

## The Mediating Role Of Supervisor Support In The Relationship Between Individual Differences And Psychological Contract Breach

**Canan Nur KARABEY**

Ataturk University  
Faculty of Economics and Administrative  
Sciences  
25040 Erzurum, Turkey  
[ckarabey@atauni.edu.tr](mailto:ckarabey@atauni.edu.tr)

**Seda KAYAPALI YILDIRIM**

Igdir University  
Faculty of Economics and Administrative  
Sciences  
76000 Suveren, Igdir, Turkey  
[kayapaliseda@gmail.com](mailto:kayapaliseda@gmail.com)

### Extensive Summary

#### Introduction

**Psychological Contract Breach:** The term 'psychological contract' refers to a concept which includes the mutual responsibilities of the organization and the employee that must be borne. It is dependent on employee's perceptions (Walker and Hutton, 2006). Psychological contract describes the assessment of the inputs and outputs of each part in the relationship between employee and the organization (Rousseau, 1995). Psychological contract breach results from the perception of the individual that the employer has not acted in accordance with his responsibilities (Morrison and Robinson, 1997). The expectations in psychological contract are different from and stronger than the usual expectations because they stem from perceived promises. During the literature review stage of this study, it was observed that the negative results of psychological contract breach such as lower job performance, decrease in organizational citizenship behavior and increase in organizational cynicism were studied more than the antecedents of that (Suazo and Turnley, 2010). There are limited studies regarding the antecedents of psychological contract breach; so the aim of this study is to determine the individual differences that are effective in the formation of psychological contract breach perception. In this context, positive affectivity, equity sensitivity and reciprocation wariness were addressed as individual difference variables in order to explain the antecedents of this perception.

**Positive and Negative Affectivity:** Positive affectivity describes a stable tendency to feel positive feelings at different times and places (Larsen and Ketelaar, 1991; Watson and Clark, 1984). People who experience positive affectivity feel positive emotions, e.g. joy and enthusiasm (Watson et al., 1988). On the other hand, negative affectivity refers to the tendency towards experiencing negative feelings (Spector et al., 1999; Adams et al., 2008). High negative affectivity is characterized with negative

feelings such as anger and disgust whereas low negative affectivity is characterized with calmness (Watson et al., 1988).

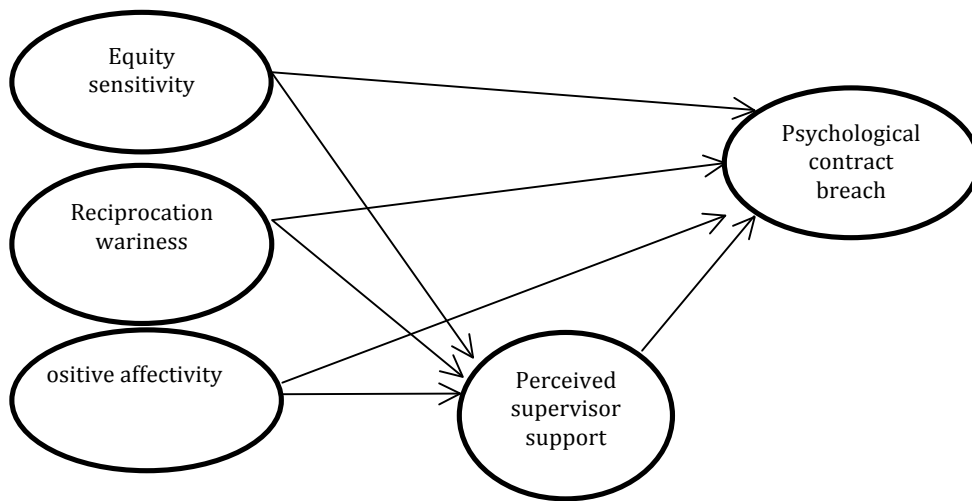
**Reciprocation Wariness:** High reciprocation wariness is the unwillingness to accept help from others or provide contribution to social relationships because of the fear for exploitation (Eisenberger et al., 1987). This cautiousness is not specific to a person or a situation. On the contrary, it describes a general wariness in both work-related and other circumstances (Lynch et al., 1999; Shore et al., 2009).

**Equity Sensitivity:** Huseman et al. (1987) asserted that individuals are different in their assessment of input-output ratios and they named this difference 'equity sensitivity'. This concept is based on the idea that people can be categorized according to their search for equity in social interactions (Scott and Colquitt, 2007).

**Perceived Supervisor Support:** Both top level and direct supervisors affect the performance level of an individual and act like a role model. The communication between supervisor and employee has many psychological impacts on employee (Zagenczyk et al., 2009).

### Method

The aim of this study is to determine the individual differences that are effective in the formation of psychological contract breach perception and to examine whether perceived supervisor support has a mediating role in the effect of these differences. A field study based on random sampling was conducted on a firm having 1500 employees operating in service industry and data were gathered through question forms from 285 employees. The research model is below:



The hypotheses are below:

H<sub>1</sub>: Equity sensitivity has a positive impact on psychological contract breach perception.

H<sub>2</sub>: Reciprocation wariness has a positive impact on psychological contract breach perception.

H<sub>3</sub>: Positive affectivity has a negative impact on psychological contract breach perception.

H<sub>4</sub>: Perceived supervisor support has a negative impact on psychological contract breach perception.

H<sub>5</sub>: Perceived supervisor support has a mediating role in the relationship between a) equity sensitivity b) reciprocation wariness c) positive affectivity and psychological contract breach.

### **Findings**

After demonstrating the dimensional structures of variables through confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis was conducted through structural equation modelling. It was found that equity sensitivity, reciprocation wariness and positive affectivity didn't affect psychological contract breach. But perceived supervisor support was found to have a mediation role in the relationship between positive affectivity and psychological contract breach.

### **Discussion**

In this study, it was found that perceived supervisor support is the most important variable affecting psychological contract breach among other variables regarding individual differences. The higher the employee perceives his supervisor's support, the lesser the psychological contract breach he perceives. This finding shows the crucial role of employee-supervisor relationship in employee's assessment of the organizational practices. Moreover, perceived supervisor support was observed to have full mediating effect between positive affectivity and psychological contract breach. This finding reveals that employees who experience positive emotions frequently believe that their supervisors support them and hence they perceive less psychological contract breach.

The results of this study might guide managers to better organizational practices with respect to supervisor-subordinate relationships. If employees believe that their employee doesn't act in accordance with psychological contracts they have made, their positive attitudes and behaviors (e.g. job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior) might disappear. So, supervisors should aim to be supportive towards their subordinates in order to lower the impact of various organizational factors which prevent the organization from satisfying its employees.