

## **Trust, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and the Volunteer's Psychological Contract**

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### **Abstract**

*Studies indicate that psychological contracts can develop between volunteers and the nonprofit organizations they serve and that this relationship plays a role in volunteer performance and retention. This study explored the relationships between volunteers' levels of trust, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and their perceptions of organizational breaches of the contract. The data indicated decreases in job satisfaction may influence volunteers' perceptions of contract breach but trust and organizational commitment did not.*

### **Keywords:**

volunteers, satisfaction, commitment, trust, psychological contracts

### **Introduction**

Volunteers may develop perceptions that their nonprofit obligations will provide them something in return for their service. This concept, of perceived reciprocity, is often referred to as a "psychological contract." Furthermore, volunteers may perceive their organization has not fulfilled its part of the contract. Perceived breaches may negatively affect the volunteer's service to the organization (Farmer & Fedor, 1997; Starnes 2004).

### **Purpose of the Paper**

This study was conducted to answer the management question: What can managers of nonprofit organizations do to maintain and improve the contributions made by their volunteer workforces? This paper focuses on the study's findings regarding the influence of the volunteers' levels of trust, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment on perceptions of contract breach.

### **Methodology**

A longitudinal research design consisting of volunteer responses to a survey instrument at two points in time within a six-month period was used. A random sample of 276 volunteers was selected from a population of 532 volunteers serving in a variety of community, professional, and fraternal organizations.

### Key concepts and operational definitions.

Trust was defined as "reliance on others" and measured using a scale created by Gabarro and Athos (1976). Job satisfaction was defined as "how happy people are with their work based on what they perceive they will receive in return" and measured using a scale developed by (Spector, 1997). Finally, organizational commitment was defined as "the willingness of the organization to fulfill obligations to employees." Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian's (1974) scale measured commitment levels. Standardized multiple regression tested the hypotheses.

The hypotheses.

H<sub>1B</sub>: Volunteers with decreased trust in the nonprofit organization (between Times One and Two) will be more likely to perceive a breach in the psychological contract (at Time Two) than are volunteers with increased trust in the nonprofit organization.

H<sub>2B</sub>: Volunteers with decreased job satisfaction in the nonprofit organization (between Times One and Two) will be more likely to perceive a breach in the psychological contract than are volunteers with increased job satisfaction in the nonprofit organization (at Time Two).

H<sub>3B</sub>: Volunteers with decreased organizational commitment in the nonprofit organization (between Times One and Two) will be more likely to perceive a breach in

the psychological contract than are volunteers with increased organizational commitment in the nonprofit organization (at Time Two).

Findings and Conclusions

Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to evaluate the changes in the mean scores of the volunteers' perceptions of trust, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment between Times One and Two. (See Table 1.) There was a statistically significant decrease in organizational commitment scores from Time One (Me = 48.6, sd = 6.23) to Time Two (Me = 45.4, sd = 5.27, t = .555, p <.0005). There were no statistically significant differences in the trust (Me = 17.7, sd = 2.24) and job satisfaction (Me = 66.7, sd = 6.23) scores between Times One and Two.

**Table 1**  
*T Scores between Volunteers' Perceptions of Trust, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment in the Nonprofit Organization at Times One and Two (N=85)*

Variable	Time One		Time Two		t	Sig.
	Me	Sd	Me	Sd		
Trust	17.7	2.24	17.4	2.40	.816	.417
Job satisfaction	66.7	7.53	66.2	7.06	.612	.542
Organizational commitment	48.6	6.23	45.4	5.27	.555*	.000*

df = 84

\*p ≤ .05

Standardized multiple regression was used as the test statistic to assess impact of the Time Two-Time One scores for trust, job satisfaction, organizational commitment on the perceptions of how well the contract had been fulfilled at Time Two. Standardized multiple regression was chosen as the test statistic for these hypotheses because the sample size of 85 was large enough and visual assessments of the appropriate Normal Probability Plots and scatter plots indicated the data appeared to be normally distributed and linear. For this analysis the dependent variable was the volunteers' perceptions of a breach of the psychological contract. (The operational definition for a breach of the psychological contract was to subtract the volunteers' scores of how well the contract had been fulfilled at Time Two from their perceptions that a psychological developed at Time One score.) The data for the independent variables trust, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment

was each variables Time Two-Time One score.

The Pearson correlation data, shown in Table 2 indicates a statistically significant strong positive relationship between organizational commitment and job satisfaction between Times One and Two and significant moderate relationships between job satisfaction, organizational commitment and trust scores between Times One and Two. In addition, a very weak negative relationship exists between the volunteers' perceptions of trust in the organization and their perceptions of a breach in the contract. In regard to perception of breach, the data indicates small positive relationships exist between the volunteers' perceptions of job satisfaction and organizational commitment and their perceptions of a breach in the psychological contract. However, only the relationship between job satisfaction and perceived breach was found to be statistically significant.

**Table 2**  
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficients for Changes in the Volunteers' Perceptions of Trust, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment and Perceptions of a Breach in the Psychological Contract (N=85)*

Variable	Me	Sd	Trust	Job satisfaction	Organizational commitment	Perceived breach
Trust (T2-T1)	-2.35	2.65	X			
Job satisfaction (T2-T1)	-4.94	7.44	.456**	X		
Organizational commitment (T2-T1)	-3.24	5.38	.459**	.510**	X	
Perceived breach (T2)	.976	8.31	-.014	.268*	.176	X

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the regression analysis. The collinearity tolerance statistics appear strong indicating this analysis does not violate the assumption of no multicollinearity and the coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) indicates that 10.5 percent of the variance in the volunteers' perceptions of how well the contract had been fulfilled was caused by changes in the volunteers' levels of trust, satisfaction, and organizational commitment between Times One and Two. The ANOVA significance value for the entire model was found to be significant at .029. The standardized coefficients indicate that the volunteers' levels of job satisfaction made the strongest statistically significant unique contribution to explaining the volunteers' perceptions of how well the contract had been fulfilled (beta = .303). The statistically significant beta score of .020 and t value of 2.37 indicated that changes in job satisfaction between Times One and Two were making significant unique contributions to the volunteers' perception of a breach in the psychological contract. The ANOVA

significant value of .029 also indicated the model was statistically significant. Therefore, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis for Hypotheses Two and concluded that there was a significant relationship between the volunteers' perceptions of a breach in the psychological contract and their levels of job satisfaction between Time One and Time Two. However, the beta significance values of .100 for trust and .371 for organizational commitment and t values of -1.66 and .89 respectively indicated that changes in trust and organizational commitment were not making significant unique contributions to the volunteers' perceptions of a breach. Therefore, the researcher failed to reject the null hypotheses for Hypotheses One and Three and concluded that there were no significant relationships between the volunteers' perceptions of breach of the psychological contract and their levels of trust and organizational commitment in the nonprofit organization.

**Table 3**  
*Standardized Regression Results for Changes in Trust, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment Variables Predicting the Perception of a Breach of the Psychological Contract (N=85)*

Variable	Tolerance <sup>a</sup>	Unstandardized Coefficients <sup>a</sup>	Standardized Coefficients Betas <sup>a</sup>	Sig <sup>a</sup>	t
(Constant)		1.569		.140	1.49
Trust (T2-T1)	.723	-.643	-.206	.100	-1.66
Job satisfaction (T2-T1)	.677	.339	.303	.020*	2.37
Organizational commitment (T2-T1)	.675	.177	.115	.371	.89
$r^2 = .105^b$					
$F = 3.152^b$					
ANOVA Sig. = .029* <sup>a</sup>					

\* $p \leq .05$

a. Predictors: (constant), trust, satisfaction, commitment at Time 2-Time 1

b. Dependent variable: Perceived contract fulfillment at Time Two

### Implications for the Profession

Managers of volunteer workforces may find it helpful to enhance their understanding of the role job satisfaction may play in a volunteer's perception that the organization has breached the psychological contract. Management techniques and tools useful for managing this satisfaction could include job rotation and enlargement activities for volunteers to build the sense of accomplishment in their work (Kreitner & Kinicki, 1998). Additional actions include: participative decision-making processes, elimination of restrictive organizational policies and procedures, self-managing work group structures, reward systems that match volunteers' expectations, and realistic job reviews to match volunteers and their abilities with organizational needs (Gellatly, 1995; Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1995; & Sims 1994).

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### **About the Author**

Becky J. Starnes received a Ph.D. in public administration and public policy from Auburn University Montgomery. She is an assistant professor of professional studies for the school of technology and public management. This article is from her dissertation: An analysis of psychological contracts in voluntarism and the influences of trust, job, satisfaction, and organizational commitment published by *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65(06), 2359 (UMI No. 316015).