

The Influence Of Psychological Contract Violation On Organizational Commitment And Intention To Leave

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of psychological contract has gained wide importance in the present decade for academicians as well as for the management. Psychological contract refers to the perceived expectations and obligations between employee and employer. In an employment relationship, the employee and the employer develop certain expectations and obligations towards each other, which go beyond the explicitly stated expectations and obligations, which influence an employee's job behaviour in a significant manner. Some form of exchange occurs between parties in an employment relationship (Hecker and Grimmer, 2006), and that the nature of the exchange process can have a strong influence on organizational outcomes (Rousseau, 1989). The fast changing business environment has resulted in changes in the psychological contract. The importance of the psychological contract can best be understood in terms of its fulfillment or violation (Rousseau, 1989), and the same it is not uncommon in organizations (Robinson and Rousseau 1994; Turnley and Feldman, 1999). Psychological contract violation results in several negative job behaviours including reduced commitment and loyalty, which may affect organizational performance.

Organized retail industry in India is relatively new, but is the fifth largest in the world and has been ranked as the most attractive emerging market for investment in the retail sector by A. T. Kearney's eighth annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) in 2009, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation (2009) report. In India, the rapid development in this sunrise sector has accelerated the need for understanding the employee's attitude and behavior with reference to their perceived expectations. Employee's commitment and loyalty are seen as some of the most important factors for better performance in human resource literature, and this can also be applied to the new emerging sector such as the retail sector.

WHY THIS STUDY?

Psychological contract violation has been the issue of research since the last few years, but most of the research had taken place in western economies. Very few research has been conducted in eastern economies, especially in the Indian context, on this issue. Being a growing economy and especially the new and emerging sector, i.e. retail, it is necessary to understand the employee's commitment and their loyalty in perspective of psychological contract violation. At present, there are very few empirical studies on the Indian retail sector focusing on this issue. It is also found that psychological contract violation has been studied in relation to organizational commitment and intention to leave, but not many studies have been undertaken, which establishes the link between the two dimensions of psychological contract and three dimensions of organizational commitment. The present paper is an attempt to bridge this gap in knowledge. Thus, this study examines the influence of violation of relational and transactional psychological contract on employees' affective, normative and continuance commitment in the retail sector in the Indian context. The paper also examines the influence of violation of relational and transactional psychological contract on employees' intention to leave the organization. In the next section, the concepts used in this study are explained and relevant literature is reviewed on how perception of violation of psychological contract influences employees' commitment and their intention to leave the organization. This review leads to the development of hypotheses to be tested in this study. This is followed by description of method and after that results, discussion, conclusions and limitations are presented.

CONCEPTS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

✿ **Psychological Contract** : Psychological contract consist of the implicit and explicit “*promises*” that employees

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believe their organization has made to them through various organizational agents, organizational practices or policies, or from other employer actions (McFarlane Shore and Tetrick, 1994; Morrison and Robinson, 1997; Rousseau and Greller, 1994). Some of the obligations are recorded in the form of a written formal contract of employment, but largely, they are implied and not openly discussed (Anderson and Schalk, 1998). Classical approaches to the psychological contract have considered both the employee and the employer as the '*parties*' involved. However, recent work has focused more on the employees and their perceptions (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000). The belief does not need to be agreed formally by the employee and the employer; it exists based on the employee's perception. These types of beliefs and expectations are subjective and perceptual in nature. In the present study, psychological contract is conceptualized from the modern approach, i.e. from the employee's perspective.

Two basic types of psychological contracts have been identified: relational and transactional (Anderson and Schalk, 1998). Relational contracts characterize beliefs about obligations based on exchanges of socio- emotional factors. In it, employees are involved and are emotionally attached to their organization, which results in a long term relation as well. Transactional contracts, by contrast, center on short-term monetary agreements with little close involvement of the parties. Employees are more concerned with compensation and personal benefit than with being good organizational citizens. Although employees' psychological contracts may not be exclusively relational or transactional, and rather comprised of both elements concurrently, individuals typically perceive their contracts as being dominant in one orientation or the other (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2000; Montes and Irving, 2008). Accordingly, one should evaluate the differential effects of violation along relational versus transactional lines. While there are few studies in the literature on psychological contracts that distinguish between the effects of relational and transactional contract violation, the present study is addressing this issue.

✿ **Psychological Contract Violation** : If employees think that they have fulfilled their obligations towards their employer, but the employer has not undertaken its responsibilities as expected, psychological contract violation would appear. Psychological contract violation is defined as a failure to comply with the terms of the contracts (Osland, Turner, Colb, and Rubin, 2007). These violations are perceived by the employee based on what they expected at the time the promises were made by the employer (Osland et al., 2007). Wolfe-Morrison and Robinson (1997) suggest two conditions that may give rise to the perception of violation of the psychological contract. The first condition is reneging on a '*deal*' by the employer, where obligations owed are knowingly left unfulfilled, due to either inability or unwillingness on behalf of the employer, to fulfill what was promised. Secondly, perceptions of violation may arise due to incongruence. Psychological contract violation can and does occur in the absence of an actual violation (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). It is an employee's belief that a violation has occurred that affects his or her behavior and attitude, regardless of whether that belief is valid or whether an actual violation took place. In this study, psychological contract violation is operationalized as an employee's perception of the extent to which the employer has failed to fulfill promised obligations.

✿ **Organizational Commitment** : Employee commitment towards the organization has gained much significance in the present scenario because high levels of commitment lead to several favorable organizational outcomes. Three reasons are generally given for this focus. First assumption is that the more committed employees are to the organization, the more motivated they would be and the more willing they would be to work '*above and beyond the contract*'. Second, these approaches presume that committed employees feel greater responsibility, reducing the manager's need to monitor and supervise. Third, committed employees are expected to be less likely to leave the organization. Research has provided evidence of a positive correlation between organizational commitment and job performance (e.g., Meyer et al., 1989).

Two approaches have been used to define the commitment by researchers : One-dimensional and Multidimensional approach. The Multidimensional approach, also called as the three-component model (Meyer and Allen, 1991) of organizational commitment, has gained substantial popularity since its inception (Wasti, 2005) and may be considered as the dominant model in a research stream (Solinger, van Olffen and Roe, 2008). The three-component model suggests that organizational commitment manifests in three distinct forms: affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment. Affective commitment refers to the emotional attachment with the organization based on the match with the organizational values and goals to that of the employee's personal values and goals. Normative commitment refers to the sense of obligation and responsibility to remain with the organization.

Continuance commitment indicates employee's attachment with the organization based on the concept of cost and benefit. In this study, the researcher has considered operationalized organizational commitment as a multi-dimensional construct.

✿ **Psychological Contract Violation and Organizational Commitment** : Perception of violation in an employee's psychological contract has negative effects on the employee's commitment. When the contract is violated, it may also have great implications for personal and organizational variables, mostly in negative ways (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway, 2005; DelCampo, 2007; Nadin and Cassell, 2007). Research has revealed that violation of psychological contract significantly influences organizational commitment (Lemire and Rouillard, 2005; De Cuyper and De Witte, 2006; Grimmer and Oddy, 2007). Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000) suggest that when faced with contract violation, employees seek to remedy the imbalance in their relationship with their employers through the reduction of their commitment. Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003) reported a correlation of -0.52 between psychological contract violation and commitment, whereas Lemire and Rouillard (2005) reported a correlation of -.45. There are a plethora of studies citing linkage between the two variables taken as a single construct. However, a differential effect has been found for the role of relational versus transactional psychological contracts. Relational scores have been found to mediate the effect of fulfillment of expectations on organizational commitment, but transactional scores have not (Grimmer and Oddy, 2007). This suggests it is relational-type expectations that explain how expectations affect outcomes, and not transactional-type expectations. Similarly, Ran (2007) in his study examined the relationship between the two variables, in which he took three dimensions of commitment, but did not mention the nature of psychological contract violation (relational and transactional). He found that perceived psychological contract violation significantly reduces employee's affective commitment, increases continuance commitment, but does not affect normative commitment to organizational change. However, the present research postulates that the mechanisms through which psychological contract experiences (here violation) have their effects on the various dimensions of organizational commitment are distinct. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated for the present study.

✿ **H1: Relational and transactional psychological contract violation will explain variance in affective commitment, normative commitment and continuance commitment differently.**

✿ **Intention To Leave** : Employee turnover is one of the important issues for organizations. Turnover leaves negative effects on organization in different ways, especially when the performing employees leave the organization. Employee turnover has been conceived as the negative indicator of organizational effectiveness and has also received much theoretical and empirical attention in organizational behavior and human resource management for several decades (Dalton and Todor, 1987). Turnover intentions reflect the subjective probability that an individual will leave his or her organization within a certain period of time. Similar to other employee reactions, turnover intentions can serve as an indicator of the extent of one's psychological attachment to the organization. Intention to leave measures an individual's thoughts about leaving the organization. Turnover models have been extensively studied, and scholars have provided strong support for the proposition that behavioral intentions (intention to leave) are the most immediate determinant of actual turnover behavior (Igharia and Greenhaus, 1992; Lee and Mowday, 1987). Turnover may be influenced by the turnover intention or intention to leave. Scholars have recommended using intent to leave attitudes rather than actual staying or leaving behavior, because it is relatively less expensive to collect data on turnover intentions than actual turnover (Udo, Guimaraes and Igharia, 1997). Prior research also have reported a positive relationship between intention to leave and actual turnover (Igharia and Greenhaus, 1992; Udo et al., 1997). Following this, the present research has used to study the intention to leave as a variable.

✿ **Psychological Contract Violation And Intention To Leave** : Researchers have revealed that the perceived fulfillment or otherwise of psychological contractual obligations significantly influences employee turnover intentions and actual turnover (Flood et al, 2001; Sturges et al, 2005). Several researches have shown that violation of the psychological contract increases employees' intention to leave (Barnett, Gordon, Gareis and Morgan, 2004; Lemire and Rouillard, 2005; Tekleab, Takeuchi and Taylor, 2005). Turnley and Feldman (1999) state that the intent to quit for an employee would be positively related to the breach of psychological contract. Thus, psychological contract violation / breach, as a negative event for employees, can increase their tendency to leave. Here again, the present research postulates that the mechanisms through which psychological contract violation have their effects on the

turnover intention will be different, thus the following hypothesis has been formulated.

✿ **H2: Relational and transactional psychological contract violation will explain variance in employee's intention to leave the organization.**

METHODOLOGY

✿ **Study Design:** A cross-sectional design was employed to study the hypothesized relationships presented for this study.

✿ **Participants and Procedures:** The study is based on the convenience and snowball sampling. The participants were executives working in different retail chains in South Delhi region of New Delhi, India. All the respondents had work experience ranging from 2 to 6 years, working at different positions. Proportion of male and female respondents in this study were 76% and 24% respectively. The questionnaire was sent to 110 executives. Out of that, the researcher received 90 filled-up questionnaires, yielding around 81% response rate. However, only 80 questionnaires were valid for the research. Thus, the usable response rate was around 89%. The questionnaires were sent to all the participants through e-mail. All the respondents were intimated about the objectives of the study, and the questionnaire was e-mailed to the respondents with the request to fill and return the survey questionnaire. It was also emphasized to the respondents that the information provided by them in the questionnaire would be completely confidential, and that all findings would be reported in a generalized way so as to ensure anonymity.

VARIABLES AND MEASURES

✿ **Psychological Contract Violation Scale:** Psychological contract violation scale developed by Knights and Kennedy (2005) was used in this research, which is based on the nine areas of violation as identified by Robinson and Rousseau (1994). The 9-item scale measured the respondents' perception that their employer had fulfilled its obligations and/or the promises made in relation to training and development, compensation, promotion, the nature of the job, job security, feedback, management of change, amount of personal responsibility, and the expertise and qualities of co-workers. The scale measures relational as well as transactional psychological contract violation with four & five items respectively. The responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The coefficient alpha of the scale (psychological contract violation scale) is 0.84.

✿ **Organizational Commitment Questionnaire:** Organizational Commitment Questionnaire, developed by Allen and Meyer (1996), was used in the study. This scale measures a commitment in three areas namely affective, normative and continuance commitment. There are six items, each of the three areas, making 18 items scale in all. Reliability of the scale was found to be .87 for affective, .75 for continuance, and .79 for normative commitment (alphas). The responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

✿ **Intention To Leave:** Intention to leave was measured by a scale developed by Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997). The scale has five items with the reliability 0.89 (alpha). The responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

✿ Besides demographic information, age, gender, educational qualification, etc. were also taken from the respondents.

RESULTS

The obtained data were analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 12). As the study is a co-relational study, so the researcher has used correlation and multiple regression analysis as a tool in analyzing the data. Correlation was used to see how the variables in questions were related. Multiple regression was applied to ascertain how much predictors influence the outcome of variables, that is to find out that how much relational and transactional psychological contract violation predicts affective, normative and continuance commitment as well as intention to leave.

Results in the Table 1 clearly reveal that both the dimensions of the psychological contract violation are related to the three dimensions of the organizational commitment and intention to leave the organization. Relational contract violation is significantly and negatively related to the affective commitment ($r = -0.230$), but is positively related to

Table 1: Mean, SD And Correlation Coefficient Among Variables (N= 80)									
	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Transactional PCV	2.20	0.554	-					
2	Relational PCV	1.34	0.548	.032	-				
3	Affective Commitment	1.26	0.217	-.018	-.230(*)	-			
4	Normative Commitment	1.30	0.295	.140	-.100	.188	-		
5	Continuance Commitment	2.65	0.713	.243(*)	.324(**)	-.125	.181	-	
6	Intention to leave	1.52	0.420	.250(*)	-.249(*)	.160	.189	.115	-
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).									
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)									
PCV = Psychological Contract Violation									

the continuance commitment ($r = 0.324$). The present research has not found any significant relation of relational contract violation with the normative commitment. Another significant finding here is that relational contract violation has a significant, but negative relationship with the intention to leave the organization ($r = -0.249$). This result is against as per the presumed relationship, in which, the researcher has assumed that violation of the relation contract will be positively related to the intention to leave. It means that an employee will not think twice before leaving his/her present organization and looking for other options if he/she feels that the organization has violated the relational contract obligations. Regarding the transactional psychological contract violation, the result revealed that it is significantly and positively related to the continuance commitment ($r = 0.243$) and intention to leave ($r = 0.250$), but does not have any significant relationship with the other two dimensions of the organizational commitment. In order to know how much predictor variables will predict the outcome variables, the researcher focused on regression analysis, which is presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Summary Of Multiple Regression Analysis With The Dimensions Of Psychological Contract Violation, Organizational Commitment And Intention To Leave							
Predictor variables (Dimensions of PCV)	Criterion Variables	Beta	t-value	R²	Adjusted R²	F	Significance
Transactional psychological contract violation	Affective Commitment	-.01	-.16	.000	-.01	.026	.872
	Normative Commitment	.14	1.25	.02	.007	1.56	.215
	Continuance Commitment	.24*	2.21	.05	.04	4.90	.030
	Intention to leave	.25*	2.28	.06	.05	5.20	.025
Relational psychological contract violation	Affective Commitment	-.23*	-2.08	.05	.04	4.34	.040
	Normative Commitment	-.10	-.89	.01	-.003	0.79	.375
	Continuance Commitment	.32*	3.02	.10	.09	9.15	.003
	Intention to leave	-.24*	-2.27	.06	.05	5.16	.026*
Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).							

Based on the results of the correlation analyses, multiple regression analyses were carried out to determine that how much each dimension of the psychological contract violation predicts each dimension of organizational commitment and intention to leave. The Table 2 reveals that violation of transactional psychological contract predicts continuance commitment positively ($\beta = .24$; $p = .03$) and not affective and normative commitment. R^2 is 0.05, which indicates that only 5 % variation can be explained in the continuance commitment by the transactional psychological contract violation. F value was found in this model to be significant ($F = 4.90$, $p = .03$). It is also clear from the Table 2 that violation of transactional contract predicted intention to leave ($\beta = .25$; $p = .025$). R^2 is 0.06, which indicates that only 6 % variation can be explained by the transactional psychological contract violation. F value was found, in this model, to be significant ($F = 5.20$, $p = .025$).

Relational contract violation was found to be predictor of affective commitment ($\beta = -0.23$; $p = .04$). R^2 is 0.5, which

indicates that only 5 % variation can be explained by relational psychological contract violation in the explanation of affective commitment. F value was found in this model to be significant ($F = 4.34, p = .04$). It also predicts other continuance dimensions of the organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.324; p = .003$), but not normative commitment. R^2 is 0.10, which indicates that only 10 % variation can be explained by relational psychological contract violation in the explanation of continuance commitment. F value was found in this model to be significant ($F = 9.15, p = .003$). Violation of relational contract predicts intention to leave ($\beta = -.24; p = .025$) as well. R^2 is 0.06, which indicates that only 6% variation can be explained by the transactional psychological contract violation. F value was found, in this model, to be the significant ($F = 5.16, p = .026$).

DISCUSSION

The present study planned to achieve two objectives :

- (1) To explore the relationship between two dimensions of psychological contract violation and three dimensions of organizational commitment and intention to leave the organization and;
- (2) To find out that how much the three dimensions of the organizational commitment and intention to leave can be explained by two dimensions of the psychological contract violation i.e. transactional and relational contract violation.

Analysis of the results revealed that violation of transactional contract is significantly related to one out of the three dimensions of organizational commitment. It has a positive and significant relationship with the continuance commitment, but not with affective and normative commitment in any significant manner. It means that employees want to remain with an organization, even if they have experienced a violation of their transactional aspects of relationship such as compensation, training, promotions, etc. This may be because sometimes, employees believe that the organization may fulfill its obligations of the contract in the future, and that is why they want to continue. It may also be possible that leaving the organization will have more negative financial implications, and because of this reason, employees want to continue. Transactional contracts engender a commitment to the exchange relationship that derives more from beliefs about the opportunity-cost, than from desire. Continuance commitment is said to occur when an employee remains with an organization largely out of need, whether due to lack of alternatives or costs associated with leaving, such as loss of income, seniority or retirement benefits. Literature suggests eight variables as determinants of continuance commitment - self-investment, general training, social support (supervisory, co-worker, spouse, parents, and friends) and opportunity (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch and Topolnysky (2002) believe that perceived lack of alternatives or an inability to transfer skills and education to another organization are the primary antecedents of the continuance commitment.

Violation of transactional contract was also found to be the predictor of intention to leave the organization. This finding falls in line with the findings of Robinson and Rousseau (1994), which reveal that the violation is negatively related to the intent to remain with the employer and is positively associated with an actual turnover. Perception of violation of transactional psychological contract may develop the propensity in employees to leave the organization, which may result in the actual leaving behavior. Probably, the employees feel that the organization either is not interested in, or may not be able to fulfill its obligations as promised before employment or during the employment period. It is also possible that perception of non fulfillment of obligation may result into loss of trust in the employer, creates resentment and dissatisfaction in the employee, and this results in thinking of leaving the present organization. The present study also deals with the violation of relation psychological contract and its relation with the dimensions of organizational commitment and intention to leave the organization. Results revealed that it is related to, and predicts affective commitment significantly, and in a negative manner. Relational psychological contracts with their strong emotional component, and propensity to engender emotional responses, are likely antecedents to the development of the affective component of attitude. Individuals in relational contracts typically derive benefits from the developmental opportunities and personal support they receive from the organization, and do not demonstrate a focus on an evaluative sense of what they would gain or lose by leaving. The result, somewhat, is consistent with the prior researches, which suggested that psychological contract breach is negatively related to employee's affective commitment (Raja, Johns and Ntallanis, 2004). It shows that the more is the relational violation, the less will be the affective commitment by the employee. Some employees join the organization with the intention that he / she will work in the organization for a long time, and will support and strive in the achievement of organizational goals. But

when an employee feels that the employer has failed, or is not interested in meeting his/her relational obligations fully or partially, probably, the employee loses faith and trust in the employer, and probably tries to reciprocate their contribution by reducing their affective commitment. Violation of relational contract also predicts continuance commitment positively in the present study. Reasons may be the lack of alternative better options in the market for the employee or may be other factors, such as family or personal, which hold the employee to continue with the present organization, and expectation for fulfillment of the obligations in the future.

Violation of relational psychological contract was found to be the predictor of intention to leave the organization. Relationship between the relational violation and intention to leave was found inverse in the present research. Ideally, both the variables should have a positive relationship. Perception of violation of the relational obligations should predispose employees to leave the organization. However, the present finding is against the logical relationship. There may probably be expectation of fulfillment of obligations by an employer in the future, or lack of availability of suitable positions in the market place. Sometimes, it happens that the employee calculates the cost and benefit with the leaving and staying in the organization, even after employee experience breach or violation of some of the obligations by an employer. If an employee finds it beneficial in staying in the organization even after some loss, the employee will not want to leave the organization.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the study was to investigate the influence of transactional and relational psychological contract on affective, normative and continuance commitment and intention to leave the organization. The study reveals that violation of transactional psychological contract predicts continuance commitment and intention to leave, whereas, relational psychological contract violation predicts affective and continuance commitment positively within the context of retail industry in India. Central to the discussion of this paper is that violation of both types of psychological contract produces an undesirable result in terms of commitment and employee's loyalty within the context of retail industry in India. Even though relational contract violation negatively predicts intention to leave, this may be because of reasons, which may not result in increased productivity. Thus, retail organizations are required to understand employee's expectations and manage it properly, otherwise, perception of their psychological contract violation may break the harmonious employment relation, which in turn will affect the employee's commitment and can even result in quitting the organization.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings are considered to have made a contribution from two perspectives, theoretical perspective and application perspective. Theoretically, the present findings have made a contribution in the literature of psychological contract in terms of increased understanding of effect of contract violation on commitment and intention to leave. From the application perspective, the findings prescribe potential implications for management of retail companies - that the management should try to understand and manage the employee's psychological contracts, especially relational psychological contract, otherwise, the perception of contract violation will have a negative impact upon the employee's commitment and especially affective commitment, which may affect their motivation, morale and consequently, their job performance. Employee's affective commitment is considered to be important from an organizational perspective. It is also possible that organizations may lose some of their performing employees because of the perception of failure to fulfill contractual obligations by employers.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the study is based on a small sample, this puts limitations in terms of true representations to all its population. A small sample also affects its ability to generalize its results. So, the issue needs to be verified by having a large and / or diversified sample. Further findings are based on the use of self-reported survey data, which may be affected by response biases. Further in this study, psychological contract is investigated from the employee perspective. In contractual obligations, two parties are involved. So, the findings of the present research can be considered with this caution. Investigation of the concept of psychological contract by taking both the parties will probably provide better and more useful insight. Nonetheless, the study shall be treated as valuable because of its empirical assessment of the concept, which is new to the Indian context, and is relevant in the present time.

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