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**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT VIOLATION AND AFFECTIVE
COMMITMENT: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF CYNICISM AND THE
MODERATING EFFECT OF EMPLOYEES' EXPECTATIONS**

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ABSTRACT: *This research is building on the previous research by examining both the mediating effect of cynicism and the moderating effect of employees' expectations on the psychological contract violations–affective commitment relationship among academic staff in private universities in Egypt. A sample of 395 academic members responded to a four-part questionnaire measuring research variables (psychological contract violation, affective commitment, cynicism, and employees' expectations). Cynicism was found to partially mediate the violation – affective commitment relationship. Further, employees' expectations were found to moderate the violation – cynicism relationship. These results were discussed in light of extant literature. Research limitations and implications were reported*

KEYWORDS: Psychological contract violation, Affective commitment, Cynicism, Employees' expectations, Egyptian academics

INTRODUCTION

Through the last decades, the traditional employment relationship has come to an end due to globalization, continuously changing work environment and the demanding workforce (Arshad, 2016; Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). The competitive pressures have led to layoffs, restructurings, and reorganisations that made employee-employer relationship more complicated, insecure and less predictable (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013; Purse, 2015; Tomprou, Rousseau, & Hansen, 2015).

In an attempt to have clearer explanatory framework, the psychological contract concept was introduced to help defining and understanding the contemporary employment relationship (Purse, 2015; Tomprou et al., 2015). The employment relationship is governed by both formal and informal contracts. Formal written contracts indicate the main obligations and responsibilities of each party, whereas informal contracts - labelled psychological contracts - indicate employees and employers' perceptions about mutual obligations (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 2001).

Psychological contract concept is used as a framework to understand and predict employees' behaviours. Research indicates that when their obligations were met, employees become more satisfied and committed to their jobs and they tend to express their gratitude through trust and citizenship behaviours (Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Lee, Liu, Rousseau, Hui, & Chen, 2011; Walker, 2013). On the other hand, failing to meet the perceived obligations (breach) may lead

to negative emotions and affective states (violation) that could be expressed in negative attitudes and behaviours (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Chin & Hung, 2013; Jafri, 2012; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003).

Perceived violations of psychological contract have several negative outcomes on organisational and individual levels. On the individual level, employees may experience stress, anger and burnout (Jafri, 2012; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Morrison & Robinson, 1996; Robinson, 1997). On the organisational level, reduced commitment, and performance, increased absence and turnover, deviant behaviours and cynicism are examples of the negative consequences of violations (Arshad, 2016; Morrison & Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006; Robinson, 1997; Tomprou et al., 2015).

Organisational commitment considered as one of the major employees' attitudes that may be influenced by psychological contract violations. Organizational commitment has been conceptualized as a construct of three dimensions: affective, continuance, and normative (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Organisational commitment also may change and fluctuate throughout individuals' careers due to employees' experiences within the organisation (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002).

A significant body of research has indicated that affective commitment was found to be the most influenced dimension by violations (Agarwal, 2011; Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Lövblad & Bantekas, 2010; Restubog et al., 2006; Walker, 2013). It was described as emotional attachment and involvement with the organisation, which develops due to employees' trust in the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Walker, 2013). If employees perceive that the organisation has violated their psychological contract, their attachment and trust will decrease.

Cynicism, one of the important and less studied outcomes of violations, is an attitude characterized by frustration, distrust, disillusionment as well as negative feelings toward individuals, groups, ideologies, social conventions, or institutions (Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997). Organisational cynicism occurs when employees believe that their employing organization has betrayed them and did not show the integrity and honesty they were expecting (Abraham, 2000; Bedeian, 2007; Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Khalid & Yasin, 2015). As explained by Dean et al. (1998) this perceived lack of integrity may result from perceived violations of fundamental expectations regarding sincerity, justice, and honesty. So cynicism may be seen as a reaction to psychological contract violations (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003).

The current research suggests that the decrease in affective commitment due to perceived violations will happen only when employees lose their faith in the organisation's integrity and honesty; when they feel betrayed and become cynical. Therefore, cynicism is believed to mediate the violations–commitment relationship. Psychological contract violation is considered as a significant predictor of cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks, & Lomeli, 2013). Both psychological contract violation and cynicism, involve employee reactions to unmet expectations in their employment contexts (Andersson, 1996).

This explains the direct relationship found between them (Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Pugh, Skarlicki, & Passell, 2003; Abraham, 2000; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Andersson, 1996; Conway & Briner, 2002, Conway, Guest, & Trenberth, 2011). However, results of previous research were inconsistent regarding the strength and the direction of this relationship. A significant part of these inconsistent results may be attributed to an important moderating variable which is employees' expectations. The current study has two important contributions. First, it suggests a conceptual model that can explain the dynamic relationships among psychological contract violations, cynicism, employees' expectations and commitment. Second, it is considered the first trial to investigate such relationships in non-western culture such as Egypt.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Psychological Contract Violation

Psychological Contract was originally introduced by Argyris (1962) as the expectations of employers and employees that are considered as mutual obligations in business relations (cited in Rousseau, 1989). Since Argyris, the psychological contract concept evolved and developed through the contributions of Rousseau (1989, 1995, 2001, and 2004). According to Rousseau, psychological contract is defined as the '*individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange between individuals and their organization*' (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998. p. 678). It refers to the items and principles in a reciprocal exchange agreement between employees and organizations (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Tomprou, Nikolaou, & Vakola, 2012).

Rousseau emphasized that psychological contract is about individuals' trust in an exchange contract between themselves and another party (Rousseau, 1995, 2004). She considered psychological contract as a 'declaration of commitments' through a mutual contract between individuals and organizations (Rousseau 2004). Within the continuing changing environment, organizations may not have adequate ability to fulfil all their promises and, in return, employees themselves may not fulfil their obligations (Conway & Briner, 2002; Ho, Weingart, & Rousseau, 2004; Tomprou et al., 2012). In this context, three concepts were related to psychological contract: fulfilment, breach and violation.

Psychological contract fulfilment occurs when employees perceive that their employer has fulfilled promised obligations and the expectations have been met (Lambert, Edwards, & Cable, 2003; Lee et al., 2011; Walker, 2013). In contrast, Psychological contract breach happens when employees perceive a discrepancy between what was promised and what was fulfilled (Agarwal & Bhargava, 2013; Aykan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2003; Walker, 2013). Perceived breach refers to the perception of an employee that the organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within the psychological contract compared to her contributions. Consequently, it may be relatively short-term phenomenon (Aykan, 2014; Lambert et al., 2003; Walker, 2013). Employees may reconsider the psychological contract based on their experience within the organisation, a step that may lead to returning to their relatively stable psychological contract state. If the balance was not restored, breach may develop into full violation (Cassar & Briner, 2011).

Violation is the emotional and affective state that may, under certain conditions, follow from

the belief that one's organization has failed to adequately maintain the psychological contract (Arshad, 2016; Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Suazo, 2009; Lemire & Rouillard, 2005). Violation is a combination of disappointment and anger emotions stemming from the perceived failure to receive the expected and desired outcomes (Shimei and Yaodong, 2013; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Although violation is an emotional experience, yet it arises from an interpretation process that is cognitive in nature (breach) (Shimei & Yaodong, 2013). However, what really distinguish violation is that it represents a state of readiness for action (Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

Some researchers seems to use breach to represent both the cognitive and the emotional side (Conway et al. 2011; Wang & Hsieh, 2014) while others belief that dealing with them separately may allow better understanding of the two concepts (Cassar & Briner, 2011; Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). In this study we adopt the second approach where violation is dealt with as a concept that goes far beyond the cognitive side. Not every employee, who perceives that a promise has been broken, experience the strong affective response associated with the term violation (Cassar & Briner, 2011; Turnley & Feldman, 2000).

These strong emotions –violations- may lead to a decrease in employees' trust, job satisfaction, involvement, commitment, performance and citizenship behaviours. On the other hand, it leads to an increase in intentions to quit and cynicism (Conway & Briner, 2005, Conway et al., 2011; Pate, Martin and McGoldrick, 2003; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). In extreme cases of violation, employees may seek revenge or engage in deviant behaviours (Chiu & Peng, 2008; Hussain, 2014; Pate et al., 2003).

AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT

Organisational commitment is defined, in general, as the strength of an individual's identification with and attachment to an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It is described as a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's values and goals accompanied with willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization with a strong desire to sustain membership within the organization (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Cooper & Viswesvaran, 2005). Organizational commitment can predict work outcomes such as turnover, organizational citizenship behaviour, and job performance. Moreover, it is associated with wide range of organizational variables such as role stress, empowerment, job insecurity and employability, and distribution of leadership (Agarwal, 2011; Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Cassar & Briner, 2011).

According to Meyer & Allen (1991) organisational commitment has three main dimensions: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment is based on emotional ties the employee develops with the organization primarily via positive work experiences. Normative commitment reflects commitment based on perceived obligation towards the organization. Continuance commitment reflects commitment based on the perceived costs, both economic and social, of leaving the organization. Although the three dimensions have shown to have significant effects on employees' behaviours, however, in the psychological contract domain researchers have found that only affective commitment has consistent negative relationship with violation (Behery, Hussain, & Paton, 2012; Cassar & Briner, 2011; Knights & Kennedy, 2005; Lövblad & Bantekas, 2010; Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007).

This explains the growing interest in affective commitment as the main commitment dimension that can be influenced by fulfilment, breach and violation (Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Chiaburu, et al. 2013; Behery et al., 2012; Lövblad & Bantekas, 2010). Affective commitment has been defined as 'employees' emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization' (Meyer, Irving, & Allen, 1998. p. 32). An employee who is affectively committed may demonstrate strong feelings of belongingness and seek to achieve organisational goals. With affective commitment, being a part of the organisation becomes a crucial step for employees' emotional status (Meyer et al., 1998).

Research argued that psychological contract is closely related to employee's affective commitment (Coyle & Kessler, 2000; Lövblad & Bantekas, 2010; Restubog et al., 2006; Rousseau, 2004). Psychological contract defines and shapes the employee- employer relationship through employees' perceived mutual obligations that seems to influence their beliefs and attitudes (Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 1998). A positive emotional experience (fulfilment) may lead to emotional attachment whereas a negative emotional experience (breach and violation) may lead to decrease in attachment and involvement (Coyle & Kessler, 2000; Schalk & Roe, 2007). When employees perceive contract breach or violation they may become emotionally less committed due to the decreased trust in and identification with their organization, and may reduce performance or involve in counterproductive behaviours, in order to restore the balance to their exchange relationship (Lester, Kickul, & Bergmann, 2007; Robinson, 1996; Schalk & Roe, 2007). Accordingly, affective commitment is believed to be a major outcome of perceived violation (Behery et al., 2012; Coyle & Kessler, 2000; Restubog, et al., 2006; Rousseau, 2004).

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CYNICISM

Cynicism has its roots in the ancient Greece where the philosopher Antisthene introduced his ideas about how bad is the human nature and that we should not trust it (Dean et al, 1998). More recently, it has become the focus of study in a variety of social science (Andersson, 1996). In the organisational domain, the study of cynicism is relatively new (Abraham, 2000; Bedeian, 2007; Ewis, 2014; Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011). Organizational cynicism is a negative attitude toward one's employing organization that is based on a belief that the organization works against the employee's best interests (Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011).

Cynicism, in general, was defined by Andersson and Bateman (1997) as 'both a general and specific attitude, characterized by frustration and disillusionment as well as negative feelings toward and distrust of a person, group, ideology, social convention, or institution' (P.449). While Dean et al. (1998) defined organizational cynicism as a 'negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviours toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect' (Dean, et al., 1998 p.345). The two definitions are concerned with individual's feelings. The distinction between the two definitions is that Dean's definition focuses on organization related cynicism and included the cognitive, affective and behavioural components of cynicism within the organisation while Andersson and Bateman used a wider scope and included only the affective component (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Li, Zhou, & Leung, 2011). The current study adopts Dean's definition as it is believed to be more comprehensive

and more explanatory in nature.

Organizational cynicism is seen as a defensive mechanism that develops as a result of experience of lack of integrity, perceived violations, injustice and dishonesty (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998). As broadly described, cynicism can be seen as ‘the main root of negative attitude and is of deem importance in shaping whatever employees perceive in whatever way’ (Khalid & Yasin, 2015, p. 570). Despite its importance, relatively few researches have investigated the major antecedents (causes) of organisational cynicism (Cole, Heike, & Bernd, 2006). The most comprehensive theoretical model for cynicism development was introduced by Andersson (1996). In Andersson’s model several factors including; organization and job environment, psychological contract violations, and individuals’ dispositional attributes are found to contribute to increased levels of employee cynicism (Andersson, 1996; Cole et al., 2006; Karfakis & Kokkinos’s, 2011). Perceived violations is a major antecedent for employees’ cynicism (Abraham, 2000; Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998; Johnson & O’Leary, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003)

On the other side, cynicism is found to influence employees attitudes and behaviours (Evans, Goodman, & Davis, 2011; Ewis, 2014; Johnson & O’Leary, 2003; Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011; Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Li, et al., 2011). Cynicism may influence employees’ commitment in general (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al. 1998; Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Nafei & Kaif, 2013; Pugh et al., 2013) and affective commitment in particular (English & Chalon, 2011; Poon, 2010). However, only limited research (e.g., Bashir & Nasir 2013; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Johnson & O’Leary 2003) investigated and supported the mediating role of cynicism in the relationship between perceived violation and commitment. The logic behind this mediating role is that cynicism surfaces between the time the violation is perceived and the time its impact is felt on employees’ affective commitment level. This means that when employees perceive violation they first feel frustration and disillusionment as well as negative feelings (cynicism) that develops through time to reduce their affective commitment (Bashir & Nasir 2013; Chiaburu, et al., 2013; English & Chalon, 2011; Johnson & O’Leary 2003; Poon, 2010). Accordingly, it is not the violation that may explain the decrease in affective commitment; it is the loss of faith in the organisation’s integrity and honesty due to the violated obligations. Before losing commitment, employees may lose faith and trust and become cynical then they may demonstrate less emotional attachment with their organisations. Accordingly it is expected that psychological contract violations may lead to cynicism which, in turn, may lead to reduced affective commitment.

THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEES’ EXPECTATIONS

Expectations are beliefs about the probabilities associated with a future state of affairs (Kandasamy & Sreekumar, 2009). These expectations are formed before and during the recruiting process (Lee, 2006; Kandasamy & Sreekumar, 2009). Before recruiting, expectations are formed by both past experiences and the information gathered by the individual about the targeted organisation (Oraman, Unakitan, & Selen, 2011; Purse, 2015). During the recruiting process, expectations are formed through the given explicit and implicit promises or commitments related to the future (Lambert et al., 2003; Top, 2013; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). Expectations cover wide range of elements including actions, wages, work environment, promotions, career bath and relationships with supervisors (Robinson &

Rousseau 1994). The higher the expectations are the higher the frustrations due to unmet expectations (Robinson & Rousseau 1994; Top, 2013).

The psychological contract is distinct from expectations. Expectations refer simply to what the employee expects to receive from his or her employer (Top, 2013), whereas psychological contract refers to the perceived mutual obligations. Employees' expectations are closely attached to the psychological contract concept as expectations are the building blocks for perceived obligations (Robinson & Rousseau 1994; Rousseau, 1998; Rousseau, 2004). Although psychological contract involve expectation, however, not all expectations are included in the psychological contract (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1998). Accordingly it may be expected that employee's expectations may affect employee's reactions to violations (e.g., cynicism) (Abraham, 2000; Andersson, 1996; Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Dean et al., 1998; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003). However, the strength and direction of this relationship is not consistent through the available literature. For example, Bashir & Nasir (2013) and Pugh et al. (2003) found a weak significant relationship between violation and cynicism, whereas a strong significant relationship was found by Andersson (1996) & Chiaburu, et al (2013). This inconsistency suggests the existence of some moderating variables that may have a strong contingent effect on the relationship. As employees' expectations are closely related to the psychological contract and as cynicism is developed due to feelings of loss of integrity triggered from not fulfilling what was expected (Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Dean et al., 1998; Robinson and Rousseau 1994; Rousseau, 2004; Rousseau, 1998), it is suggested that employees' expectations may moderate the relationship between violation and cynicism.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This study aims at understanding the violation – affective commitment relationship by examining the mediating role of cynicism and the moderating role of employees' expectations. The proposed relationships can be illustrated in figure 1.

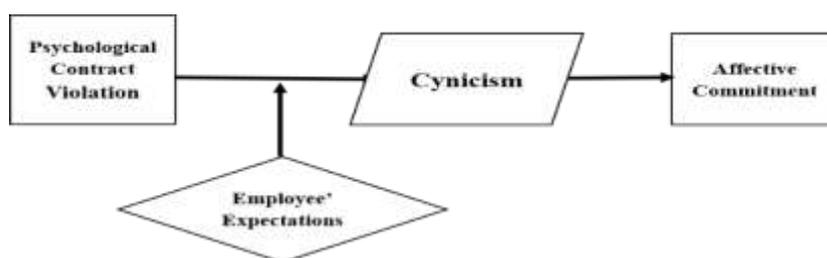


Figure (1) The proposed model

Figure 1. The proposed relationships among study variables.

RESEARCH AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The current research proposes that the experience of a psychological contract violation triggers cynicism and this, in turn, decreases employees' affective commitment. The study also proposes that employees' expectations will affect the relationship between psychological

contract violation and cynicism.

To achieve this objective the following **hypotheses** will be tested:

H1: Cynicism Mediate the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment

H2: Employees' expectations moderate the relationship between psychological contract violation and cynicism.

METHODOLOGY

PILOT STUDY

As a preliminary step, in-depth interviews with a sample of academic staff have been conducted to check the importance of the research variables to the targeted population. 30 face to face interviews were conducted with academic staff (lecturers, assistant professors and professors) in 2 private universities in greater Cairo area. These interviews focused on two main points. First, to clarify the research main concepts with special focus on psychological contract violation and cynicism. Second, to reveal the importance of the research objectives from academic and practical perspectives.

SAMPLE:

The target population in this study was academic staff working in (10) private universities in Cairo, Egypt. Three private universities, with international partnerships, working in greater Cairo area were chosen. The total no. of permanent staff in the three universities was 2316. According to Sekaran (2013) the suitable sample size for this target population should be 331 subjects. To consider the response rate, a quota sampling procedure was used to recruit five hundred university staff members. Only three hundreds and ninety five of them responded positively with a response rate of (79%). Their main characteristics are shown in table1.

Characteristic	Description
Age	M = 43.36 years ± SD = 8.89 years
Teaching experience	M = 18.47 years ± SD = 4.83 years
Gender	
- Male	44%
- Female	56%
Academic position	
- Assistant professor (Lecturer)	43%
- Associate professor	31.6%
- Full professor	25.4%
Teaching experience in the current faculty	M= 4.35 years ± SD = 2.74 years

Table 1. Sample characteristics.

These characteristics indicate a reasonable mix of demographic groups represented in the collected data.

MEASURES

Four-part questionnaire was used to assess the study variables. Psychological contract Violation (PCV) was measured using 5 items scale developed by Robinson and Morrison (2000). Cynicism was measured using the 5 item scale developed by Pugh et al. (2003). Two of the five items were reverse-coded. Affective Commitment (AC) was measured using Meyer and Allen (1991) 8-item scale. Finally, Employee' Expectations (EE) was measured using 8 items scale adopted from the organizational diagnostic survey by Pond et al., 1984. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale. Answers ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Demographic variables including age, gender, academic position, and experience were also included. Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients, and reliability coefficient of these measures are shown in table 2.

Table 2.Descriptive statistics, correlation coefficients and reliability coefficients of study variables.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1. PCV	19.56	3.27	.781			
2. Cynicism	18.77	4.54	.429**	.742		
3. EE	32.41	5.68	.460**	.446**	.874	
4. AC	24.52	4.69	-.762**	-.494**	-.424**	.893

** Correlation coefficient is significant at .01 level; Chronbach's alphas are in diagonal cells

Furthermore, to test the validity of the used measures, two procedures were used. First, the four-part questionnaire was revised by a panel of 10 experts who assessed the content of each part and evaluated the appropriateness of this content to the Egyptian culture. The comments of all experts indicated that the used questionnaires are valid and culturally appropriate. Second, a confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS 20, was conducted to confirm the factor structure of the used scales in the target population as shown in table 3.

Table 3.Confirmatory factor analysis for study variables.

Item	PCV		Cynicism		EE		AC	
	Estimate	t-value	Estimate	t-value	Estimate	t-value	Estimate	t-value
1	.778	14.89**	.805	15.85	.386	6.74**	.512	8.93**
2	.766	15.09**	.791	15.22	.317	6.63**	.332	7.03**
3	.744	16.23**	.866	18.61	.348	6.25**	.369	6.70**
4	.597	11.81**	.482	9.67	.381	7.51**	.396	7.89**
5	.625	11.76**	.487	8.82	.542	10.54**	.534	10.47**
6					.703	14.22**	.674	13.73**
7					.585	11.81**	.574	11.68**
8					.643	12.30**	.666	12.96**

** Coefficient is significant at .01 level

It can be shown from the previous results that all questionnaire' parts have significant factor loadings on their latent variables. The fit indices for these factor structures are shown in table 4.

Table 4. Fit indices for the factor structures of the used instruments

Variable	CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
PCV	1.971	.986	.965	.971	.976	.048
Cynicism	1.893	.972	.958	.963	.968	.053
EE	1.867	.966	.951	.959	.962	.055
AC	1.765	.981	.969	.975	.971	.051

As can be shown in the previous table, all fit indices were above the recommended level of acceptance. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the factor structures of the used instruments are confirmed in the target population.

PROCEDURE

Participants were approached in their offices in universities' campuses and were asked to complete the questionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, all participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and anonymity was guaranteed. Latin square procedure was used to control the order of presenting the four-part questionnaire and to minimize the common method bias.

RESULTS

To test the first hypothesis, assuming that cynicism mediates the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment, was tested using a hierarchical multiple regression in two steps. In the first step, psychological contract violation was used to predict employees' affective commitment. In the second step, organizational cynicism is entered in the regression equation as a second predictor. The results of this procedure are shown in table 5.

Table 5. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis

Independent variable	b	t-value	R-square	F
First step				
PCV	.254	23.33**	.581	544.28**
Second step				
PCV	.224	19.43**	.615	313.34**
Cynicism	.282	5.93**		

** Coefficient is significant at .01 level

It can be shown from the previous table that the regression coefficient of psychological contract violation was slightly decreased in value, although still significant, when organizational cynicism was entered in the regression model. Therefore, it can be concluded that organizational cynicism partially mediates the relationship between psychological contract violation and employees' affective commitment. These results were confirmed using Sobel test (Z-value = 5.066, p-value = .0001). Accordingly, the first hypothesis is accepted. To test the second hypothesis, assuming that employees' expectations moderate the relationship between psychological contract violation and cynicism, a multiple regression procedure was applied using the standardized scores of psychological contract violation, employees' expectations and the interaction between them as independent variables as shown in table 6.

Table 6. Multiple regression analysis to predict organizational cynicism.

Independent Variable	Regression coefficient	t-value	R-square	F
Z- PCV	.831	6.58**	.269	47.87**
Z- EE	.783	6.08**		
Interaction	.472	2.87**		

** Coefficient is significant at .01 level

The multiple regression analysis indicates that there is a significant interaction between psychological contract violation and employees’ expectations that affect organizational cynicism. This result reveals that employees’ expectations moderate the relationship between psychological contract violation and organizational cynicism. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also accepted. *To test the fit of the proposed model* that includes both the mediation and moderation model, a path analysis model was designed to represent the possible paths. The analytical results for model fit and model good fit indices are shown in Table 7.

Table 7. Structural model and fit indices.

		Estimate	Standardized	C.R.	P
PSC	→ Cynicism	.603	.484	11.02	.0001
PSC	→ AC	.254	.237	5.84	.0001
Cynicism	→ AC	.282	.243	6.71	.0001
Interaction	→ Cynicism	.472	.465	2.87	.001
CMIN/DF	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
2.85	.964	.958	.961	.963	.056

All in all, it can be concluded that results support the structural model presented in Figure 2.

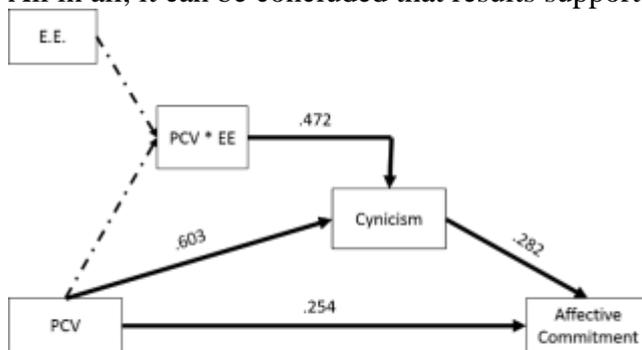


Figure (2) Fitted Empirical Model

Figure 2. The fitted empirical model.

DISCUSSION

Understanding the effects of psychological contract violation on employees’ attitudes and behaviours is an important issue that has been the focus of research for more than two decades. This research is lined at the same direction. Psychological contract violation has been associated with several negative attitudes and behaviours (Arshad, 2016; Lemire & Rouillard,

2005; Pate et al., 2003; Shimei & Yaodong, 2013). One of the major attitudes that could be affected by violation is organisational commitment (Cassar & Briner, 2011; Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Knights & Kennedy, 2005; Tomprou et al., 2015). Affective commitment was found to be the most influence dimension by violations of psychological contract (Bantekas, 2010; Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Lövblad & Restubog et al., 2006). Understanding the effects of violation on affective commitment could enhance our understanding of employees' behaviour (Dantas & Ferreira, 2015; Tomprou et al., 2015). This research tried to add to our understanding by including cynicism as a mediator and employees' expectations as moderator.

The results indicated that Egyptian academic staff in private universities experience relatively high levels of psychological contract violation and cynicism along with high level of expectations and relatively moderate level of affective commitment. This could be explained by the nature of employment contracts in private sector and the academic staff background. In private universities, almost all contracts are temporary (one year to be renewed upon university approval) while in public sector (where most of the staff came from) contracts are permanent and staff has great freedom (Belal & Springuel, 2012). When academic staff joins private universities they develop high expectations regarding flexibility, financial systems and work environment as were clear in the responses to the expectation scale. In reality they found that flexibility in private universities is not as expected especially regarding quality of students, workloads, and financial packages, however work environment relatively meets their expectations (Belal & Springuel, 2012; Cupito & Langsten, 2010; Holmes, 2008). The moderate level of commitment among respondents irrespective of the relatively high levels of psychological contract violation and cynicism may also be explain by the cultural dimension, as stated by Ibrahim & Rue (1994), where Egyptian employees scored higher on commitment than their American counterparts . According to Ibrahim & Rue (1994) culture, among other variables, can explain variance in commitment.

The correlation analysis revealed the existence of a significant strong negative relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment. This means that when staff perceive that their psychological contract was violated they lose trust in the organisation and consequently well be less attached and committed to their organisation.(Agarwal, 2011; Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Bankole & Ajagun, 2014). Both feelings of violation and affective commitment develop over time, they require clear understanding of the job , the systems, goals, regulations, expectations and consequences of behaviour (Bal, De-Lange, Zacher, & Van-der, Heijden, 2013). In the studied sample the respondents had relatively long experience in general ($M = 18.47$ years \pm $SD = 4.83$ years) and a reasonable experience in their current faculties ($M = 4.35$ years \pm $SD = 2.74$ years) this means that they got the time needed to understand the nature of the job and their current positions. This indicated that the perceived violation and the corresponded affective commitment were developed based on staff experience in their faculties. This result matches previous researches (Agarwal, 2011; Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Bankole & Ajagun, 2014; Cassar & Briner, 2011; Knights & Kennedy ,2005; Lövblad & Bantekas, 2010; Pate et al. 2003; Suazo, 2009) where affective commitment is expected to decrease as a reaction to feelings of violations .

A significant positive correlation also exists between psychological contract violation and cynicism (.429). Cynicism seems to be a reaction to experience of lack of integrity and perceived violations (Andersson, 1996; Ewis, 2014; Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011; Johnson

& O'Leary, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003). Accordingly, when employees experience violations they develop negative attitudes toward the organisation. Cynicism can be seen as an apathy-based attitude (Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Pugh et al., 2003) where employees' feels isolation and tiredness and they became unwilling to act. These attitudes are developed due to losing of trust in the organisation integrity (Ewis, 2014; Abraham, 2000; Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011; Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). This attitude that reduces employees' attachment and recognition with the organisation, hence reduce their commitment. A significant negative correlation (-.495) was found between cynicism and affective commitment which support the existence of this relationship (Abraham, 2000; Bedeian, 2007; Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Nafei & Kaif, 2013). Cynicism, as social construct, was found to affect people's affective reactions toward their organisations (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Li et al., 2011). As explained by Karfakis & Kokkinidis (2011) cynicism seems to be a defensive mechanism by which the employee create an 'inner free space' where employees avoid being committed to the organization in order to avoid the feelings of being responsible, way or another, for the company's failure. Accordingly, employees how scored high in cynicism are more likely to score low in affective commitment (Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Li et al., 2011).

The results supported the relationship between cynicism and both psychological contract and affective commitment. This study proposed the mediating role of cynicism in the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment. According to the results, the regression coefficient of psychological contract violation was slightly and significantly decreased (from .254 to .224) when organizational cynicism was entered in the regression model. This means that when cynicism exists, the effect of psychological contract violation on affective commitment is decreased, but the relationship remains significant, which indicate that cynicism partially mediates the relationship. This mediation role was confirmed by Sobel test. As mentioned earlier, this mediation role was rarely investigated in previous research (Bashir & Nasir 2013; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Johnson & O'Leary 2003). In previous research other variables were considered as mediators in this relationship between psychological contract (violations and fulfilment) and organisational commitment. Mediators included job satisfaction (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Tsui, Lin, & Yu, 2013), Self Esteem (Bankole & Ajagun, 2014; Hughes & Palmer, 2007), type of psychological contract (Agarwal, 2011), Exchange imbalance (Cassar & Briner, 2011), transformational leadership (Behery et al., 2012), and work related quality of life (Khalid & Yasin, 2015). Although the proposed mediating role of cynicism was accepted by the statistical analysis, however, the relationship needs more investigation with a possibility of using other important variables.

The research also investigated the moderation effect of employees' expectations on the relationship between psychological contract violation and cynicism. It was proposed that the strength of reaction to violation (manifested in cynicism) is affected by the unmet expectations (Conway et al., 2011; Rousseau, 2004; Top, 2013). The results supported the existence of a positive significant correlation between employees' expectations and both psychological contract violation (.460) and cynicism (.446). This means the higher the expectations the higher the perceived violation and more likely to be cynical. The moderation role was sustained by multiple regression analysis results where a significant interaction between psychological contract violation and employees' expectations ($\beta = 0.472$ / t -value = 2.87** / $F = 47.87$ ***) was found to affect organizational cynicism. The relationship between psychological contract violation and employees' expectations was investigated in previous research and a significant relationship was found (Conway et al., 2011; Lambert et al., 2003;

Robinson and Rousseau 1994; Top, 2013; Turnley & Feldman, 2000). According to the results, the relatively high level of violation perceived by the academic staff in the studied universities was correlated to their high expectations. The greater the expectations are the greater the anger and rage that expressed in violation (Conway et al., 2011). Consequently, negative emotions are developed due to frustrations created by unmet expectations and leading to cynicism (Ewis, 2014; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003; Lester et al.2007; Robinson & Rousseau 1994; Top, 2013). Despite of the importance of the negative effects of unmet expectations (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992) neither the employees' expectations-cynicism relationship nor the moderation role of employees' expectations was investigated in previous research. This moderation role needs to be investigated in other context.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

These results have several important *practical implications*: first, the nature of psychological contract among academic staff needs to be explored as the nature of the profession itself is complicated and affects the way staff are evaluating employment contracts wither they are written or psychological. The academic staff perception of psychological contract is shaped by several aspects that relates to the socio-economic factors in Egypt (Belal & Springuel, 2012; Cupito & Langsten, 2010; Holmes, 2008), hence the exploration of these contracts can enhance our understanding of academic staff attitudes and behaviours and consequently improve their performance.

Second, there is urgent need for better understanding of academic staff expectations. They occurred to have high expectations which affected their perceptions of psychological contract violation. Depending only on written formal contracts may increase the gap between expectations and reality (Purse, 2015). Induction programs, orientation sessions, focus group discussions with emphasis on revealing expectations and unwritten obligations could be used by HRM (Charland & Leclair, 2007; Purse, 2015).

Third, the fact that academic staff experience relatively high levels of cynicism is an alarm for decision makers to consider the reasons and search for mechanisms or approaches to deal with it. The devastating effects of cynicism on both organisational and personal levels are worth the efforts needed to reduce this negative attitude (Bedeian, 2007; Ewis, 2014).

These results contributed to literature by emphasising the mediation role of cynicism and the moderation role of employees' expectations. These results could have several *theoretical implications*, first, the nature of cynicism and the distinction between organisational and employee cynicism is still in need for more clarification in regard of scope and measurement (Abraham, 2000; Karfakis & Kokkinidis, 2011). Cynicism, as an attitude, is also interface with cynicism as a personality trait. The distinction between both is still difficult leading to a dilemma: do people in organisations get cynical because of the different organisational factors affecting them or were they created cynical? (Abraham, 2000; Johnson & O'Leary, 2003). Second, the mediating role of cynicism in affecting employees' behaviours was not investigated comprehensively, only few attempts tried to investigate this role (Bashir & Nasir 2013; Chiaburu et al., 2013; Ewis, 2014; Johnson & O'Leary 2003; Pugh et al. 2003). Including cynicism as a mediator could explain some of employees' negative behaviours.

Third, employees' expectations should be included in equations that predict employees' performance and behaviours. Employment relationship should be seen from both sides' employees and employers (Purse, 2015).

CONCLUSION

This research aimed at enhancing our understanding of the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment by examining the moderating effects of employees' expectations and to consider cynicism as a mediating variable among Egyptian academic staff in private universities. The results revealed that Egyptian academic staff under investigation experience relatively high levels of psychological contract violation and cynicism associated with high levels of expectations that lead to relatively moderate level of affective commitment.

The first hypothesis, proposing a mediation role of cynicism in the violation - affective commitment relationship, was also sustained. Yet, the violation - affective commitment relationship still significant after the entering of cynicism indicating that cynicism partially mediate the relationship and proposing the existence of other variables that might be considered as mediators (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Bankole & Ajagun, 2014; Khalid & Yasin, 2015; Tsui et al. 2013).

The second hypothesis, proposing the moderation effect of employees' expectations, was accepted as results supported the existence of a moderation effect of employees' expectations on the violation-cynicism relationship. The proposed structural model was tested using SEM. The model fit indices support the proposed relationships between variables.

FUTURE RESEARCH

These results are subject to the following *limitations*. First, the scope of research is limited to academic staff working in private universities in Cairo. Second, the research sample (395 respondents) and the type of sample (quota) may also limit the generalizability of the results. Therefore, future research needs to address the effects of cynicism as a mediator on employees in- role and extra-role behaviours. Employees' expectations need to be investigated as independent variable that affects a wide range of attitudes and behaviours.

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