Conscientiousness and Reactions to Psychological Contract Breach: A Longitudinal Field Study

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The authors examined the role of employee conscientiousness as a moderator of the relationships between psychological contract breach and employee behavioral and attitudinal reactions to the breach. They collected data from 106 newly hired employees within the 1st month of employment (Time 1), 3 months later (Time 2), and 8 months after Time 1 (Time 3) to observe the progression through contract development, breach, and reaction. Results suggest that conscientiousness is a significant moderator for 4 of the 5 contract breach–employee reaction relationships examined (turnover intentions, organizational loyalty, job satisfaction, and 1 of 2 facets of job performance). Specifically, employees who were lower in conscientiousness had more negative reactions to perceived breach with respect to turnover intentions, organizational loyalty, and job satisfaction. In contrast, employees who were higher in conscientiousness reduced their job performance to a greater degree in response to contract breach. Future research directions are discussed.

Keywords: psychological contract, conscientiousness, social exchange relationship, job performance, work attitudes

When an individual enters an organization, he or she forms a relationship with the employer that consists of perceived mutual obligations. Collectively, these perceived mutual obligations constitute an employee’s psychological contract. The psychological contract construct was developed to explicate obligations between employee and employer and the extent to which those obligations are fulfilled (Shore & Tett, 1994).

Psychological contract research over the past decade has demonstrated that employee perceptions of underfulfillment (i.e., psychological contract breach and violation) have important organizational consequences (see Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). Previous research has demonstrated that when contract breach occurs, an employee may experience an emotional reaction (i.e., contract violation) and may counter with an attitudinal or behavioral response (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Shore & Barksdale, 1998). Specifically, breach results in reductions in trust (Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2006; Robinson, 1996), job satisfaction (Sutton & Griffin, 2004; Tekleab, Takeuchi, & Taylor, 2005), organizational commitment (Raja, Johns, & Ntalianis, 2004; Rostubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000; Suazo, Turnley, & Mai-Dleton, 2005) and in increases in turnover intentions (Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994) and absenteeism (Deery et al., 2006).

Prior psychological contract research has focused primarily on such consequences of perceived breach. Less emphasis has been placed on potential moderators of breach–outcome relationships (Rousseau, 2001; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). If perceived breach has a negative impact on relevant outcomes, it would be useful to identify variables that mitigate this impact. Some situational variables, such as the availability of job alternatives and organizational justification for violation (Turnley & Feldman, 1999), have been identified as having an impact on the relationship between perceived breach and various outcomes. Turnley and Feldman (1999) found that employees were more likely to leave their organization if they perceived that there were a greater number of attractive options available and that there was little external justification for the organization’s actions. The moderating role of personality or other individual differences, by contrast, has received less attention in the psychological contract literature (Shore & Coyle-Shapiro, 2003; Zhao et al., 2007; see Kickul & Lester, 2001, and Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2007, for exceptions). Research in other areas has demonstrated that personality is an important predictor of how an individual reacts to unfavorable work perceptions (Cullen & Sackett, 2003; Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). Further, researchers have acknowledged that the norm of reciprocity, central to the psychological contract and other social exchange relationships, should be modified to take into account the role of individual differences (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004).
relationships in turn. For instance, Perugini et al. (2003) demonstrated that individuals differ in their sensitivity to positive and negative events and their preference for retaliation or cooperation; some individuals are prone to detect and react to negative interpersonal events, whereas others are particularly responsive to positive events.

One individual difference variable that may be particularly likely to influence employee reactions to breach in the employment relationship (i.e., a negative interpersonal event) is the Big Five personality trait of conscientiousness. Conscientiousness has received considerable attention for its utility in the prediction of organizational behavior (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Salgado, 1997). Conscientiousness is often touted as the most important of the Big Five personality traits across various work contexts (Behling, 1998; Mount & Barrick, 1998; Schmidt & Hunter, 1992). Specifically, conscientiousness has been demonstrated to be the most robust personality trait in predicting employee job performance (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000), turnover intentions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 2002), and counterproductive behaviors (Sackett & De Vore, 2001). Conscientiousness has also consistently been shown to predict employee work motivation (Judge & Ilies, 2002), job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), and job search attitudes and behaviors (Schmit, Amel, & Ryan, 1993). Further, Raja et al. (2004) demonstrated that conscientiousness influences psychological contract formation.

Given the demonstrated generalizability of conscientiousness (compared with other personality traits) as a predictor across numerous employee cognitions and behaviors, we expected that conscientiousness would play a significant role in employee interpretations of psychological contract breach and subsequent attitudinal and behavioral responses. Accordingly, our purpose in this study was to examine the moderating influence of conscientiousness in psychological contract breach–employee reaction relationships. In particular, conscientiousness was expected to moderate the impact of breach on organizational loyalty, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and job performance. We discuss each of these relationships in turn.

The Untapped Role of Conscientiousness in Understanding the Consequences of Breach

Organizational Loyalty

Loyalty represents a multifaceted attachment to the organization and represents 1 of the 10 dimensions of citizenship identified by Borman, Penner, Allen, and Motowidlo (2001). The loyal employee stays with the organization despite hardships, tolerates adversity cheerfully, and endorses the mission of the organization publicly (Borman et al., 2001). Research has shown that loyalty behaviors are influenced by dispositional variables (Beach, 1998; Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Hom & Kinicki, 2001), in particular, conscientiousness (Borman et al., 2001). Conscientious employees seek to develop and maintain long-term relationships with their organization because they value relational obligations in their psychological contracts, whereas low-conscientious employees place more importance on extrinsic obligations, such as pay (Raja et al., 2004).

Although relatively little attention has been paid to organizational loyalty in the psychological contract literature, this literature has demonstrated that breach leads to lower levels of similar variables, such as citizenship and organizational commitment (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Additionally, there is reason to believe that the impact of breach on job attitudes such as these would be especially strong for low-conscientious employees. Specifically, research has found that negative perceptions of the work environment will not cause an individual to reciprocate with an attitude or behavior that is inconsistent with his or her personality tendencies (Colbert et al., 2004; Restubog et al., 2007). Reduced loyalty would be contrary to the tendency of conscientious employees to develop and maintain a long-term relationship with their organization, as well as to their sense of duty and obligation to work hard in order to meet their perceived work responsibilities and commitments (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Accordingly, such employees will be less likely to alter their level of loyalty, even when confronted with a breach.

In contrast, low-conscientious employees lack self-discipline and work ethic, and they frequently fail to fulfill their responsibilities and commitments. Further, such employees are oriented primarily toward the feelings and sensations of the immediate moment and are relatively unaffected by the broader, long-term consequences of their cognitions and behaviors (Ashton & Lee, 2001; Hough & Ones, 2001; Watson, Clark, & Harkness, 1994). They also perceive that they have less of an obligation to be good organizational citizens who are supportive of the organization (Iliess, Scott, & Judge, 2006). Accordingly, when low-conscientious employees have negative experiences with the organization, they are more likely to reduce their loyalty.

Previous research on citizenship supports this expectation and suggests that citizenship is more externally driven for employees who are low in conscientiousness than for employees who are high in conscientiousness. Ilies et al. (2006) argued that although more positive work attitudes within person would be associated with more citizenship behaviors, this relationship would be stronger for those who are low in conscientiousness, because their citizenship is driven less by internal factors (i.e., their conscientiousness) and more by external, situational variables. We expected a similar pattern for breach and loyalty, such that the breach-loyalty relationship would be more negative for low-conscientious employees than for high-conscientious employees.

Hypothesis 1: Conscientiousness will moderate the relationship between breach and organizational loyalty, such that low-conscientious employees will reduce their loyalty to a greater degree in response to breach than will high-conscientious employees.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from an appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). A great deal of research has showed that job satisfaction is influenced by individual differences (Brief, 1998; Judge & Hulin, 1993). Research on traits has found that conscientiousness is positively related to job satisfaction (Judge, Parker, Colbert, Heller, & Ilies, 2001). Organ and Lingl (1995) suggested that conscientiousness is related to job satisfaction, in part because high-conscientious employees value work itself and
possess a greater work involvement tendency than do low-conscientious employees; in turn, high-conscientious employees perform better and thus are more satisfied because of the greater likelihood of their obtaining the benefits that result from high performance (e.g., personal sense of accomplishment, respect, and promotions). Additionally, psychological contract research has demonstrated that employees typically report lower levels of job satisfaction after a breach occurs (Rousseau, 1989). There is reason to believe, although this possibility has not been examined previously, that breach and conscientiousness combine multiplicatively to influence satisfaction.

As previously mentioned, research has found that an individual is unlikely to reciprocate or to respond to perceptions of a negative organizational event with an attitude or behavior that is inconsistent with his or her personality tendencies (Colbert et al., 2004; Restubog et al., 2007). In comparison with low-conscientious employees, conscientious employees should be more tolerant of a breach, because they place more value on the work itself and because they feel an obligation for and derive satisfaction from contributing to their organization (Ilies et al., 2006; Organ & Lingl, 1995). Raja et al. (2004) proposed that high-conscientious employees want to maintain healthy relationships with their organization that will maximize their opportunities for task accomplishment and personal development; accordingly, they focus more on their inputs (i.e., the work itself) than on what they receive in return. High-conscientious employees are also less swayed by immediate negative experiences and instead direct their attention toward broader, long-term outcomes (Watson et al., 1994), such as satisfaction derived from future task accomplishment and personal development (Stewart, 1996). On the basis of this prior research, we expected that high-conscientious employees should be motivated to react to breach in a way that preserves their image as responsible, goal-driven persons who possess a strong work ethic. Such employees would not want to engage in cognitions or actions that threaten this image/reputation, either in the perceptions of others or in their self-perceptions (Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001).

**Hypothesis 2:** Conscientiousness will moderate the relationship between breach and job satisfaction, such that low-conscientious employees will reduce their job satisfaction to a greater degree in response to breach than will high-conscientious employees.

**Turnover Intentions**

Psychological contract research has demonstrated that employees, in general, increase their turnover intentions and actual turnover in response to a contract breach (Guzzo et al., 1994; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). Moreover, prior meta-analytic research has found conscientiousness to be the strongest Big Five predictor of employee turnover, such that high-conscientious employees are less likely to change jobs than are low-conscientious employees (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 2002). Although both findings have received considerable support, prior research has not empirically investigated how the psychological contract breach–turnover intentions relationship varies according to an employee’s level of conscientiousness.

Hom, Griffeth, and colleagues’ model of turnover (e.g., Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Hom, Griffeth, & Sellaro, 1984), which suggests a relationship between impulsiveness (a facet of conscientiousness; Hough & Ones, 2001) and turnover, offers insight into how conscientiousness may moderate the relationship between contract breach and an employee’s level of turnover intentions. This model of turnover suggests two paths by which individuals leave organizations. In one path to turnover, the withdrawal cognitions of an employee trigger the investigation of alternative job positions and the comparison of these alternatives to his or her current job. These comparisons may lead to a reassessment of the relative value of the current job. The other path leads from withdrawal cognitions directly to turnover, without consideration of other tangible job alternatives. In other words, the first is a more analytical route to turnover, and the second is largely an impulsive, emotional reaction to one’s withdrawal cognitions. Recent research has supported a positive relationship between the level of an individual’s conscientiousness and his or her analytical, problem-focused coping (e.g., planning, taking action) but has found a negative relationship between conscientiousness and emotion-focused coping (e.g., escape avoidance, hostile reactions, and emotional venting; Mobber, 1998; O’Brien & DeLongis, 1996; Penley & Tomaka, 2002; Vollrath & Torgersen, 2000; Watson & Hubbard, 1996). These findings offer insight into employee reactions to psychological contract breach. Highly conscientious individuals are characterized as having impulse control, which includes the tendency to consider possible consequences before taking action and to accept delay of gratification (John & Srivastava, 1999; Miller, 2002). Because conscientious individuals are cautious and planful and are more willing to delay gratification of their needs (Barrick & Mount, 1991; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1987) when they are faced with breach, they should be less likely to generate withdrawal cognitions. Further, even if conscientious employees perceive a breach and experience immediate feelings of anger and thoughts of turnover, such employees are likely to control and moderate these thoughts, because turnover is viewed as a rash action in response to breach. Instead, high-conscientious employees may be more likely to utilize active, problem-focused strategies to cope, such as addressing the perceived breach with superiors. On the other hand, employees who are low in conscientiousness are less inclined to delay gratification and are more likely to adopt an immediate escape–avoidance reaction to breach that includes generating withdrawal cognitions and leaving the organization. In short, we expected that high-conscientious employees would take a more analytical route and that low-conscientious employees might be more likely to follow the impulsive path to turnover.

**Hypothesis 3:** Conscientiousness will moderate the relationship between breach and turnover intentions, such that low-conscientious employees will increase their turnover intentions to a greater degree in response to breach than will high-conscientious employees.

**Job Performance**

Psychological contract research has demonstrated that job performance typically decreases after breach (Lester, Turnley, Bloodgood, & Bolino, 2002; Turnley & Feldman, 1999). There is, however, variability in the degree to which this relationship holds. Theoretical and empirical literature on conscientiousness, ap-
praiseworthy and coping, and performance suggests that the role conscientiousness plays in the breach–performance relationship might be similar to role it plays in the breach–turnover intention relationship.

As mentioned previously, theoretical and empirical work has shown that conscientious individuals are more likely to cope proactively with a situation than are low-conscientious individuals (Hooker, Frazier, & Monahan, 1994; Watson & Hubbard, 1996). This finding has clear implications for reactions to psychological contract breach. Breach is a perceived problem. Thus, in reaction to a breach, high-conscientious individuals may be more likely to utilize active, problem-focused strategies to cope (such as consulting with their supervisor regarding the breach). In contrast, low-conscientious individuals may be more likely to use emotion-focused coping strategies, such as mental and behavioral disengagement. By disengaging themselves from their job, low-conscientious individuals would be more likely to decrease performance, as they devoted less time and effort to their work.

**Hypothesis 4:** Conscientiousness will moderate the relationship between breach and task performance, such that low-conscientious employees will reduce their task performance to a greater degree in response to breach than will high-conscientious employees.

**Method**

**Sample and Procedure**

In the current field study, our organizational sample included 106 newly hired faculty members. Of these individuals, 81.1% (n = 86) were newly hired faculty in a large, mid-Atlantic university and participated via structured interviews. The remaining 18.9% (n = 20) of the participants were newly hired faculty from various universities across the United States. These individuals were contacted via e-mail. They participated via mail surveys, which were identical to the questions asked in the structured interview. We conducted independent sample t tests to determine whether mean differences existed between the two samples on any of the key research variables. No differences were found; therefore, the decision was made to combine the two groups.

Forty-eight percent of the participants were female, and the mean age was 38.27 years (SD = 9.71). Of the 106 employees, 59.4% (n = 63) were tenure line faculty and 40.6% (n = 43) were nontenure line faculty; these percentages allowed adequate comparisons. In this sample, assistant professor was the dominant job classification and represented 64.2% of the participants; the classifications of associate professor, instructor, professor, and other were selected by 9.4%, 9.4%, 6.6%, and 10.4% of the participants, respectively. More than 25 different academic departments were represented in this sample.

We utilized a three-phase longitudinal design to separate trait, breach, and attitudinal measurements from one another (cf. Lindell & Whitney, 2001) and to examine temporally the subsequent consequences of breach. Newly hired faculty of the sampled universities (across a 2-year period, n = 162) were contacted approximately 1 week after the start of their first semester and were asked to participate in the current study. Individuals were provided with a brief introduction to the research and were promised confidentiality of their responses. These individuals were asked if they were new employees to their university that semester or if they had worked at the university previously. Out of the 162, 29 indicated that they had previously worked at their university; therefore, we eliminated them from the study. Although 117 individuals agreed to participate, yielding an 88.0% participation rate, 11 employees were eventually eliminated from the sample because they did not complete the Time 2 or Time 3 interview. Therefore, the final sample size was 106.

Highly structured interviews were conducted with each employee individually at three points in time. Time 1 (T1) data, which were collected within the employee’s first month of employment, assessed conscientiousness. Time 2 (T2) data, collected 3 months after T1, assessed contract breach perceptions. Time 3 (T3) data, collected 8 months after T1, assessed the behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. These behaviors and attitudes consisted of organizational loyalty, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and perceived research productivity. Online student teaching evaluations were obtained for all courses that a faculty member taught, beginning after T2 and concluding during the T3 data collection.

**Measures**

**Conscientiousness.** Conscientiousness was assessed with Saucier’s (1994) Mini-Markers scale. This scale is composed of four positive adjectives (e.g., systematic, organized) and four negative adjectives (e.g., careless, inefficient). Participants rated how accurately these adjectives described them on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 (extremely inaccurate) to 9 (extremely accurate). Coefficient alpha for this scale was .87.

**Psychological contract breach.** Perceived contract breach was assessed with a multiplicative measure adapted from Turnley and Feldman (1999). The particular employer-based obligations (i.e., what the employee believes the organization is obligated to provide to him or her) that we assessed were based upon the obligations examined in Rousseau (1990) and Turnley and Feldman (1999), with a few additional obligations tailored to the specific population of faculty members. Specifically, 16 employer-based obligations were assessed; these included opportunities for promotion and advancement, competitive pay, pay based on current level of performance, training, long-term job security, career development, feedback, health care benefits, retirement benefits, supervisory support, organizational support, challenge in the job, responsibility, decision-making input, recognition, and support with personal problems.

Participants were first asked to rate the degree of importance of each obligation on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Participants were then asked to make a comparison between the amount of each obligation they had actually received and the amount they perceived the organization had committed to provide. Responses ranged from −2 (received much less than expected) to 2 (received much more than expected). Responses were reverse scored, so that higher scores indicated a greater magnitude of breach. Finally, we calculated psychological

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1 The Time 1 participation rate was especially high (88%) because newly hired faculty members were contacted by e-mail or phone and in person, by face-to-face requests. The face-to-face nature of the structured interviews sustained this high level of participation for Times 2 and 3.
contract breach by multiplying the magnitude of perceived breach for each obligation by the importance of that same obligation. An overall breach composite was created by summing across breach items. The rationale behind this multiplicative measure of breach is that obligations that are more important to the participant are more heavily weighted in the calculation of breach. Breach scores ranged from -86 to 45 (M = -3.04, SD = 19.31), with higher scores indicating a greater degree of contract breach and a negative score indicating contract fulfillment. As noted by Turnley and Feldman (2000), assessing breach in this way allows for the full range of variance possible on these items, from overfulfillment (receiving more than expected) to underfulfillment (receiving less than expected).

Behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. Organizational loyalty was assessed with an eight-item scale adapted from the Loyalty subscale of Van Dyne, Graham, and Dienesch (1994). A sample item is “I am willing to go out of my way to defend the university to outsiders.” Possible responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The coefficient alpha was .91. Job satisfaction was assessed with a six-item scale adapted from Robinson and Rousseau (1994) and Kunin (1955). A sample item is “Working for this university is very satisfying to me.” Possible responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The coefficient alpha was .93. Turnover intentions were assessed with an eight-item scale adapted from Robinson and Rousseau (1994) and Kunin (1955). A sample item is “How likely is it you will actively look for a job outside your university next year?” (1 = not likely at all to 5 = extremely likely) and “I will probably look for a new job outside my present university in the next year or so” (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The coefficient alpha was .97. Research-oriented task performance was assessed with an eight-item scale adapted from Tsui, Pearce, Porter, and Tripoli (1997). A sample item is “My quality of research is higher than average in my department.” Possible responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The coefficient alpha was .88.

Teaching-oriented task performance was measured with university student teaching evaluation ratings. Students answered the following item, “Overall, I rate the teaching of this course as ___,” with possible responses ranging from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). Ratings were obtained online for all courses a faculty member taught that began after the T2 data collection and concluded during the T3 data collection. When a faculty member taught more than one course during that time period, his or her teaching performance score was the average rating across courses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Correlations, means, and standard deviations of the variables are displayed in Table 1.

Contract Breach–Outcome Relationships

The moderating influence of conscientiousness (T1) on the relationships between psychological contract breach (T2) and five behavioral and attitudinal outcomes (T3) was examined. In total, five moderated regression analyses were conducted. In Step 1, conscientiousness (T1) and breach (T2) were entered into the equation. In Step 2, the interaction term between conscientiousness and breach was entered. All variables were centered prior to moderator analyses. For the equations with turnover intentions and research performance as the dependent variable, tenure line status (T1) was entered first as a covariate in its own step. Results for the moderated regression analyses are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Hypothesis 1, which examined conscientiousness as a moderator of the relationship between breach (T2) and organizational loyalty (T3), was supported (β = .23, p < .05). As displayed in Figure 1, the breach–organizational loyalty relationship was more negative for employees who were low in conscientiousness than for employees who were high in conscientiousness. Hypothesis 2 was supported, such that conscientiousness moderated the relationship between breach (T2) and subsequent job satisfaction (T3; β = .25, p < .01). As shown in Figure 2, employees who were low in conscientiousness reduced their job satisfaction to a greater degree in response to contract breach than did employees who were high in conscientiousness. In support of Hypothesis 3, conscientiousness

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2 Due to the nature of our sample, we conducted independent samples t-tests to determine whether tenure line and nontenure line faculty differed on key dependent variables of interest. Results demonstrated significant mean differences on two dependent variables: turnover intentions (T3) and research performance (T3). Therefore, tenure line status was included as a covariate for the analyses involving these two dependent variables.
Teaching Performance

Results of Conscientiousness as a Moderator of Breach–Outcome Relationships for Organizational Loyalty, Job Satisfaction, and Teaching Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Organizational loyalty</th>
<th>Job satisfaction</th>
<th>Teaching performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>−.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness × Breach</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.23*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For organizational loyalty, \( R^2 = .07^* \) for Step 1; \( ΔR^2 = .05^* \) for Step 2. For job satisfaction, \( R^2 = .19^* \) for Step 1; \( ΔR^2 = .05^* \) for Step 2. For teaching performance, \( R^2 = .00 \) for Step 1; \( ΔR^2 = .05 \) for Step 2. \( n = 102, 100, \) and 73 for organizational loyalty, job satisfaction, and teaching performance, respectively. The sample size for the moderated regression analysis for teaching performance is smaller in magnitude, because university student teaching evaluation ratings were accessible online only for the employees of the large, mid-Atlantic university.

* \( p < .05 \). ** \( p < .01 \).

Table 3

Results of Conscientiousness as a Moderator of Breach–Outcome Relationships for Turnover Intentions and Research Performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Turnover intentions</th>
<th>Research performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure line status</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure line status</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>−0.26</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure line status</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td>−0.27</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breach</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness × Breach</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For turnover intentions, \( R^2 = .19^* \) for Step 1; \( ΔR^2 = .07^* \) for Step 2; \( ΔR^2 = .05^* \) for Step 3. For research performance, \( R^2 = .16^* \) for Step 1; \( ΔR^2 = .06^* \) for Step 2; \( ΔR^2 = .04^* \) for Step 3. \( n = 102 \) and 95 for turnover intentions and research performance, respectively.

* \( p < .05 \). ** \( p < .01 \).

Discussion

Our purpose in this article was to investigate the role of conscientiousness as a moderator of the observed relationships between the perception of psychological contract breach by an employee and his or her subsequent attitudinal and behavioral responses to breach. As expected, our results suggest that organizational loyalty and job satisfaction decrease as a function of breach and that turnover intentions increase as a function of breach more for low-conscientious employees than for high-conscientious employees.

We also found that employees who are high in conscientiousness are more likely to have lower levels of research-oriented task performance following a perceived breach than are employees who are low in conscientiousness. The unexpected direction of the interaction may be explained in part by motivational processes that influence employee work performance. Recent empirical and theoretical work has demonstrated that higher conscientiousness does moderate the relationship between breach (T2) and ensuing turnover intentions (T3; \( β = −.25, p < .01 \)). As shown in Figure 3, employees who were low in conscientiousness increased their turnover intentions to a greater degree in response to psychological contract breach than did employees who were high in conscientiousness.

Hypothesis 4 examined conscientiousness as a moderator of the relationship between breach (T2) and task performance (T3). In regard to research-oriented task performance, the beta weight of the interaction was significant (\( β = −.21, p < .05 \)); however, the interaction was in the opposite direction, as we hypothesized. As shown in Figure 4, the relationship between breach and research-oriented performance was more negative for employees who were high in conscientiousness than for employees who were low in conscientiousness. We revisit this finding in the Discussion section. In regard to teaching-oriented task performance, although the beta weight of the interaction was in the hypothesized direction, the interaction was not statistically significant (\( β = −.23, p < .08 \)).
not always lead to higher performance (Gellatly, 1996; Martocchio & Judge, 1997; Witt, 2001). Further, research suggests that conscientiousness does not always have a positive relationship with performance expectancy, performance valence, and goal choice (Gellatly, 1996). Work on motivation by Gellatly and others may help to explain why perceptions of breach may more negatively impact the performance of high-conscientious employees than the performance of low-conscientious employees. High-conscientious employees are more likely to strive to meet their employers’ expectations (Martocchio & Judge, 1997). Thus, conscientious employees are more likely than are low-conscientious employees to exert more effort, set higher task performance goals, place more value on these goals, and view themselves as higher performers (Costa & McCrae, 1992). When breach occurs (e.g., the employee perceives that the employer failed to fulfill its obligation of providing performance-based rewards, performance feedback, or job-relevant training), an employee is denied expected and desired outcomes (Kickul & Lester, 2001). As a result, this breach is likely to decrease individual perception of the value of high performance and subsequent expectancies and goals related to performance (Gellatly, 1996). This reaction may hold particularly true for conscientious employees. Such employees tend to be more exacting and goal oriented, and they tend to place a higher value on task work (Ashton & Lee, 2001); accordingly, they may be more likely than are low-conscientious employees to recalibrate their performance goals and effort in order to restore balance.

In summary, the present study suggests that conscientiousness influences both the magnitude and the type of response that employees enact after perceiving a breach to their psychological contract. In response to breach, employees attempt to restore balance in the employment relationship in different ways, depending on their level of conscientiousness. High-conscientious employees are more likely to respond to breach by reducing their levels of task performance, whereas low-conscientious employees are more likely to decrease their organizational loyalty and job satisfaction and to increase their desire to withdraw from the organization via turnover. In short, conscientiousness shapes not only the nature of the psychological

Figure 1. Conscientiousness and breach interaction for organizational loyalty.

Figure 2. Conscientiousness and breach interaction for job satisfaction.
contract developed (Raja et al., 2004) but the means for restoring balance after breach occurs.

Limitations of the Present Study

There are two potential limitations to the present study. First, this study sampled employees primarily from one organization and one occupation. Although such an approach has advantages, it creates the potential for generalizability concerns. Second, a limitation of research involving self-report data is the potential for common method bias. Our measures of employee attitudes and behaviors may have been inflated due to self-enhancement bias. However, note that the relationships examined involved variables assessed longitudinally, with at least 5 months separating the breach and outcome measures. Research has demonstrated that the response bias associated with common method variance can be reduced by incorporating time delays between the measurement of study variables at the individual level of analysis (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). In addition, although response bias associated with common method variance may make more it more likely that analyses will yield significant main effects, it generally does not increase the likelihood of observing significant multiplicative effects (Evans, 1985).

Directions for Future Research

We believe our results suggest several valuable directions for future research. First, we suggest that future research examine how other Big Five personality traits influence psychological contract breach–outcome relationships. One particularly compelling possibility is that multiplicative effects exist among various Big Five personality traits. Prior research has demonstrated that personality traits interact with one another to predict a variety of organizationally relevant criteria, such as job performance, counterproductive behaviors, and interview performance (Witt, 2002a, 2002b; Witt, Burke, Barrick, & Mount, 2002). For instance, Witt et al. (2002) found that the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance was stronger for employees who were high in agreeableness than for employees who were low in agreeableness. A similar case could be made in regard to the current research when one considers how personality moderates the relationship between breach and subsequent employee attitudes and behaviors.
For example, a high level of agreeableness may dampen the moderating influence of conscientiousness.

Second, future research should examine whether certain personality traits are associated with the likelihood that an employee will seek to restore balance in the employment relationship after a breach via more behaviorally based or more attitudinally based coping strategies. For example, one may hypothesize that extraversion will be more predictive than will the other Big Five traits of whether an employee chooses to employ a behaviorally based strategy. Because employees with high levels of extraversion are more likely to express their emotions outwardly to others, such employees may have a proclivity for responding to breach via more behaviorally based coping strategies rather than a simple alteration of their job attitudes. Third, research should examine other nondispositional variables that moderate breach–outcome relationships. Variables such as prior experience with breach, family situation, and even labor market conditions might influence reactions and thus would further highlight the complexity of contract-related phenomena.

In conclusion, the current study offers a unique contribution to the literature by examining the neglected but important role of conscientiousness in the psychological contract. The results provide insight into how employees with varying levels of conscientiousness react differently to psychological contract breach. The current study, however, is only the first step in understanding personality’s role in the psychological contract. Future research should work toward developing a more comprehensive framework of personality–psychological contract relations.

References


Correction to Orvis, Dudley, & Cortina (2008)

In the article “Conscientiousness and reactions to psychological contract breach: A longitudinal field study” by Karin A. Orvis, Nicole M. Dudley, and Jose M. Cortina (Journal of Applied Psychology, 2008, Vol. 93, No. 5, pp. 1183–1193), six correlations in Table 1 on page 1187 are incorrectly reported. A corrected table is presented below, with corrected values in bold. It should be noted that all other values reported in this table were correct, as well as the values in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Conscientiousness (T1)</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tenure line status (T1)</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contract breach (T2)</td>
<td>−3.04</td>
<td>19.31</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job satisfaction (T3)</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.34***</td>
<td>−.07</td>
<td>−.29***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organizational Loyalty (T3)</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.22*</td>
<td>.75***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Turnover intentions (T3)</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>−.17</td>
<td>.43***</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>−.59***</td>
<td>−.43***</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Research performance (T3)</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>−.40***</td>
<td>−.23*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>−.13</td>
<td>—</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teaching performance (T3)</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>−.05</td>
<td>−.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.27*</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>−.03</td>
<td>−.02</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For tenure line status, tenure line is coded as 0 and non-tenure line is coded as 1. For all other variables, higher values indicate higher scores on the variables. N = 75-106. T1 = Time 1 (1st month of employment); T2 = Time 2 (3 months after T1); T3 = Time 3 (8 months after T1); *p < .05, **p < .01, two-tailed.