

A Systematic Review of Broken Psychological Contracts in  
Employment Relationships and Actions to Manage Them

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A dissertation submitted to

Auckland University of Technology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Business

2024

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## **Abstract**

The psychological contract (PC) has been widely studied over the past few decades as a valuable framework for understanding the employment relationship. However, many PC studies have taken an employee perspective and focused primarily on the effects of the broken PC on a limited number of outcomes. There has been a lack of attention on the practical actions organisations have taken or could take to manage these breakages. Therefore, a systematic review from an organisational viewpoint can provide a better understanding of the complexity of relationships between the broken PCs and a large number of work-related outcomes, and solutions for managing these broken PCs. We implemented systematic review methods to identify 80 primary studies from 1989 to 2024. Our findings reveal that a broken PC negatively affects work-related outcomes, not only have detrimental effects on organisational performance but also on employee health in both contexts of dyadic relationships and third parties witnessing these relationships. Findings also suggest that organisations should focus their efforts on prospective prevention strategies, repair tactics, and potential moderators for mitigating the effects of broken PCs. To our knowledge, this systematic review is the first to conduct a qualitative review of primary studies to identify practical actions that are or could be taken to prevent or mitigate the adverse effects of broken PCs from an organisational perspective. Future research is needed to manage broken PCs within specific contexts, such as in different occupational settings. Moreover, time and health-related outcomes are two gaps for future PC research.

Keywords: broken psychological contract, systematic review, employment relationship, work-related outcomes, practical actions

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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature:

Date: September 27, 2024

## **Acknowledgements**

To Professor Helena Cooper-Thomas, my supervisor. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for your invaluable guidance and unlimited patience throughout this journal. Your insightful recommendations, detailed comments, and continuous encouragement helped me get back on track whenever I faced difficulties. I especially appreciated your care and warm-hearted support when I encountered my father's illness. Thank you so much, Helena. Without you, I could not have completed this dissertation. Your passion for research, commitment to rigorous standards, and the way you treat students have been truly inspiring. I will pursue a PhD and an academic career, and I hope to pass on the valuable lessons I have learned from you to future students.


Also, I wish to thank the Business Postgraduate Research Office for providing many helpful workshops during my studies. In particular, many thanks to Regina Lee, who always helped me to solve my visa issues and other things; and Tania Teng, thank you for your recommendation to apply for a leave of absence for an extension, which really helped me a lot. I appreciated it.

Finally, special thanks to my wife, Rachel Dong, and my parents, Yong Li and Qinghua Xu. Your trust and understanding of my desire mean a lot to me. Love you.

## Co-authorship Contributions Within this Dissertation

### STUDENT AND SUPERVISOR APPROVALS

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<b>Chapter Number:</b>	Chapter 2
<b>Manuscript Title:</b>	A systematic review of broken psychological contracts: How broad are the impacts and what organisational actions are effective?
<b>Publication Status:</b>	Unpublished/Ready for submission for Publication
<b>Reference if published:</b>	
<b>AUTHOR SURNAME: (order as per manuscript)</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTION (May copy from the guidelines above)</b>
Li	I am the principal author of the jointly-authored manuscript, contributing 90% of the work.
Cooper-Thomas	My supervisor (Professor Helena Cooper-Thomas) supervised me, guided review process, methods, results, discussion and conclusion, and helped with revision editing; contributing 10% of the work.

## Chapter One: Introduction

Over the last half-century, the psychological contract (PC) has proven valuable for understanding the employee-organisation relationship (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Laulié & Pavez, 2024; Rousseau, 1989; Schein, 1965). However, despite being a valuable concept, the PC has no uniform definition in the PC literature (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). For instance, one of the PC definitions developed from the employee's perspective is that the PC comprises an individual's mental representation about the terms of reciprocal exchange arrangement between themselves and their organisation (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Rousseau, 1989, 1995, 1998). An alternative definition frames PC from both perspectives of the employee and organisation, defining it as the perceptions held by both parties (the employee and the organisation) in the employment relationship about the mutual promises and obligations inherent in that relationship (Guest & Conway, 2002; Herriot & Pemberton, 1997).

Contrasting these different definitions of the PC, there is more consistency in how scholars view damage to the PC. Suppose one party (e.g., the organisation) breaks its promises to the other party (e.g., the employee). In that case, it may result in a *PC breach* (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Henderson et al., 2020), which relates to the cognitive judgement that the organisation fails to deliver on its promises (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). A further term used to refer to PC damage is *PC violation*, is defined as “an intense reaction of outrage, shock, resentment, and anger” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 129). Hence, there is a distinction between these two terms: a *PC breach* has a cognitive focus and represents a significant difference between what employees believed they were promised and what the organisation actually offered, whereas a *PC violation* has an affective focus and refers to a strong negative emotional response that may occur after a PC breach (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019; Dulac et al., 2008; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Tomprou et al., 2015). Importantly, individuals may experience a breach of PC but not a violation (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). In other words, the cognitive perception that the PC has been broken may not result in a negative emotional response, suggesting that breach and violation are distinct.

However, in contrast to this distinctiveness, the terms *PC breach* and *PC violation* are occasionally used interchangeably in PC research (Zhao et al., 2007). The rationale provided by scholars for this merging is that the essence of both PC breach and PC violation fundamentally lies in the breaking of promises (Bankins, 2015; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2018; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Tomprou et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2007). Empirical evidence suggests that breach and violation are closely related. Thus, a meta-analysis by Zhao et al. (2007) reported that the PC breach is positively related to the violation, and correlation coefficients of both breach and violation with each of the seven work-related

outcomes were similar. For instance, the correlation between breach and performance was -.24, as opposed to -.25 for violation and performance. Similarly, for job satisfaction, the correlation was -.54 for breach, compared to -.68 for violation (Zhao et al., 2007). Taking a practical viewpoint, organizations normally adopt the same strategies to manage both PC breaches and PC violations, without allocating additional time and resources to distinguish between them. Therefore, in this systematic review (SR), we use *broken PC* as a broad conceptual term that includes PC breaches or PC violations or both.

## **A Brief History of the Psychological Contract**

According to Conway and Briner (2009), the history of PC research can be divided into two distinct periods: the pre-Rousseau period and the Rousseau period. Before Rousseau's influential work (1989), researchers employed various definitions and measures of the PC in their studies (Argyris, 1960; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1965). However, after Rousseau redefined the PC, most research has used her PC reconceptualization (Conway & Briner, 2009; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019).

### ***The Pre-Rousseau Period***

Argyris (1960) initially adopted the idea *psychological work contract* to describe the tacit agreement between employees and their foreman in an American factory. Subsequently, Levinson et al. (1962) formally introduced the specific term *psychological contract*, showing that

The psychological or unwritten contract is a product of mutual expectations. These have two characteristics: (a) they are largely implicit and unspoken, and (b) they frequently antedate the relationship of person and company (Levinson et al., 1962, pp. 21-22).

They argued that the mutual expectations between employees and their organisation are compulsory, and the PC is continually affected and then changed by daily work experiences (Levinson et al., 1962). These prior mutual expectations between them have lasting impacts for current and future PCs.

A further addition by Schein (1965) emphasized that the PC is a key concept for understanding the relationship between the employee and their organisation. However, his definition of PC still centered around expectations (Schein, 1965).

### ***The Rousseau Period***

Rousseau's seminal work (1989), which has undeniably made the greatest impact on PC research (Conway & Briner, 2009; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019), redefined the concept of the PC. Her work (1989) focused on the more specific construct of promises as the core of the PC, while earlier definitions emphasised the mutual expectations (Argyris, 1960; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1965). Additionally,

Rousseau (1989) identified two common types of promise in PC research: explicit promises and implicit promises. Explicit promises derive from how employees perceive written and non-written arrangements, while implicit promises arise from employees' perception of recurring and similar exchange behaviours with their organisation in the past (Conway & Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1989, 1995).

Moreover, Rousseau (1989) redirected attention from the perspective of the relationship between employees and their organisation (Argyris, 1960; Levinson et al., 1962; Schein, 1965) to an individual and subjective perspective. She highlighted that the PC exists "in the eye of the beholder" (Rousseau, 1989, p. 123). This signifies that each individual within an organisation and the organisation itself develop their own PC based on their personal perceptions of experienced or observed events (Conway & Briner, 2005; Rousseau, 1995). Therefore, the PC can be perceived from different points of view, incorporating those of the employee (De Roeck et al., 2023), employer (Guest & Conway, 2002), or from a dual perspective (Chen et al., 2008).

Despite its extensive influence, Rousseau's (1989) redefinition of PC has been critiqued. For example, Rousseau (1989) focuses primarily on PC from the employee's viewpoint to understand the mutual promises (both implicit and explicit) and obligations between employee and organisation. However, critics have argued that PC research should also include the organisational standpoint to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the reciprocal promises of both parties (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Guest, 1998). Since the PC has been developed as a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between the employee and their organisation, it is essential to realize that this relationship is not a one-way exchange but rather two-way (Guest, 2004a, 2004b). In line with such criticisms, in the present study, a two-way perspective is adopted that acknowledges both the employee and organisational perspectives on the PC.

In addition, there are two common types of PC: transactional and relational (Rousseau, 1995). The transactional contract emphasizes short-term economic exchange, such as organisations paying employees for their work on a regular basis, while relational contracts focus on long-term socioemotional exchange, such as career development exchange for employees' commitment to organisations (Deng et al., 2023; Rousseau, 1995). It is noted that they are negatively related: as the PC becomes more transactional, it becomes less relational (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Rousseau, 1989).

Common theoretical bases for PC research draw upon the Norm of Reciprocity proposed by Gouldner (1960) and the Social Exchange Theory presented by Blau (1964). Both theories explain how employees evaluate whether the organisation has kept its promises to them and, vice versa, whether employees have

delivered their promises to the organisation (Bordia et al., 2010; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Kutaula et al., 2020; Tomprou et al., 2015). Existing PC research places emphasis on broken PC-related topics (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Kozhakhmet et al., 2023). This is shown, for example, in a recent bibliometric analysis of PC research by Kozhakhmet et al. (2023). They used the index of co-citation frequency to identify 100 milestone papers from 1989 to 2022. Of these, 78 studies concentrated on broken PC-related topics, followed by 15 studies on PC interdisciplinary (using PC-related concepts to other subjects, such as PCs of customer and supplier executives (Koh et al., 2004)), 7 studies on PC development, and 5 review studies.

## **Rationale for the Present Research**

This historical foundation of PC research and the recent bibliometric analysis (Kozhakhmet et al., 2023) of past studies provided the motivation for conducting a systematic review.

Firstly, to our knowledge, no reviews have focused explicitly on practical actions to prevent or reduce the harmful effects of broken PCs on work-related outcomes from an organisational perspective. For instance, existing reviews have mainly focused on the impact of these PC breaches and violations on work-related outcomes, including five meta-analyses (Bal et al., 2008; Jayaweera et al., 2021a, 2021b; Topa et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007). However, these meta-analytical reviews have taken only one side of the PC, that is, looking at how employees perceive and respond to the organisation's breaches and violations. Moreover, these reviews and meta-analyses have typically studied only a limited number of outcomes, such as job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intention, actual turnover, trust, and organisational commitment. None of them focused on solutions organisations could use to prevent or mitigate these broken PCs from the organisational perspective.

Additionally, three qualitative reviews (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Hoye & Kappelides, 2021; Kutaula et al., 2020) have given comparatively little attention to the practical strategies organisations could introduce for future prevention and resolution. For example, although the review by Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2019) discussed some solutions for managing PC breaches, its primary focus was to provide a comprehensive overview of PC research rather than concentrating on breach management strategies. Another review focused primarily on the volunteers' relationship to PC breaches, violations, and fulfillments, without giving much attention to actions non-profit organisations could take for future management of volunteers' PC (Hoye & Kappelides, 2021). Finally, a qualitative review by Kutaula et al. (2020) aimed at filling the knowledge gap on PC evaluation and content in the Asian context, summarising what is known to date. Thus, it did not focus specifically on broken PC-outcomes relationships and corresponding actions organisations could take to manage these breakages.

Therefore, a review is needed that includes a broader range of constructs, and accounts for the complexity of relationships between them, in understanding how broken PCs lead to poorer work-related outcomes. Additionally, a review could usefully identify the most effective solutions that organisations could use for managing broken PCs.

Secondly, broken PCs harm employee health but negatively impact organisational performance and effectiveness (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2007). For instance, after a broken PC, employees may suffer from worse mental health (Garcia et al., 2018), physical health (Vander Elst et al., 2016), and burnout (Jiang et al., 2017). Extant research shows that the broken PC has adverse effects on turnover intentions (Zhao et al., 2007), work performance (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019), and organisational trust (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Furthermore, employees perceiving a broken PCs may display destructive voice (Lin et al., 2022), deviant behaviour (Chiu & Peng, 2008), and counterproductive workplace behaviours (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a), which could impose huge costs on organisational development, and therefore reduce profitability and effectiveness (Asante et al., 2024; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Chiu & Peng, 2008; Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Therefore, organisations should take actions to prevent or reduce the negative effects of these broken PCs on employee health and organisational performance.

Finally, according to many studies, a broken PC is the norm rather than the exception. For instance, Robinson and Rousseau (1994) found 55% of employees experienced PC violation; Sutton and Griffin (2004) found 32% of individuals perceived a broken PC, and O’Leary-Kelly et al. (2014) found 67% of employees perceived their PC to have been broken. Given the preponderance of broken PCs, organisations appear unlikely to prevent PCs from breaking (Zagenczyk et al., 2009). Instead, organisations should pay more attention to address the broken PCs, with research having the potential to optimize organisations’ efforts (Bal et al., 2017; Henderson et al., 2020).

Based on these rationales, this systematic review is needed. The objective of this review is to have better understanding of the impact of broken PCs on work-related outcomes and identify organisational actions that are or could be taken to manage these breakages in the future. Therefore, to achieve this objective, this SR will answer two research questions:

- Research Question 1(RQ1): How do broken PCs affect organisational and employees’ work-related outcomes?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): What actions are being taken or could be taken by organisations to manage the effects of broken PCs?

This dissertation adopts a systematic review method is adopted because it provides a comprehensive and structured way to answer these research questions (Tranfield et al., 2003). In particular, a systematic review offers understanding which is less biased, more rigorous, and transparent, and easily reproducible compared with other types of reviews and individual studies (Fan et al., 2022; Rousseau, 2024; Tranfield et al., 2003).

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation has a manuscript format and includes three chapters. The current chapter, Chapter One, serves as the overarching introduction. It begins with a description of key terms related to the PC and its history. Following this, it highlights the rationale for conducting this systematic review. The chapter concludes with two research questions aimed at understanding the impact of broken PCs on work-related outcomes (RQ1) and identifying organisational actions that are or could be taken to manage these PC breakages in the future (RQ2).

Chapter Two is a manuscript. It starts with its own introduction, which is a condensed version compared to the introduction provided in Chapter One. This introduction to the manuscript ends with a brief summary of the potential contributions offered by this systematic review. Following this, the methods and results are presented. This chapter concludes with a discussion and conclusion, which analyse the research results and state the potential contributions, limitations, and possibilities for future research.

Chapter Three concludes the dissertation with an overarching discussion and conclusion, extending to Chapter Two's discussion and conclusion section. Chapter Three begins with a general discussion and broad theoretical implications, followed by broad practical implications. This chapter then presents the broad limitations and future research directions of this SR and ends with a final conclusion.

As noted above, this dissertation follows a manuscript format. Accordingly, some repetition can be found across the three chapters to provide a foundation for presenting ideas. Note also that some repetition has been necessary to meet AUT's postgraduation regulation requirements for manuscript format research. Efforts have been made to keep repetition minimal.

## **Chapter Two: A Systematic Review of Broken Psychological Contracts: How Broad are the Impacts and What Organisational Actions are Effective?**

The psychological contract (PC) has been served as a central concept for understanding the relationship between employees and their organisations (Argyris, 1960; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Rousseau, 1989; Schein, 1965). Yet workplace change, such as the introduction of digital technologies (e.g., information and communication technologies and artificial intelligence) and organisational changes (e.g., restructuring and downsizing) have significant impacts on the PC (Ballas et al., 2024; Wiechers et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007). Many studies have adopted Rousseau’s PC definition: the PC refers to “an individual’s beliefs regarding the terms of conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between the focal person and another party” (Rousseau 1989, p. 123). Rousseau’s definition only looks at the PC from the employee’s perspective as she states the organisation cannot hold PC, thus the organizational side of the PC is largely ignored (Anderson & Schalk, 1998; Conway & Briner, 2009; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006). Guest (1998) argued that PC research should also add an organisational perspective to acquire a complete understanding of reciprocal exchange arrangement from both employees’ and organizations’ viewpoints. Moreover, to effectively assess an employment relationship using the PC, it is vital to recognize that this relationship is a two-way exchange, not just from the employee side (Guest, 2004a, 2004b). Hence, studying the PC should be from two sides: the employees and the organizations.

In this systematic review (SR), we adopt the term *broken PC* to encompass both PC breaches and PC violations, whether one or both occur. Our reasoning is as follows: firstly, from a conceptual perspective, whether the PC breach results in a violation or not, the essence of both concepts is about breaking one or more promises (Bankins, 2015; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2018; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Tomprou et al., 2015; Zhao et al., 2007). The only difference is that a PC violation is a more intense affective reaction to the breaking of promises, but one that may or may not occur after a PC breach (Baruch & Rousseau, 2019; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). Secondly, from a practical point of view, organizations do not usually spend extra effort on differentiating a PC breach from a PC violation. Instead, organisations use similar tactics to prevent or mitigate both of these under a broader schema of “breaking of promises.” Therefore, we use the term broken PC to cover PC breaches or PC violations or both.

## Why is This Systematic Review Necessary?

We present three highly practical arguments as to why it is timely to provide a systematic review on broken PCs.

To begin with, over the last six decades the PC has provided a valuable framework for understanding the employment relationship (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Laulié & Pavez, 2024; Rousseau, 1989; Schein, 1965), but we know that the broken PC has detrimental effects on this relationship between employees and their organisations. However, broken PCs are more common than exceptions in organisations (O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2014; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994), and organisations seem to find it difficult to avoid breaking PCs (Zagenczyk et al., 2009), principally because of the unpredictable external market environment and corresponding organisational changes (Guerrero et al., 2014; Restubog et al., 2015; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Therefore, organisations should attempt to manage these inevitable broken PCs to keep a good employment relationship. As such, effectively dealing with these broken PCs is essential to keeping and fostering this positive relationship.

Next, broken PCs may harm employees’ health, such as physical health (Vander Elst et al., 2016) and psychological distress (Rodwell et al., 2015). Broken PCs can also adversely affect organisational effectiveness, including reduced job performance (De Clercq et al., 2021), decreased job satisfaction (Wang & Hsieh, 2014), and increased deviant behaviours (Shaffakat et al., 2022), which can adversely impact on organisational performance (Asante et al., 2024; Bennett & Robinson, 2000; Chiu & Peng, 2008; Robinson & Morrison, 1995), thereby reducing profitability. Thus, organisations will benefit from developing effective strategies to manage, and ideally reduce or eliminate, these detrimental effects of broken PCs on employees’ health and organisational effectiveness.

Finally, extant studies have noted that employing remedial actions and preventive measures to alleviate these broken PCs’ harmful impacts may benefit both the employees and organisations (Achnak & Vantilborgh, 2021; Bal et al., 2008; Guest & Conway, 2002; Henderson et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022). According to four meta-analyses (Bal et al., 2008; Jayaweera et al., 2021; Jayaweera et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2007) and one systematic review of reviews (Topa et al., 2022), showing that broken PCs mainly focus on the relationship between broken PCs and a limited number of work-related outcomes from employee’s viewpoint. However, they fail to investigate how organisations can address these adverse effects of broken PCs on work-related outcomes from organisational perspective. Moreover, three qualitative reviews (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Hoye & Kappelides, 2021; Kutaula et al., 2020) found a paucity of information on solutions for preventing or mitigating these broken PCs. Yet, identifying effective organizational actions presents an important theoretical and practical issue.

Based on these three reasons, we argue that there is a need to conduct a systematic review on the effects of broken PCs on a large number of outcomes that provides a comprehensive understanding of these broken PC-outcome relationships. Additionally, a systematic review should identify practical strategies organisations could or have introduced to manage the adverse effects of broken PCs to benefit both future prevention and resolution. However, the findings of a systematic review may also contribute information for theoretical developments.

All in all, to gain a better understanding of impact of broken PCs on work-related outcomes and identify organisational actions that are or could be taken to manage these breakages in the future, this SR will answer the following questions:

- Research Question 1(RQ1): How do broken PCs affect organisational and employees' work-related outcomes?
- Research Question 2 (RQ2): What actions are being taken or could be taken by organisations to mitigate the effects of broken PCs?

This systematic review covers 80 primary studies published in the past three decades from peer-reviewed journals. It makes several contributions. Firstly, to our knowledge, this SR is the first to conduct a qualitative review of primary empirical studies to identify practical actions that are or could be taken to prevent or mitigate the adverse effects of broken PCs from an organisational perspective. Hence, this SR focuses on problem solving and addressing issues faced by employees and organisations on a regular basis. Secondly, this SR adopts two approaches to analyse the broken PC-outcome relationship, providing a fresh perspective relative to existing review papers. One approach is our categorization of all work-related outcomes into two contexts: the dyadic employment relationship and beyond the dyad. This provides a broader range of understanding of these work-related outcomes' targets, and insights for developing the broader PC definition which extends beyond the dyadic employment relationship. A second approach is our use of four different combinations predicting three types of employee outcomes (psychological, behavioural, and health-related) and also organisational outcomes, that cover direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators. Previous reviews have ignored this complexity, yet incorporating these complex relationships represent the reality of broken PCs and makes it easier to find research gaps that need addressing. Finally, our findings confirm that the relationship between PCs and work-related outcomes has consistently been negative regardless of the theoretical perspectives adopted.

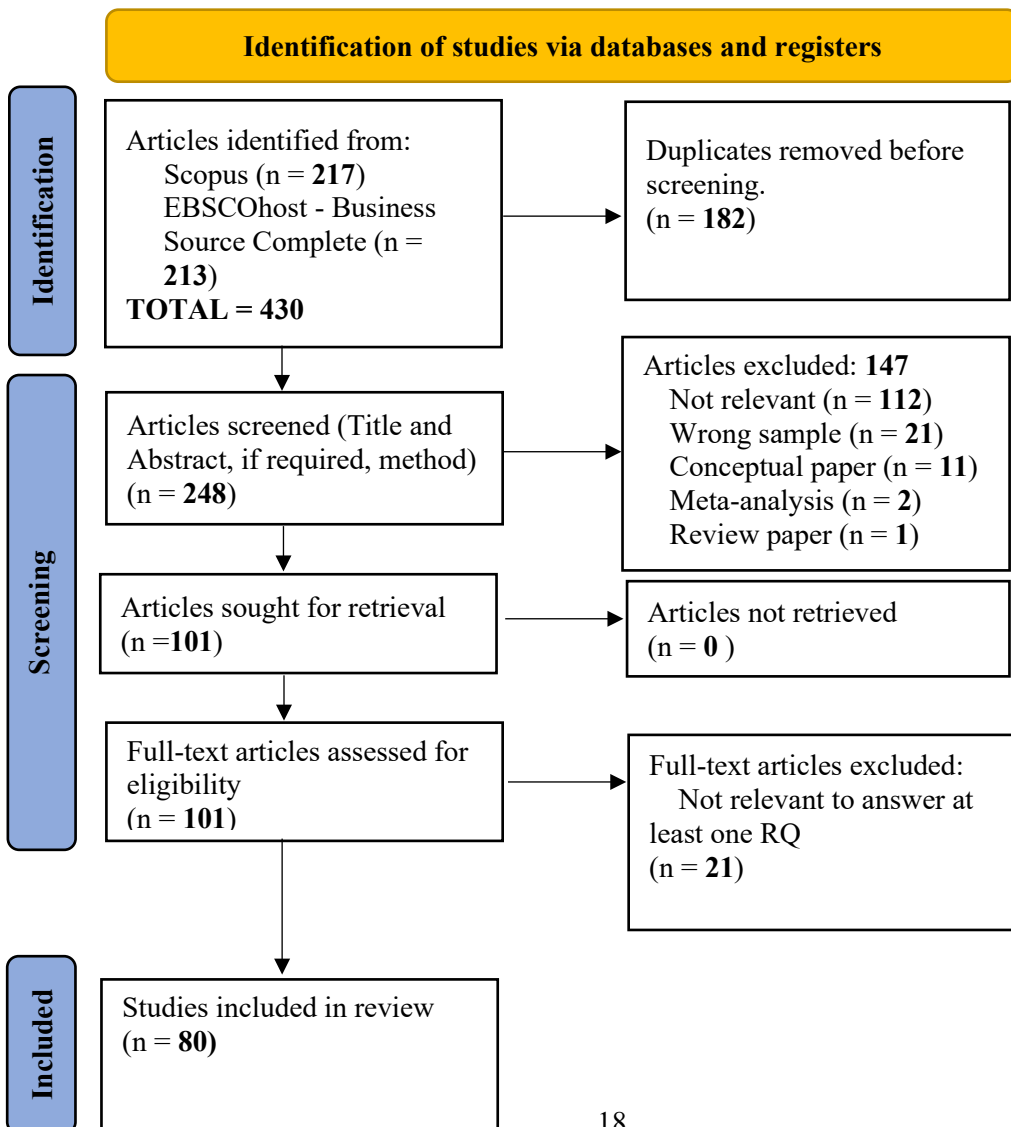
## Methods

We adopted a systematic review (SR) methodology to develop answers to each RQ. SR is less biased, readily producible, more rigorous, and transparent than other review methodologies (Fan et al., 2022; Tranfield et al., 2003). In this SR, we adhered to the Preferred Reporting Instrument for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to conduct our qualitative analysis, which consists of three major stages: identification, screening, and data analysis (Page et al., 2021).

Figure 1 shows a breakdown of how we ended with 80 articles included and the three major stages in this SR.

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA Flow Diagram*



## ***Stage One: Identification***

We used two databases, Scopus and Business Source Complete (EBSCOhost), to conduct initial searches to obtain a comprehensive selection of articles. Scopus and Business Source Complete provide comprehensive coverage of the research articles in the business and management field, having their own systematic category filters to limit search results (Englert et al., 2023; Kazemi et al., 2023). These filters enable us to implement our inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). We conducted these searches between February 11-14, 2024. Subsequently, we imported all references from these articles into EndNote 20 and systematically removed duplicates.

**Table 1**

### *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<b><u>Stage 1: Identification</u></b>	
Published articles from 1989 to January 2024 (The first empirical research on PC breach was published by Rousseau (1989).)	Not published or before 1989
Written and published in English	Non-English
Peer-reviewed journals	Grey literature, books, etc
A or A* journals from Field of Research (FoR) 3507 and 3502 (according to the 2022 ABDC journal quality list and 2020 ANZSRC)	Not A or A* journals
<b><u>Stage 2: Screening</u></b>	
Primary empirical studies	Conceptual, meta-analysis and review papers.
Sample/participants (employees) selection: Employees should have enough working time for their employers to develop their PC, so no temporary employment relationship. Students have work experience, such as MBA. Employees who work on one country and not multiple countries.	Sample: Volunteers, temporary employment relationship (freelancers/independent contractors/platform workers/temporary workers/seasonal workers). Students without work experience Employees who work on a temporary basis overseas, such as expatriates.

The specific identification process is detailed as follows:

Firstly, consistent keywords were used to search on Scopus and EBSCOhost. The search fields were aligned as closely as possible across two databases, encompassing the corresponding fields for article titles, abstracts, and keywords. The search string was:

("psychological contract\*") AND (breach\* OR violation\* OR fail\* OR break\*).

Secondly, we used the filters year, subject area, document type, and language to restrict our search results to meet our inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1). For example, all sample articles were selected from 1989 to January 2024 because the first empirical research on PC breach was published by Rousseau (1989). Moreover, all articles should be written and published in English.

Then we utilised the filters (in Scopus, this was source title, and in EBSCOhost, this was publication) to limit these results to articles published in top-tier journals to ensure that only high-quality peer-reviewed articles were included in this SR. We exclusively chose peer-reviewed papers from top-tier journals and excluded grey literature, and books to provide high-quality evidence that would be reliable and trustworthy to support the practical purposes of our review, namely informing organisations on actions. This high quality is assured through the rigorous peer review process that these sources have undergone.

Therefore, we limited our search to journals having an A or A\* ranking level according to the 2022 Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) journal quality list. Additionally, to better target the most relevant articles, we also restricted these top-tier journals from Field of Research (FoR) 3507 (Strategy, management, and organisational behaviours) and 3502 (Human resources and industrial relations) according to the 2020 Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification (ANZSRC). In total, 29 journals met these criteria. After this step, 430 articles were identified from Scopus (n = 217) and EBSCOhost - Business Source Complete (n = 213) that were published in these 29 journals.

Following this identification stage, 430 articles were imported to Endnote 20. Subsequently, we used a specialised function in Endnote 20 to search for and remove duplicates. This identified 182 duplicates which were removed, leaving 248 articles for screening.

### ***Stage Two: Screening***

248 articles were screened by reading the title and abstract; if required, we reviewed the full text to determine whether the article was relevant and met the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1).

Firstly, articles must be based on primary empirical research. Thus, conceptual meta-analysis and review papers were not included in this review.

Secondly, we evaluated the sample of participants were selected based on the following inclusion and exclusion criteria:

- The sample of participants were employees, that is having traditional work relationships in which employers pay employees for their work. This excluded volunteers.
- The sample/participants(employees) studied in each research article do not have temporary employment relationships, such as freelancers, independent contractors, platform workers, temporary workers, and seasonal workers.
- The employees who worked in their own country and thus excluded those working on a temporary basis overseas, such as expatriates.
- We distinguished two types of students. First, students without work experience are not included in this review. Second, students with work experience, such as those pursuing an MBA, are considered suitable for this review. Consequently, the student sample who had no work experience was excluded.

Through this screening process, we removed 147 articles for the following reasons: not relevant (n = 112), wrong sample (n = 21), conceptual paper (n = 11), meta-analysis (n = 2), and review paper (n = 1). This left 101 articles that met our criteria.

Finally, we conducted a second screening phase where we assessed the relevance of the content of the remaining 101 articles to ensure they helped answer at least one of our RQs. We evaluated each article's findings and practical implications or, if required, assessed the full article to make this judgment. After this stage, 80 articles remained and were included in the review.

### ***Stage Three: Data Analysis***

In the final stage, we used Microsoft Excel to produce a data extraction table to summarise, categorise and code crucial details extracted from each article. This involved reading the full manuscripts and focusing on the findings and their practical implications. The data extraction table allowed us to collate, synthesise and evaluate the data to answer our two RQs: (1) the effects of broken PCs on organizational and employees' work-related outcomes and (2) what actions are being taken or could be taken by organisations to mitigate the effects of broken PCs?

## Results

In total, 80 primary empirical studies were included in this SR: 78 studies were conducted from an employee's perspective (Asante et al., 2024; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018b; Wiechers et al., 2022), with only one study from an employer's perspective (Guest & Conway, 2002), and one from a dual perspective (Chen et al., 2008).

The results of this SR are presented in three main sections. Firstly, an overview of the studies included, comprising study methods, the journals used, participants, and theoretical perspectives, is provided. Secondly, we will examine the findings for RQ1. Finally, the results for RQ2 will be discussed.

### *Overview of Studies Included*

**Methods, Journals Used and Study Locations.** This SR spans more than 30 years, from 1989 to 2024. A total of 80 studies (refer to the Appendix for further details) were selected, including 71 quantitative studies, six mixed methods studies, and only three qualitative studies. This shows that most scholars chose quantitative methods for researching broken PCs.

Table 2 shows the list of journals from which the total set of review articles were taken, the number of articles, and the ABDC rankings per journal. A total of 24 journals are included. The journals with the highest number of articles are: *Journal of Organisational Behavior* (n = 15), *the Journal of Vocational Behavior* (n = 10), *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (n = 7), *Journal of Business and Psychology* (n = 7), *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology* (n = 5), *Journal of Applied Psychology* (n = 5), *Applied Psychology* (n = 4), and *Journal of Management Studies* (n = 4). Finally, according to the 2022 Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) ranking, nine of these 24 journals were ranked as A\*, while the remaining 15 were ranked as A. A slight majority of articles (41 out of 81) were published in A\* journals. This indicates that the studies we selected in this SR are from high-quality journals.

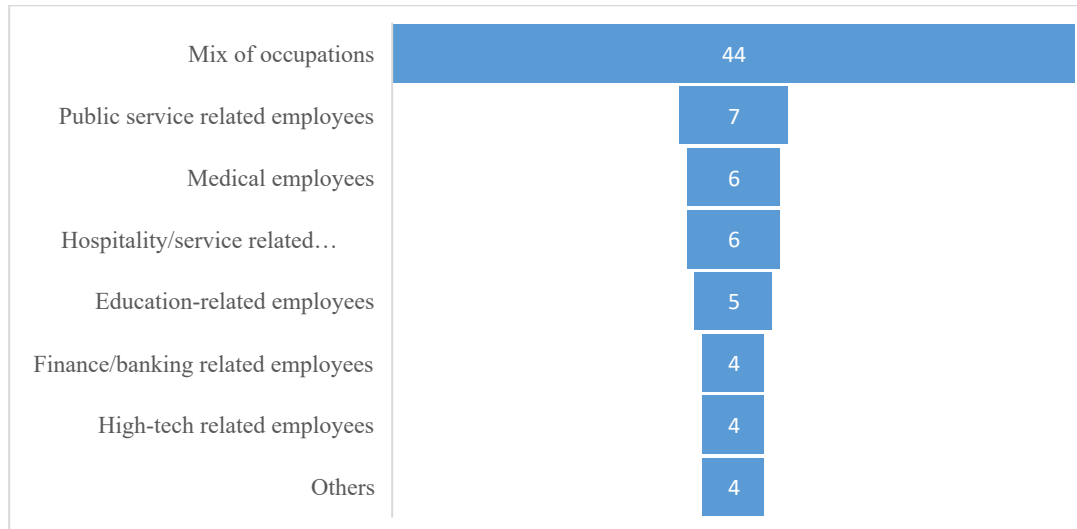
**Table 2***Journal Used, the Number of Articles From Each Journal and ABDC Rating*

Number	Journal	Number of articles	2022 ABDC rating
1	Journal of Organisational Behaviour	15	A*
2	Journal of Vocational Behaviour	10	A*
3	International Journal of Human Resource Management	7	A
4	Journal of Business and Psychology	7	A
5	Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology	5	A
6	Journal of Applied Psychology	5	A*
7	Applied Psychology: An International Review	4	A
8	Journal of Management Studies	4	A*
9	Personnel Review	3	A
10	European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology	3	A
11	Human Resource Management Journal	2	A
12	British Journal of Management	2	A
13	Journal of Management	2	A*
14	Personnel Psychology	1	A*
15	International Journal of Selection & Assessment	1	A
16	International Journal of Manpower	1	A
17	Management & Organisation Review	1	A
18	Asia Pacific Journal of Management	1	A
19	Industrial Relations: a journal of economy and society	1	A*
20	Academy of Management Journal	1	A*
21	Administrative Science Quarterly	1	A*
22	Group & Organisation Management	1	A
23	Work & Stress	1	A
24	Journal of Business Ethics	1	A

**Study Participants.** Figure 2 illustrates that the participants in our sample of articles come from various occupations. Most studies (n = 44) fell into the “Mix of occupations” category, indicating that previous researchers used participants from diverse job types. The remaining studies (n = 36) were almost evenly distributed across the other seven specified groups, such as “medical employees” (n = 6) and “hospitality/service-related employees” (n = 6).

**Figure 2**

*The Occupations of Participants.*



Additionally, 14 out of 80 studies used newcomers as participants, three focused on either older or younger employees or both, and 2 researched women employees relating to broken PCs (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Participants: Newcomers, Older or Younger or Both, and Women Employees*

Participants	Number of studies	Selected studies
Newcomers	14	Woodrow and Guest (2020); Bankins (2015); Orvis et al. (2008); Robinson and Rousseau (1994)
Older or younger employees or both	3	Garcia et al. (2018); Bal et al. (2013); de Lange et al. (2011)
Women employees	2	Gervasi et al. (2023); (Li et al., 2022).

**Theoretical Perspectives.** Within our 80 articles, a number of studies ( $n = 10$ ) did not specify any theories used in their research, while many researchers ( $n = 70$ ) adopted one ( $n = 40$ ) or more theories ( $n = 30$ ) to frame their research on broken PCs.

Five theories were used more frequently: the Social Exchange Theory and/or Norm of Reciprocity (n = 34) were the most used in our sample of studies, followed by the Conservation of Resources Theory (n = 10), the Psychological Contract Theory (n = 8), the Equity Theory (n = 5), and the Affective Events Theory (n = 3). Other theories appeared less than three times in our sample studies, such as the Job Demands-Resources Model (n = 2) and the Social Information Processing Theory (n = 2), the Selective Attention Theory (n = 1), the Developing Process Theory (n = 1), and the Self-enhancement Theory (n = 1) (see Table 4).

**Table 4**

*Theoretical Perspectives Used in This Review*

Theories	Frequency
Social Exchange Theory	16
Social Exchange Theory and Norm of Reciprocity	7
Social Exchange Theory and Group Value Model	1
Social Exchange Theory and Equity Theory	4
Social Exchange Theory and Affective Events Theory	1
Social Exchange Theory and Control Theory	1
Social Exchange Theory and Job Demands-Resources Model	1
Social Exchange Theory and other theories	2
Norm of Reciprocity	1
Conservation of Resources Theory	9
Conservation of Resources Theory and Job Demands-Resources Model	1
Psychological Contract Theory	5
Psychological Contract Theory and Group Value Model	1
Psychological Contract Theory and Self-consistency Theory	1
Psychological Contract Theory, Socioemotional Selectivity Theory, and Lifespan Developmental and Regulatory focus	1
Equity Theory	1
Affective Events Theory	1
Affective Events Theory, Socio-emotional Selectivity Theory, and Model of Emotion regulation	1
Insurance-like effect of corporate social responsibility	1
Attribution and Appraisal theories of Emotion	1
Perceived organisational membership theoretical framework and the Social Identity Theory	1
Referent Cognitions Theory	1
Relative Deprivation Theory	1

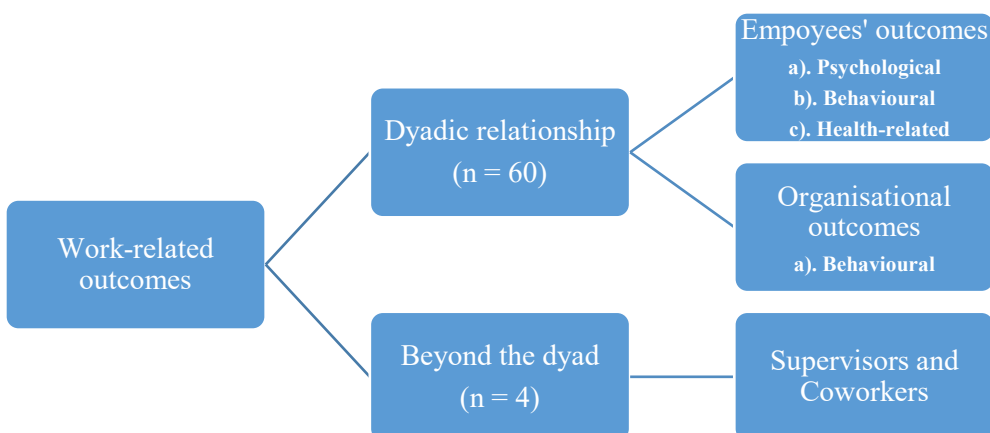
Theories	Frequency
Selective Attention Theory	1
Self-enhancement Theory and Self-consistency theory	1
Social information processing theory and General Theory of Crime	1
Social Information Processing Theory and the Deontic Theory of Justice	1
The Five-factor Model of Personality	1
The Model of Workplace Deviance	1
The post-violation model	1
Trust repair literature and Organisational Justice Theory	1
Developing Process Theory, Self-regulation Theory, and Coping Theory	1
More than two theories	10
No mention of specific theories	

### ***Findings for RQ1: How Do Broken PCs Affect Organisational and Employees' Work-Related Outcomes?***

Figure 3 shows the overall structure of how we will answer RQ1 in this section. In our sample, 64 out of 80 studies provide evidence that addresses RQ1: 60 studies examined the effects of broken PCs on outcomes in dyadic employment relations (employee-organisation relationship), and the remaining four identified third-party relationships (employees with their coworkers and supervisors with their subordinates). We categorize employee outcomes as psychological, behavioural and health-related; at the organizational level, we categorize them as behavioural; and then outcomes for supervisors and coworkers.

**Figure 3**

*Outline of Categorization of Studies to Answer RQ1*



All 64 studies showed consistent results: in both dyadic relationships and beyond dyads, broken PCs harmed work-related outcomes. Examples include decreased employee performance (De Clercq et al., 2021), lower job satisfaction (Bal et al., 2013), increased counterproductive behaviour (Gervasi et al., 2023), and decreased employee' helping behaviour towards their co-workers (third-party) (Asante et al., 2024).

### **Dyadic relationship.**

**Employee Outcomes.** Table 5 shows the psychological, behavioural and health-related outcomes at the employee level in the context of a dyadic relationship and with example articles. Studies equally investigated psychological and behavioural outcomes, but surprisingly, fewer studies looked at health-related outcomes. In all cases, broken PCs predicted worse employee outcomes. It is notable that scholars have particularly focused on psychological outcomes, that is, how employees experience work subsequent to a broken PC, such as reporting lower affective commitment (Quratulain et al., 2018); and behavioural outcomes, that is, how they respond to broken PC, such as higher deviant behaviour (Chiu & Peng, 2008) and lower job performance (Orvis et al., 2008). We explore these employee outcomes further next, categorizing them according to whether they are with or without mediators and moderators.

**Table 5**

#### *Employee Outcomes*

	Number of studies*	Selected outcomes
Psychological outcomes	33 ( <u>17</u> studies without mediators and <u>16</u> with mediators)	Turnover intention (Raja et al., 2011) Job satisfaction (Wang & Hsieh, 2014) Employee engagement and Person-organisation fit (Lv & Xu, 2018) Affective commitment (Quratulain et al., 2018) Affective commitment and Continuance commitment (Cassar & Briner, 2011) Organisational identification (Restubog et al., 2008) Organisational cynicism (Pfrombeck et al., 2020) Perceived organisational support (Zagenczyk et al., 2009) Trust (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994) Loyal boosterism (De Roeck et al., 2023)

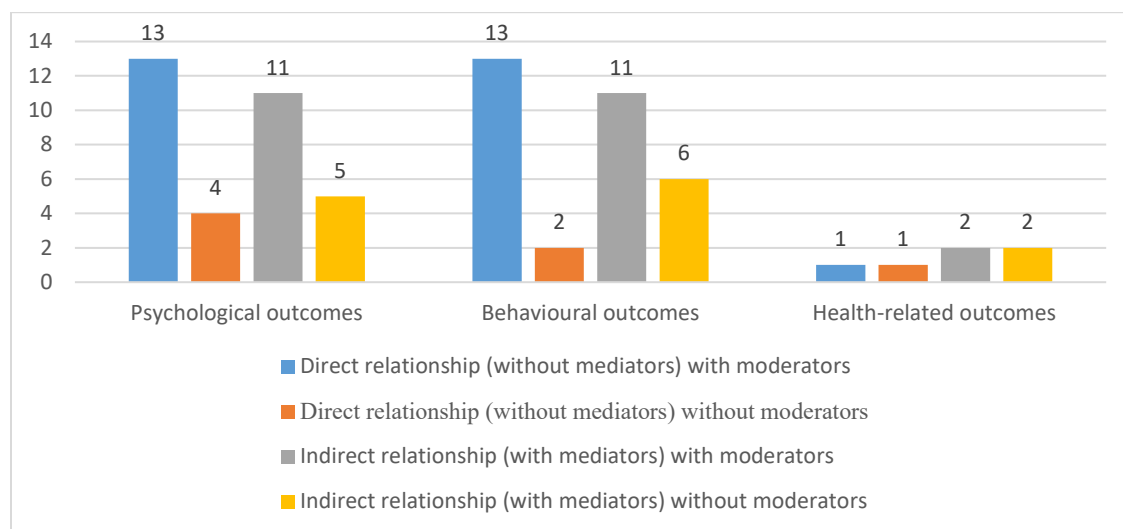
	Number of studies*	Selected outcomes
Behavioural outcomes	32 ( <u>15</u> studies without mediators and <u>17</u> with mediators)	Creative behaviour (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020) Acquiescent silence (Wang & Hsieh, 2014) Voice behaviour (Ng et al., 2014), destructive voice (Lin et al., 2022) Helping behaviours (Asante et al., 2024) Deviant behaviour (Chiu & Peng, 2008) Employee absence (Deery et al., 2006) Turnover (Robinson, 1996) Job performance (Orvis et al., 2008) Career-related behaviour (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021) Incivility (Gervasi et al., 2023)
Health-related outcomes	6 ( <u>2</u> studies without mediators and <u>4</u> with mediators)	Insomnia (Garcia et al., 2018); Psychological distress (Rodwell et al., 2015); Emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Lapointe et al., 2013; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021)

\*Sometimes one study has more than two outcomes; by showing these separately, the total number of studies for outcomes appears greater than the number of articles in our sample.

In figure 4, we show the number of articles investigating each three categories of outcomes (psychological, behavioural, and health-related outcomes), and splitting these out further into four categories: those investigating both direct and indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) and also whether or not moderators were used.

**Figure 4**

*Direct and Indirect Relationships (Mediators and Moderators) at the Employee Level.*



### a) Psychological Outcomes:

Of the 33 studies that refer to psychological outcomes, 17 identified direct effects without using mediators, while the other 16 used mediators to explain the indirect effects of broken PCs on these outcomes (see Table 5 and Figure 4).

There are four different combinations predicting psychological outcomes that exist in past studies, which will be outlined in more detail below. These match those depicted in Figure 4, covering direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators.

Firstly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) without moderators were examined. Only a few studies ( $n = 4$ ) showed the negative direct effects of broken PCs on outcomes without using mediators and moderators. These found broken PCs were associated with outcomes including weakened organisational identification and job satisfaction (Rodwell et al., 2015), lower organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Haggard, 2012), and increased employee intention to quit and job dissatisfaction (Bunderson, 2001).

Secondly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) with moderators were evaluated. A number of studies ( $n = 13$ ) investigated moderators of the direct relationship between broken PCs and psychological outcomes. For instance, a higher level of Machiavellianism acted as a moderator to amplify the impact of a PC breach on organisational disidentification (Zagenczyk et al., 2013). Another study found that different career orientations moderated the damage caused by PC breaches on employee work satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intention (Gerber et al., 2012).

Thirdly, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) without moderators were examined. A small number of studies ( $n = 5$ ) investigated mediating effects to understand the indirect relationship between broken PC and psychological outcomes. For example, one study found that the negative relationship between PC breach and work engagement is mediated by job satisfaction (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014). Other studies found that PC breach is indirectly associated with lower affective organisational commitment via negative reciprocity (Quratulain et al., 2018), reduced organisational identification by organizational trust (Restubog et al., 2008), lower job satisfaction through organizational cynicism (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003), and weakened emotional engagement by focusing on opportunities (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021).

Finally, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) with moderators were identified. A number of studies ( $n = 11$ ) included moderated mediation – that is, with both moderators and mediators – to examine the

relationship between broken PCs and psychological outcomes. For instance, PC breach negatively and indirectly affects loyal boosterism through corporate hypocrisy, with corporate social responsibility-based moral capital acting as a moderator to alleviate these adverse effects (De Roeck et al., 2023). Another study showed that idiosyncratic deals, acting as a moderator, can reduce the indirect negative impact of PC breach on organisational affective commitment through trust, but this impact is only for employees who have a higher position within the organisation (Guerrero et al., 2014).

### **b) Behavioural Outcomes.**

Out of the 32 studies that refer to behavioural outcomes, 15 identified the direct effects without using mediators, while the other 17 used mediators to explain the indirect effects of broken PCs on these outcomes (see Table 5 and Figure 4).

As per Figure 4, there are four different combinations of direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators for behavioural outcomes.

Firstly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) without moderators were examined. Only two studies (n = 2) looked solely at the direct negative impact of broken PCs on outcomes without moderators. For instance, one study demonstrated that PC violations are negatively related to managers' voice and loyalty behaviours but positively related to managers' exits and neglect behaviours (Si et al., 2008).

Secondly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) with moderators were considered. Some studies (n = 13) investigated whether moderators buffered the direct effects of broken PCs on behavioural outcomes. For instance, one sample study found that employees with strong emotional regulation and humour skills can mitigate the negative impact of PC breaches on their creative behaviours (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020). Another study showed that better emotional regulation moderated the adverse effects of PC breaches on proactive behaviours, such as knowledge sharing and taking charge (Bal et al., 2011).

Of these 13 studies, four examined how a broken PC harmed job performance (Orvis et al., 2008; Raja et al., 2011; Restubog et al., 2007; Restubog et al., 2010). These studies used different moderators to regulate this adverse association; for example, a higher level of leader-member exchange served as a moderator to mitigate the adverse effects of PC breach on job performance (Restubog et al., 2010).

Thirdly, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) without moderators were examined. Studies just using mediators and without moderators (n = 6) focused on the negative indirect effects of broken PCs on job

performance through affective commitment (Restubog et al., 2006), deviant behaviours and voice behaviours through facades of conformity (Liang, 2022), and increased women's incivility behaviours by aggressive reciprocal attitude (Gervasi et al., 2023).

Finally, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) with moderators were identified. Some studies used both moderators and mediators ( $n = 11$ ), via moderated mediation, to examine the relationship between broken PCs and behavioural outcomes. For instance, one study found that emotional support from leaders can reduce the negative impact of PC breaches on personal relative deprivation, in turn reducing the negative effects of these breaches on employees' destructive voices (Lin et al., 2022). Moreover, our sample showed that employees who perceived a broken PC tend to report more deviant behaviours (Bordia et al., 2008; Restubog et al., 2015). For example, a study found that employees with higher mindfulness (that they could deploy as a self-regulatory tool) buffered the negative indirect effects of PC breach via hostility on employees' deviant behaviours (Shaffakat et al., 2022).

### c) **Health-related outcomes.**

Of the small number of studies that investigate health-related outcomes ( $n = 6$ ), two studied the direct effect without mediators, while the other four used mediators to explain the indirect effects of broken PCs on these outcomes (see Table 5). There are four different combinations of direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators for health-related outcomes (see Figure 4) which we present next.

Firstly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) without moderators were examined in only one study (Rodwell et al., 2015). This showed that participants who perceived PC breaches were more likely to experience psychological distress (Rodwell et al., 2015).

Secondly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) with moderators were evaluated. Only one study investigated whether a moderator buffered the direct effects of broken PCs on health-related outcomes. In this case, supervisory social support, serving as a moderator, mitigated the negative direct effect of PC breach on emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003).

Thirdly, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) without moderators were examined. Two studies ( $n = 2$ ) investigated mediators but not moderators. Specifically, they found negative indirect effects of PC breach on emotional exhaustion, using different mediators, namely occupational future time perspective (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021) and organisational cynicism (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

Finally, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) with moderators were identified. A few studies (n = 2) adopted moderated mediation to examine the relationship between broken PCs and outcomes. For instance, one study demonstrated that the lower level of generativity concerns as a moderator reduced the adverse effects of breach on insomnia among older workers via psychological stress, but this effect was not observed in those having a higher level of generativity concerns (Garcia et al., 2018).

Interestingly, of these six studies that include health-related outcomes, four employed emotional exhaustion as their outcome (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Lapointe et al., 2013; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021), one used psychological stress (Rodwell et al., 2015), and another adopted insomnia (Garcia et al., 2018).

In the next section, we will present the behavioural outcomes at the organisational level in the context of dyadic relationships.

**Organisational Outcomes.** Table 6 shows 14 studies that refer to behavioural outcomes. Of these, nine studies investigated the direct effects without mediators, while the other six used mediators to explain the direct effects of broken PCs on these outcomes. Moreover, all behavioural outcomes in 15 studies were categorised into three groups: organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (n = 10), counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) (n = 4) and organisational performance (n = 1).

**Table 6**

*Organisational Outcomes*

	Number of studies	Outcomes with example studies
Behavioural outcomes	14 (8 studies without mediators and 6 with mediators)	Organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Shih & Chuang, 2013), civic virtue behaviour (Restubog & Bordia, 2006) Counterproductive workplace behaviour (CWB) (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018b) Organisational performance (Robinson & Morrison, 2000)

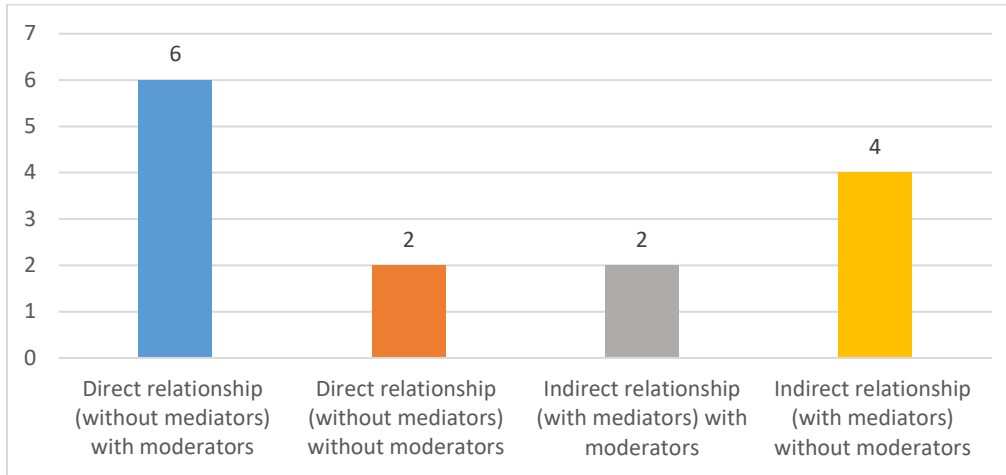
Next, we will examine the results of broken PC research investigating behavioural outcomes affecting organisations, examining both direct and indirect relationships (mediators and moderators used) between broken PCs and these outcomes.

**a) Behavioural Outcomes.**

There are four different direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators for behavioural outcomes at the organisational level in the context of dyadic relationships (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*Behavioural Outcomes at the Organisational Level*



Firstly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) with moderators were investigated. Some studies (n = 6) were conducted by utilizing moderators to buffer the direct effects of broken PCs on behavioural outcomes affecting the organisation. For instance, one study found that Chinese employees, for those having a higher level of power distance, acting as a moderator mitigates the positive relationship between PC breach and CWB (Chao et al., 2011). Another study indicated that employees who have a higher level of equity sensitivity as a moderator can alleviate the adverse effects of PC breaches on OCB (Kickul & Lester, 2001). Similarly, employees having a higher level of equity sensitivity can buffer the adverse effects of PC breaches on OCB and mitigate the impact of workplace deviant behaviours towards to the organisation (Restubog et al., 2007).

Secondly, direct relationships (i.e., without mediators) without moderators were examined. Only two studies examined the direct effects of broken PCs without considering moderators at the organisational level. For example, one study showed an accumulating PC breach is positively related to CWB directed at the organization (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018b).

Thirdly, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) with moderators were examined. Of six studies investigating indirect relationships between broken PCs and behavioural outcomes at the organisational level, two studies (n = 2) included moderators. For instance, employees who have a higher level of

forgiveness can mitigate the adverse effects of PC breach on OCB, mediated by emotional exhaustion (Costa & Neves, 2017).

Finally, indirect relationships (i.e., with mediators) without moderators were identified. Four studies employed mediators but not moderators, investigating the indirect relationship between the broken PC and both OCB and CWB. These studies found that broken PC is positively related to CWB towards supervisors through increased organisational cynicism and reduced self-esteem (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a), and negatively related to OCB through the organizational trust and identification (Restubog et al., 2008).

### **Beyond the dyad.**

Figure 3 shows that only four studies in our sample look at the effects of PC breach beyond dyadic relationships. These studies identified supervisors (Wei & Si, 2013) and employees (Deng et al., 2018) who perceived broken PCs could affect third parties beyond the dyadic employee-organisation relationship. For example, a new study found that employees who experienced PC violations display reduced helping behaviours towards their coworkers (Asante et al., 2024). Furthermore, another study investigated the adverse effects of employees' broken PCs by immediate supervisors from their third-party employees' perspective (Birtch et al., 2024). They found that when third-party employees observed co-workers experiencing a PC breach by a common supervisor, it adversely affected their perceptions of the supervisor's interactional justice (Birtch et al., 2024).

In conclusion, these studies consistently showed that broken PCs adversely affect work-related outcomes at both employee and organisational levels, both within dyadic employee-organisation relationships and for third parties witnessing these relationships. These adverse impacts of broken PCs are not only on organisational performance and effectiveness but also on employee health. Evidence for certain mediators (e.g., organisational trust, psychological stress, and affective commitment) as the intermediate mechanism, can help authors test the relationship between broken PCs and work-related outcomes. For moderators, some mitigate the negative effects of broken PCs, such as forgiveness and supervisory social support.

### ***Findings for RQ2: What Actions Are or Could be Taken by Organisations to Manage the Effects of Broken PCs?***

Next, we assess evidence relevant to our second research question, on the actions that organisations have taken or could take when they break employees' PCs. In our sample, six studies directly investigate actions taken, while 71 studies draw on their findings to suggest potential actions that companies could

take to prevent or mitigate the impact of broken PCs, and three studies do not have relevant evidence to help addressing RQ2.

Of the six studies, one examined that effective communication could mitigate the perceived broken PCs from employers' perspective (Guest & Conway, 2002). Another study tested the post-violation model developed by Tomprou et al. (2015). The remaining four studies focused on coping actions (Achnak & Vantilborgh, 2021; Bankins, 2015; Henderson et al., 2020; Li et al., 2022).

The other 71 studies extrapolate beyond their findings to indirectly discuss preventive actions and provide possible suggestions for addressing the negative impact of broken PCs, particularly in their Practical Implications.

To analyse these suggestions, we divide our analysis into three subsections below: prospective prevention strategies, possible repair tactics, and potential moderators for preventing or mitigating the effects of broken PCs.

**Prevention is Better Than Cure.** Some scholars suggest setting out preventive measures from the outset of the employment relationship that occurs at employee selection (Li et al., 2022; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Shih & Chuang, 2013; Woodrow & Guest, 2020). For example, scholars recommend that organisations use tests to screen potential employees, such as psychometric personality tests (Shih & Chuang, 2013), to give organisations insights into their desirable employees' personality (Bordia et al., 2008; Zagenczyk et al., 2013). For instance, employees with a lower hostile attributional style (Chiu & Peng, 2008), better self-control abilities (Restubog et al., 2015), and lower level of neuroticism (Raja et al., 2004), could be better employees for organisations in the long run as these traits may buffer the negative impact of broken PCs.

Next, preventive actions should focus on the socialisation period because newcomers are more likely to experience broken PCs due to over-promising during recruitment in order to attract employees (Li et al., 2022; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Woodrow & Guest, 2020). Also, while investing in newcomers may be viewed as resource intensive, this pain is short-term and, in return, organisation achieve long-term gains from productive newcomers who stay in the organisation (Li et al., 2022). Hence, organisations should pay more attention to newcomers' PCs to ensure they are realistic and to protect them from being broken (Kiazad et al., 2014; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Woodrow & Guest, 2020).

Table 3 shows that 14 studies specifically focus on newcomers' broken PCs; these also include viable solutions for managing them. For example, Li et al. (2022) found that a Realistic Orientation Program for Entry Stress (ROPES) program may reduce newcomers' stress and the possibility of a PC breach. Plus,

suggestions to mitigate the harmful effects of broken PCs include offering new employees training courses on emotional regulation, empathy building, and mindfulness (Asante et al., 2024; De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020; Shaffakat et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there studies of newcomers suggest their managers and supervisors should consistently provide realistic promises throughout newcomers' recruitment and socialization to enable PCs to be fulfilled (Kiazad et al., 2014; Lapointe et al., 2013). Suggestions include providing a realistic job preview (Tekleab et al., 2013) and ensuring delivery of promised inducements, such as ongoing support and sufficient training (Lambert et al., 2003; Woodrow & Guest, 2020).

With fair and respectful treatment, newcomers are less likely to experience a PC violation (Robinson & Morrison, 2000).

Finally, organisations should attempt to earn newcomers' initial trust, and in turn could enhance their subsequent trust in the organisation after a broken PC (Robinson, 1996). As a result, this trust may serve as a prevention for alleviating the adverse impact of the perceived broken PC on their employment relationship (Henderson et al., 2020; Robinson, 1996).

**Repair Tactics.** While prevention seems preferable, organisations may find it challenging to deliver all the promises made to their employees given the pace of change in society and, relatedly, in organisations (Deng et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2022; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Therefore, a second option for mitigation is organisational actions to repair perceived broken PCs.

Firstly, few studies have investigated what strategies organisations could take to repair broken PCs. Henderson et al. (2020) found that making full reparations to employees is the best way to reduce employees' feelings of violation, while a tactic of denial should be avoided as it will not improve the situation. However, if full reparations are unattainable, an apology from the organisation works best for employees (Deng et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2020). Moreover, one study stated that for the subset of employees with less work experience and who are younger, the most effective tactics are excuses or a combination of apologies and excuses (Henderson et al., 2020). For older employees, the organisation may not need to take combined actions to repair their broken PCs, as they react less intensely to broken PCs than younger employees (Bal et al., 2013; de Lange et al., 2011; Garcia et al., 2018).

Secondly, studies have investigated who could represent the organisation in restoring broken PCs. In this respect, managers and supervisors are crucial in managing broken PCs (Birtch et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2022; Zagenczyk et al., 2009). Once a PC is broken, managers should immediately provide clear, honest, and compassionate explanations without any excuses for why some promises could not be fulfilled due to

unforeseen changes (Chao et al., 2011; De Clercq et al., 2021; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). This highlights the critical role of managers in managing broken PCs. Moreover, their immediate supervisors also play an essential role in managing the broken PCs of certain employees (see Table 3), including women employees (Gervasi et al., 2023; Li et al., 2022), younger employees (Bal et al., 2013; de Lange et al., 2011), and newcomers (Woodrow & Guest, 2020) who are more likely to experience broken PCs.

Finally, effective communication could alleviate the adverse effects of broken PCs throughout the employees' tenure (Birtch et al., 2024; De Roeck et al., 2023; Guest & Conway, 2002). Frequent communication can reduce misunderstandings between managers and employees, which in turn buffer the adverse impact of broken PCs (Lapointe et al., 2013; Lv & Xu, 2018). However, Robinson and Morrison (2000) argued that more communication is unhelpful, implying that excellent communication should be based on open, honest, and accurate information without overpromising or excessive frequency. Although one study suggests regular communication is needed (Quratulain et al., 2018), it does not mention best frequency for how often managers should communicate with employees. Moreover, notably, Gervasi et al. (2023) highlighted that open communication might be an approach for managers to decrease women employees' incivility behaviours. Based on these recommendations, organisations should train managers on how to communicate with employees effectively (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014), which may need to be tailored to the context and different employees.

**Potential moderators for preventing or mitigating broken PCs.** Many studies found that moderators may prevent or mitigate broken PCs (e.g., Birtch et al., 2024; Raja et al., 2004; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Wang & Hsieh, 2014). Figure 6 shows that moderators in this review are divided into nine categories. The most common moderators are depicted at the top of Figure 6 and occur in the three categories of psychological moderators (n = 16), work relationships (n = 10) and individual differences (n = 8).

**Figure 6**

*Classification of Moderator Variables and Their Distribution Frequencies*

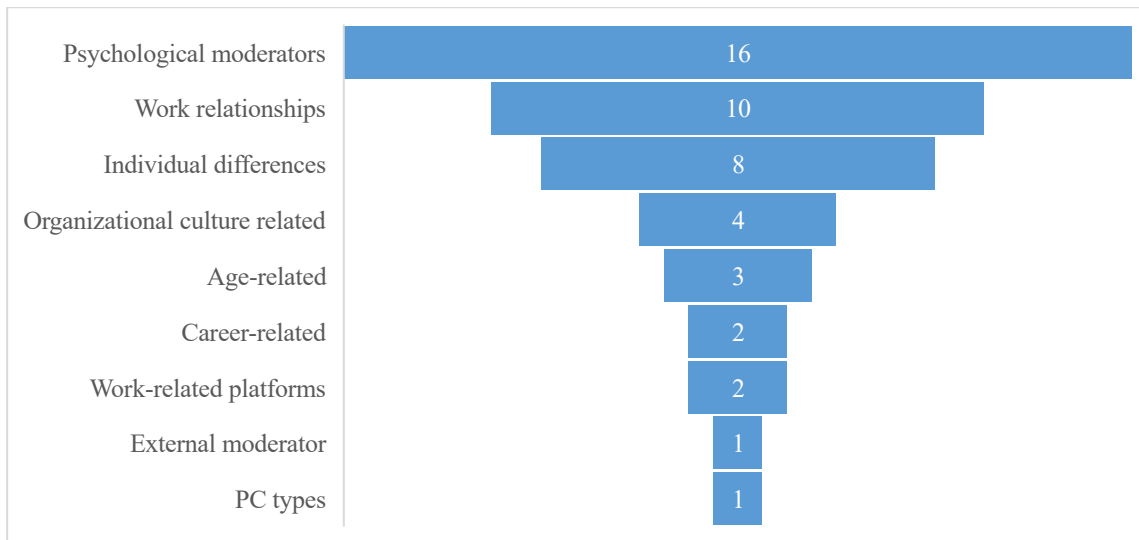


Table 7 shows all moderators and their corresponding outcomes used in our sample, comprising 44 different moderators across 47 studies. Several studies noted that moderators can buffer the adverse reactions to broken PCs. For instance, Doden et al. (2018) identified that a higher level of leader-member exchange (categorised as work relationships) mitigates the detrimental effects of broken PCs on employees' career satisfaction and CWB. Furthermore, self-control (categorised as a psychological moderator) acts as a moderator can reduce the adverse effects of broken PCs on workplace deviance, with the association being stronger when employees are low in self-control, and vice versa (Bordia et al., 2008). Another study found that employees' higher levels of forgiveness (categorised as a psychological moderator) can buffer the direct relationship between broken PC and emotional exhaustion, since this relationship is weak for employee high in forgiveness (Costa & Neves, 2017).

However, not every moderator can effectively reduce the adverse reactions to broken PCs. For instance, Lo and Aryee (2003) found that interactional justice (categorised as a psychological moderator) did not buffer the relationship between PC breach and outcomes of turnover intentions, civic virtue, and psychological withdrawal behaviour. Another study showed that a role modeling relationship (categorised as a work relationship) actually increased the adverse effects of PC breach on perceived organisational support (Zagenczyk et al., 2009).

Moreover, at different levels (whether higher or lower), the same moderator can have diverse impacts on different outcomes. Orvis et al. (2008) noted that employees with higher conscientiousness (categorised as an individual differences) tend to exhibit decreased task performance following a PC breach. In contrast, employees who have lower conscientiousness are more likely to display reduced turnover intentions, organisational loyalty, and job satisfaction following a broken PC (Orvis et al., 2008).

Interestingly, a study by Lv and Xu (2018) observed that a high level of high-performance work system (HPWS) (a moderator categorised as work-related platforms) could not mitigate the adverse effects of PC breach on person-organisation fit and employee engagement. Instead, it worsens these adverse effects. The underlying reason is that the higher level of HPWS may bring employees more job demands, and in turn, resulting in job burnout, which subsequently harms employee engagement and person-organisation fit (Lv & Xu, 2018). Another work-related platform called idiosyncratic deals (i-deals), which acts as a moderator can mitigate the indirect relationship between broken PC and affective commitment via trust, but only for high performers who have high level managerial positions (Guerrero et al., 2014).

In summary, evidence to date suggests organisations should focus their efforts on three areas to manage broken PCs. Firstly, organisations should pay attention to selecting employees, and taking care of newcomers' PCs as they enter and start at the organisation. Secondly, managers and supervisors are extremely important for managing the broken PC, attempting to keep promises to employees and avoiding overpromising. Finally, some evidence exists for moderators that can buffer the harmful effects of the broken PC on corresponding outcomes, such as leader-member exchange and self-control, although some other moderators are ineffective (e.g., interactional justice) or exacerbate negative effects (e.g., a role modelling relationship).

**Table 7***Moderators (by Group) of Broken PCs and Their Corresponding Outcomes*

Number of studies	Moderators (44 different moderators in a total of 47 studies)	Outcomes
<b>N = 16</b>	<b><u>Psychological moderators</u></b>	
1	Trait emotional resources (Asante et al., 2024)	Helping behaviors
1	CSR-based moral capital (De Roeck et al., 2023)	Turnover intension, loyal boosterism
1	Employee mindfulness (Shaffakat et al., 2022)	Hostility and deviant behaviors
1	Emotion regulation and humour skills (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020)	Creative behaviors
1	Emotional regulation (Bal et al., 2011)	Proactive behaviors (knowledge sharing and taking charge)
1	Organisational/professional identification (Deng et al., 2018)	Third party employees' interpersonal harming toward their coworkers
1	Forgiveness and revenge cognitions (Costa & Neves, 2017)	OCB and In-role performance
1	Self-control (Bordia et al., 2008)	Revenge cognitions and Deviant behaviors
1	Sacrifices and person–organisation (P–O) fit (Kiazad et al., 2014)	Work-role innovation
1	Negative reciprocity belief (Wei & Si, 2013)	Abusive supervision
1	Separateness–connectedness self-schema (Epitropaki, 2013)	Organisational identification
1	Exchange imbalance (Cassar & Briner, 2011)	Affective and continuance commitment
1	Interactional justice (Lo & Aryee, 2003)	Turnover intentions, psychological withdrawal behavior and civic virtue

Number of studies	Moderators (44 different moderators in a total of 47 studies)	Outcomes
1	Procedural injustice and interactional injustice (Kickul, 2001)	Negative affect toward the organisation and deviant behavior
1	Prior trust (Robinson, 1996)	Subsequent trust
1	Explicitness of obligations (Robinson & Morrison, 1995)	Civil virtue behavior
<b>N = 10</b>	<b><u>Work relationships</u></b>	
2	Leader–member exchange and coworker exchange (Pfrombeck et al., 2020) (Ng et al., 2014)	Organisational cynicism Voice behavior
2	Leader–member exchange (Doden et al., 2018) (Restubog et al., 2010)	Career satisfaction and CWB In-role performance and OCB
1	Leader emotional support (Lin et al., 2022)	Destructive voice behaviour
1	Mentor relationships/Supervisor support/Role model (Zagenczyk et al., 2009)	Perceived organisational support
1	Third-party’s guanxi with the supervisor (TP’S power distance) (Birtch et al., 2024)	Interactional justice
1	Workplace supervisor familism (Restubog & Bordia, 2006)	Civic virtue behaviour
1	Affective commitment to the supervisor (Lapointe et al., 2013)	Turnover intention and emotion exhaustion
1	Traditionality on inducement breach and the employee responses / Leader’s benevolence on perceived contribution breach and the supervisor’s responses (Chen et al., 2008)	Organisational commitment, OCB, and work performance
<b>N = 8</b>	<b><u>Individual differences</u></b>	
2	Equity Sensitivity (Restubog et al., 2007) (Kickul & Lester, 2001)	Deviant behaviours, OCB, and in-role performance. Job satisfaction/negative affect toward the organisation, OCB

Number of studies	Moderators (44 different moderators in a total of 47 studies)	Outcomes
1	Personality characteristics (extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, self-esteem, equity sensitivity, and locus of control) (Raja et al., 2004)	Intentions to quit, job satisfaction and affective commitment.
1	Machiavellianism (Zagenczyk et al., 2013)	Organisational identification and disidentification
1	Agreeableness and conscientiousness (Shih & Chuang, 2013)	OCB
1	Employee conscientiousness (Orvis et al., 2008)	Loyalty, job satisfaction, job performance, turnover intentions
1	Role of hostile attributional style (Chiu & Peng, 2008)	Deviant behaviors
1	The Big Five dimension and contract type (Raja et al., 2011)	Job satisfaction, performance, turnover intentions
N = 4	<b><u>Organisational culture related</u></b>	
	Power distance (Zagenczyk et al., 2015)	Exit, Voice, Loyalty, and Neglect behaviors
	Power distance orientation/causal attribution (Chao et al., 2011)	CWB
	Self-control and perceived aggressive work culture (Restubog et al., 2015)	Deviant behaviors
	Perceived ethical climate (Wang & Hsieh, 2014)	Job satisfaction, acquiescent silence
N = 3	<b><u>Age-related</u></b>	
	Generativity concerns (Garcia et al., 2018)	Insomnia
	The age-related variables future time perspective and regulatory focus (de Lange et al., 2011)	Intrinsic work motivation across time
	Age (Bal et al., 2013)	Job satisfaction Job performance
N = 2	<b><u>Work-related systems</u></b>	
	High performance work system (Lv & Xu, 2018)	Employee engagement
	I-Deals (Guerrero et al., 2014)	Affective commitment

Number of studies	Moderators (44 different moderators in a total of 47 studies)	Outcomes
N = 2	<b><u>Career-related</u></b> Distinct types of career orientation (independent, traditional/promotion, traditional/loyalty) (Gerber et al., 2012)	Job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to quit
	Careerism (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994)	Trust, satisfaction, intentions to remain and turnover
N = 1	<b><u>External moderators</u></b> External market pressures and available job alternatives (Deery et al., 2006)	Employee absence
N = 1	<b><u>PC types</u></b> Psychological contract type (De Clercq et al., 2021)	Job performance

## Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this SR is to understand better of the impact of broken PCs on work-related outcomes and identify organisational actions that are or could be taken to manage these breakages in the future. To achieve this objective, we adopted a systematic review method to qualitatively synthesize 80 primary studies published in the past three decades from high-quality peer-reviewed journals.

Findings for RQ1 identify that the broken PCs have adverse effects on organisations and employees in the both contexts of dyadic employment relationships and beyond dyadic relationships. We adopted a novel approach using four different combinations of mediators and moderators to thoroughly analyse the relationship between broken PCs and outcomes.

Findings for RQ2 concentrate entirely on addressing the issues faced by employees and organisations, namely practical actions organisations could take to prevent or mitigate the detrimental effects of broken PCs within the organisation. Our findings identify that organisation should focus their efforts in three areas: prospective prevention strategies, repair tactics, and potential moderators for mitigating the effects of broken PCs. Hence, while the findings from RQ1 show why broken PCs should be addressed, the findings of RQ2 demonstrate how broken PCs could be addressed, and thus provide practical implications for this SR.

## ***Theoretical Implications***

Firstly, to our knowledge, this SR is the first to conduct a qualitative review of primary studies aimed at identifying organisational actions that are or could be taken to manage broken PCs from an organizational perspective. Ours is not the first review, with a number of reviews having focused on broken PCs, comprising five meta-analyses (Bal et al., 2008; Jayaweera et al., 2021a, 2021b; Topa et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007) and three qualitative reviews (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Hoye & Kappelides, 2021; Kutaula et al., 2020). Yet these have been conducted from the employee's perspective and have not emphasized practical actions that organisations could take to prevent or mitigate broken PCs. Given the increasing focus on having a beneficial societal impact through research (Hamdali et al., 2024), reviews focusing on the employees are useful in demonstrating to organisations that broken PCs are problematic for organisational effectiveness and employee health. The organisational perspective is beneficial to gain a full understanding of the reciprocal exchange arrangement, rather than restricting this to only the employees' viewpoint (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Guest, 1998). By including an organisational perspective in this SR, we contribute to the small amount of research focusing on the organisation side and, therefore, redressing the balance in understanding each party's role and possibilities in managing the PC.

Secondly, our findings for RQ1 show that, irrespective of the theoretical foundations applied (see Table 4), broken PCs have a consistently negative effect on work-related outcomes. A shortcoming of these theoretical perspectives is that, while they can explain how relationships between constructs unfold, they are unable to predict with any precision. For instance, according to the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Norm of Reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), employees tend to take tit-for-tat action for their organisations (Restubog & Bordia, 2006; Shaffakat et al., 2022). Indeed, these two theories were the most used in our sample studies. However, neither theory predicts what the retaliatory action will be (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Moreover, this could also have practical benefits for organisations. For example, if a broken PC is inevitable and they know - via Social Exchange Theory - that the retaliatory action will be higher turnover intentions (Raja et al., 2011), or lower work performance (Chen et al., 2008), or other similar outcomes, organisations can put plans in place to mitigate those effects. However, if the negative retaliation is unknown, organisations have no opportunity to be strategic. This could be an example of how theory can effectively guide practical actions.

## ***Practical Implications***

We suggest organisations pay attention to newcomers during selection, recruitment, and socialization processes (Thomas & Anderson, 1998). They should try their best to keep promises to newcomers and

avoid overpromising (Kiazad et al., 2014; Lapointe et al., 2013). Organisations can implement a realistic job preview (Wanous et al., 1992) to ensure that newcomers have clear communications with their organisations to acquire an explicit understanding of their role expectations and potential career development, helping to avoid discrepancies that may occur between what employees are expected to contribute and what the organisation will provide in return, thereby minimising the possibility of broken PCs (Guest & Conway, 2002; Tekleab et al., 2013; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021).

However, it is almost impossible for organisations to keep all their promises to employees due to unexpected events such as COVID-19 and global economic slowdown perhaps affecting employment circumstances (Chao et al., 2011; De Clercq et al., 2021; Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Hence, based on our findings, organisations should avoid denying that they have broken their promises when dealing with employees after a broken PC (Henderson et al., 2020). Instead, making amends to employees for their losses, providing a sincere apology, and giving an honest explanation can be the better remedies for reducing the adverse effects of broken PCs (Deng et al., 2018; Henderson et al., 2020; Lo & Aryee, 2003; Wiechers et al., 2022).

### ***Limitations and Future Research Directions***

One major limitation of this SR is that the criteria we used, focused on quality, may exclude some relevant research articles. For example, we excluded grey literature and some peer-reviewed research not from journals with A or A\* rankings according to the 2022 ABDC list. Future research could address this problem by expanding the filtering process to include more studies and enhance generalizability, but alongside this could risk introducing lower-quality research that may not provide a good foundation for synthesis.

We suggest two future research directions. Firstly, one important issue needing further investigation is whether solutions for managing broken PCs in the relational context differ from those in the transactional context (DiFonzo et al., 2020; Henderson et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 1994; van Gilst et al., 2020). A recent study found that both relational and transactional PCs were best repaired by the organisation trying to make amends and, to a lesser extent by apology, explanation, and promise-making (Cai & Murphy, 2024). The next step would be to test more repairing tactics (e.g., denial, excuse, and combined apology and excuses; (Henderson et al., 2020) in different PC contexts, examining these tactics for preventing or mitigating broken PCs are consistent across these contexts.

Secondly, it would be practically helpful to clarify the best communication strategy for organisations when they incur broken PCs. Research to date presents a conundrum: Frequent communication can

reduce the negative effects of broken PCs (Lapointe et al., 2013; Lv & Xu, 2018), but more communication is unhelpful (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Hence, the question remains as to the best frequency and format to effectively communicate with employees after a broken PC to mitigate employees' negative feelings and actions. In essence, exploring how often to communicate is a temporal issue, which aligns with a recent study by Griep et al. (2024), suggesting that time should be considered as a primary factor when conducting PC broken research.

### ***Summary***

In summary, our findings show that a broken PC negatively affects work-related outcomes at both the employee and organizational levels, not only having detrimental effects on organisational performance and effectiveness but also on employee health in both contexts of dyadic relationships and third parties witnessing these relationships. Thus, solutions for preventing or mitigating broken PCs are needed. Organisations should pay more attention to three areas: prospective prevention strategies, repair tactics, and potential moderators for preventing or mitigating the effects of broken PCs. Future research is needed to test whether repairing tactics work equally well for managing broken PCs in different contexts, such as for transactional or relational contracts. Additionally, we recommend a temporal lens for future broken PC research.

# Chapter Three: Discussion and Conclusion

## General Discussion

This systematic review set out to qualitatively synthesize 80 empirical studies from the last more than 30 years to address the following two RQs:

- RQ1: How do broken PCs affect organisational and employees' work-related outcomes?
- RQ2: What actions are being taken or could be taken by organisations to manage the effects of broken PCs?

Findings for RQ1 show that broken PCs have adverse effects on work-related outcomes at the employee and organisational levels, impacting not only dyadic employment relationships but also third parties witnessing these relationships. These findings align with previous reviews (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2007) on the relationship between broken PCs and outcomes but extend on these to show that the new approaches we used to categorise the information can provide additional insights. For example, four different combinations are used to group work-related outcomes at both the employee and organisational levels. These combinations include direct or indirect relationships with or without mediators and moderators. One advantage of this approach is that it presents the findings in more organised manner, making it easier for researchers to identify important research gaps needing to be addressed, such as the lack of research on health-related outcomes.

Findings for RQ2 focus more directly on broken PCs can contribute to solving problems experienced by employees and organisations. Specifically, our findings reveal the effectiveness of organizational actions aimed at preventing or mitigating the adverse effects of broken PCs within the organisational setting. Therefore, our findings in relation to RQ2 are expanded on further in the practical implications section below.

## Broad Theoretical Implications

Apart from the two theoretical implications in Chapter Two on Discussion and Conclusion section, we provide two further theoretical contributions.

This SR adopts two approaches to analyse the broken PC-outcome relationship for RQ1, which have not been used in prior reviews. These two approaches provide two additional contributions.

The first approach categorizes all work-related outcomes into two contexts: the dyadic employment relationship and beyond the dyad. Previous reviews have concentrated on first-party victims (Bal et al., 2008; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019; Topa et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2007), with only one review providing limited information about third-party victims, and even then, not in a systematic way (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). The approach used here to analyse the relationship between broken PCs and outcomes is that it provides a wider understanding of these work-related outcomes' targets. These outcomes not only directly affect the first-party employees' PCs, but they also can spill over to third parties. For example, after a broken PC, employees can reduce their helping behaviours toward their coworkers as a third party (Asante et al., 2024). Therefore, PC is concerned with the employee-organisation relationship and can have broader effects. Extending on this, the existing definition of the PC is framed as focusing on exchange between two parties, namely the employee and their organisation. This relationship represents a two-way exchange, such as first-party victim (target employee) reactions directed at the perpetrator (organisation) (Birtch et al., 2024; Conway & Briner, 2009; Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Guest, 1998; Rousseau, 1989). However, given that broken PCs affect others beyond the dyad, such as coworkers, perhaps a broader view of the PC is needed. Thus, this approach may contribute to providing insight for expanding the PC definition, which includes a third-party employment relationship.

A second contribution is that, through categorising four different combinations of mediators and moderators, namely direct or indirect relationships with or without moderators, we are able to thoroughly analyse the mechanisms underlying the relationships between broken PCs and outcomes to reveal research gaps. For example, only a small amount of research has focused on health-related outcomes.

## **Broad Practical Implications**

In addition to the practical implications in Chapter Two on Discussion and Conclusion section, we provide two additional suggestions for organisations: focusing on the role of managers and supervisors and considering “moderators” (see Figure 6 and Table 7), which could be used to manage broken PCs.

Firstly, in terms of who communicates about broken PCs, organisations should realize that managers and supervisors play the most critical role in preventing and repairing broken PCs (Birtch et al., 2024; De Roeck et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2022; Zagenczyk et al., 2009). For instance, keeping promises to employees is becoming increasingly difficult because of uncontrollable market competitive circumstances or unexpected organizational changes (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020; Porter, 1996; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Wiechers et al., 2022). Thus, the manager should act as a mediator to solve this unforeseen circumstance by providing a transparent conversation to explain why the organisation did not deliver what was promised and suggesting corresponding solutions for reducing the negative effects of the

broken PC for employees (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020). Moreover, managers should pay special attention to younger employees (Bal et al., 2013; de Lange et al., 2011) and newcomers (Woodrow & Guest, 2020) as they have a greater tendency to perceive their broken PC as having been broken, especially by their immediate supervisors. Relatedly, our findings show that managers and supervisors who communicate effectively can manage broken PCs better (Guest & Conway, 2002). Therefore, the organisation should consider providing communication training programmes for managers and supervisors to enhance this essential skill.

Secondly, organisations can adopt various moderators to manage broken PCs, comprising individual difference moderators (e.g., Machiavellianism and hostile attributional style) and psychological moderators (e.g., self-control, emotion regulation and humour skills, and forgiveness). During the employee selection process, organisations should avoid selecting employees who exhibit a higher level of Machiavellianism and hostile attributional style, because the employees with a higher level of these two strong dispositional characteristics can increase the negative impacts of broken PCs on employee deviant behaviours (Chiu & Peng, 2008; Zagenczyk et al., 2013). Instead, organisations would do well to hire employees who are high in self-control since this type of employee, after a broken PC, is less likely to seek revenge or engage in negative behaviors (Bordia et al., 2008).

Furthermore, employees who have better regulation of their negative emotions and a good sense of humour can effectively deal with the feelings of upset and annoyance caused by the broken PC (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2020). Therefore, organisations could consider providing tailored training programmes to enhance employees' emotional regulation and humour skills to tackle better negative feelings caused by a broken PC. Plus, employees with a higher level of forgiveness can reduce the detrimental effects of a broken PC on emotional exhaustion; therefore, organisations might consider developing forgiveness as a value within their organisational culture to help employees redress or reduce their emotional exhaustion subsequent to a broken PC (Costa & Neves, 2017). We note that there are ethical issues that organisations should consider when trying to select or shape employees and culture, which will vary according to the individuals, industry and country, among other factors.

Apart from individual differences and psychological moderators, some work relationships moderators also can be used to buffer the adverse effects of broken PCs, such as leader-member exchange (Doden et al., 2018), leader emotional support (Lin et al., 2022), supervisor support (Zagenczyk et al., 2009), and third-party's guanxi with the supervisor (Birtch et al., 2024). Hence, organisations can adopt these moderators to alleviate the harmful effects of broken PCs. For example, providing customised training courses for managers and supervisors on supporting their subordinates and colleagues, while building

sound relationships with them in the organisational setting. Additionally, supervisory social support, serving as a moderator, mitigated the direct adverse impact of PC breaches on emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003). The organisation could draw on this result to implement supervisory social support interventions and reduce employees' emotional exhaustion in response to breaches.

It is important to note that studies to date find some moderators have no buffering role on the negative effects of broken PCs on corresponding outcomes, such as interactional justice (Lo & Aryee, 2003) and providing role models (Zagenczyk et al., 2009). Information on ineffective moderators is valuable, pointing organisations to which initiatives to avoid or else carefully examine, ensuring their limited resources are used more effectively.

Furthermore, we suggest organisations should take care when adopting two work-related systems-level moderators to deal with broken PC issues, namely high-performance work systems and idiosyncratic deals systems. For high-performance work systems, evidence shows this does not mitigate the adverse effects of PC breach on person-organisation fit and employee engagement but worsens the adverse effects (Lv & Xu, 2018). A system of idiosyncratic deals only works well for employees with higher positions in organisations (Guerrero et al., 2014). Therefore, organisations should carefully assess each system's benefits and drawbacks before using them to avoid unnecessary spending on ineffective outcomes and wrongly targeting their efforts. For example, an idiosyncratic deals system is not effective for lower-level employees to address their broken PCs.

## **Broad Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Additional to the ideas about limitations and future research directions in Chapter Two's Discussion and Conclusion section, we provide one more limitation and two additional future research directions that PC researchers could usefully focus on.

An additional limitation is that, in terms of our selection of studies to review, the criteria we used included only employees who have sufficient working time with their organisations to develop their PCs, and thus excluded some articles that involved other temporary employment relationships such as freelancers, independent contractors, platform workers, seasonal workers and any kinds of temporary workers. Additionally, based on a report conducted by McKinsey's American Opportunity Survey Spring 2022, 36% of the US workforce belongs to temporary employment relationships (Dua et al., 2022). Therefore, future research is needed to identify whether and to what extent understandings of broken PCs generalise to these temporary employment relationships, for example, whether there are consistent

detrimental impacts of broken PCs on work-related outcomes or whether, because these employees have more flexibility in their employment relationships, there are fewer negative impacts.

Turning to future research, Figure 2 shows that most studies included in this review used a sample of participants from various occupations. If future research concentrates on one specific occupation for each study, it could lead to the most effective strategies for managing broken PCs that are known to be relevant to the occupation, allowing efficient use of resources. Moreover, there may be differences in employee norms as to what is acceptable and reactions to breaches that also have implications for organisations and their stakeholders. For example, Deng et al. (2018) found medical employees showed stronger negative reactions to PC violation, in the form of resource depletion, when their organisational identification was high and weaker negative reactions when their professional identification was high. Moreover, Deng et al. (2018) highlighted that negative reactions to PC breaches may have deleterious effects on patients in medical settings. This suggests that, in medical settings, organisations should pay more attention to medical employees' professional identification than their organisational identification. Therefore, it would be valuable for future research to investigate the management of broken PCs in specific occupational contexts (Bankins et al., 2020; Kraak et al., 2024), to maximise our knowledge of preventative and repair tactics that are effective either in only limited contexts or more broadly.

Our findings for RQ1 show that only a small number of studies focused on health-related outcomes (see Figure 4 and Table 5). The main outcomes studied was emotional exhaustion (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Lapointe et al., 2013; Zacher & Rudolph, 2021), but two studies investigated psychological stress (Rodwell et al., 2015), and insomnia (Garcia et al., 2018) respectively. Hence there is a need for more research linking broken PC to employee health outcomes to understand the scale of effects. Plus, ensuring employees' mental and physical health not only maintains organisational productivity but also shows the organisations care for their employees. Hence, future research is needed to examine the effects of broken PCs on health-related outcomes and identify corresponding solutions to manage these issues.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, our findings show that employees who experience broken PCs have detrimental effects on organisations but harm them personally, in terms of psychological, behavioural, and health outcomes. Therefore, practical actions are needed to effectively prevent or mitigate broken PCs. In this SR, RQ1 examines how broken PCs have adverse effects on work-related outcomes at both employee and organisational levels, impacting not only dyadic employment relationships but also third parties witnessing these relationships. We adopted four different combinations of mediators and moderators to

thoroughly analyse the relationship between broken PCs and outcomes, which have yet to be used in previous reviews. RQ2 focuses on identifying practical solutions for managing broken PCs. Our findings indicate organisations should pay more attention to newcomers during selection, recruitment, and socialization processes. Additionally, managers and supervisors play a decisive role in both preventing and repairing broken PCs. We emphasize that organisations should carefully consider individual differences and work relationships that act as moderators to manage broken PCs, such as different personality traits and leader emotional support. We suggest future research should focus on managing broken PCs within specific contexts, such as in different occupational settings. Moreover, the health-related outcome is a gap for future research on broken PCs because understanding the extent of this issue and how to mitigate it can help employee well-being and performance, benefiting employees and organisations. Finally, as alternative work arrangements (e.g., freelancers and platform workers) become more ubiquitous, these kinds of temporary work relationships may need to be considered for conducting PC future research.

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## Appendix: 80 Studies Included in This Review

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