addressing the management of PC violation. Although related to PC breach (i.e. cognitions that obligations are not respected), these propositions also provide interesting insights about what employers may do to manage PC violation. Monitoring may be done to

detect whether PC violation has occurred. Conway and Briner (2005) have indicated that a set of cues related to emotional displaying (e.g. frustration, helplessness, anger, etc.) may signal that employees are reacting to PC violation. Therefore, it is important that employers develop their sensitivity to these cues. Prevention of PC violation may be achieved by taking into account POS. By implementing supportive actions, an employer may help employees to overcome frustrations due to their perception that the PC has been broken. Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) argued that an employer may contribute to reduce this perception by focusing on subjective well-being at work by fulfilling socioemotional needs (e.g. work-family balance, or avoid stress situations), and by valorizing and rewarding employees' contribution in their job. In addition, consistent with Zhao *et al.* (2007) this research highlights the major role of trust in the organization. Prior research has found that trust in the organization increases commitment to the organization (Tan and Tan, 2000) and job satisfaction (Macky and Boxall, 2007). Further studies have reported that commitment to the organization increases OCB and decreases intention to leave the organization (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). Organizations and their representatives cannot neglect this chain. Therefore, it is important that managers maintain trust.

Limitations and future research

Even though the present research adds to current literature on psychological contract by reporting findings on the consequences of violation, at the same time, because the topic of the paper has focused only on PC violation, it seems that some specific issues remain unclear. For example, recent research has provided interesting insights suggesting that taking into account breach and violation together provides a more accurate explanation of the relationship with job attitudes, and POS. While Suazo (2009) reported that PC violation "fully mediated the relations between PCB (i.e. breach) and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intentions to quit" (Suazo, 2009, p. 148), Dulac *et al.* (2008) indicated that PC violation moderates the relationship between PC breach and POS. Because mediation and moderation offer different insights into the relationship between implied variables (Holmbeck, 1997), by using the same set of variables, future research could assess whether moderation or mediation provides the best pattern.

The results were obtained by collecting data from two independent samples. Recommendations by Murphy (1983) were followed. Although our research used two independent samples, the data collection process was based on a cross-sectional research design for each sample. For these reasons, the data need to be approached with caution. However, it is clear that in the design chosen for this study, the difficulty of inferring causality implies a significant limitation (Bobko and Stone-Romé, 1998). Duplication of the study using a longitudinal design should mitigate this limitation in future research.

Given that data were collected among French Canadians, it is important to emphasize that the data generated by the field study are linked to a highly specific context. Therefore, findings should not be generalized. Caution should be exercised. Future research might be carried out through similar studies in other cultural contexts.

To conclude, the present study examined the mediating role of PC violation on the relationships between POS and a set of work outcomes. Two independent studies were conducted to achieve this objective. Based on previous literature, a set of hypotheses was proposed. Most of these hypotheses were supported by the data. Overall, the two

studies provided similar patterns of results. It is hoped that this research provides useful findings on the combination of POS and PC violation for the prediction of affect, job attitudes and individual effectiveness.

Notes

1. It should be noted that Zhao *et al.* (2007) conducted a meta-analysis for examining the influence of PC breach on a set of work outcomes. For our purpose, we regarded only findings for PC violation that are derived from Table II in their paper.
2. Inspired by Herriot *et al.* (1997).

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