

## Relationship between Psychological Contract Breach and Affective Commitment among Public University Academicians in Tanzania: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the effect of two job attitudes – perceived psychological contract breach and job satisfaction on affective commitment as well as whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. A cross-sectional explanatory research design was used involving a sample of 223 academicians drawn from five public universities in Tanzania. Multiple regression analysis techniques were used to examine the effect of psychological contract breach and job satisfaction on academicians' affective commitment to their respective universities. The mediation role of job satisfaction was tested using Andrew Hayes' Process Macro 4.0. The results show that the two predictors explained about 62 percent of the variance in affective commitment where psychological contract breach and jobs satisfaction have, respectively, statistically significant negative and positive effects. Job satisfaction, in addition to being the most influential predictor, mediates significantly, but partially, the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. The study concludes that while psychological contract breach negatively affects the academicians' affective commitment, part of this effect is indirect through job satisfaction. It, therefore, recommends that honoring psychological contracts is important for cultivating affection and identification of academicians with their universities, and that these outcomes would be enhanced if job satisfaction-enhancing measures are also stepped up.*

**Keywords:** *psychological contract breach, job satisfaction, affective commitment, universities, mediation.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The roles of universities in socioeconomic development are universally acknowledged as those of teaching, researching and service to society (Cloete & Maassen, 2015; Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020; Ekwall-Sundby, 2021; Morphew *et al.*, 2018). Universities' superior performance is a function of the commitment of their academic staff both to the profession and to their universities (Aboramadan *et al.*, 2021; Nazir & Islam, 2017). The irreplaceability of their competencies and experiences provides the universities with a competitive advantage (Shrand & Ronnie, 2019) and success (Lovakov, 2016). Being at the core of the university's operations (Vassigh, 2017), academicians influence the quality of teaching and learning as well as that of knowledge creation, which in turn enhances the contribution that these universities make to society (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Therefore, developing and sustaining the right number and quality of academicians committed to their universities is key to enhancing the latter's sustainability.

Overall, having employees who are committed to their organizations is important because it has been shown empirically that organizational commitment is linked to positive organizational outcomes such as job performance (Mansoor *et al.*, 2022), profitability and competitiveness (Ramay & Ramay, 2012), reduced absenteeism and turnover intentions (Lamber *et al.*, 2015), among others.

The concept of organizational commitment has evolved over time. While commitment refers to "the force that binds an individual to a course of action that is of relevance to a particular target" (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001), organizational commitment refers to "the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement, in a particular organization" (Porter *et al.*, 1974, p.604). Mowday *et al.* (1982) identify the characteristics of organizational commitment as (a) a strong belief, in and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert a considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) strong intent, or desire, to remain with the organization.

Subsequently, Meyer and Allen (1991) identify three dimensions of organizational commitment. The first is "affective commitment" – the employees' emotional attachment to, recognition/identification with, and involvement in, the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990), or the positive feeling of the same (Meyer & Allen, 1984). The second dimension is

“continuance commitment” - the choice to stay in an organization due to the perceived cost of not to, and it represents the calculation and comparison of the cost of leaving against the desire to continue membership with the organization based on the profitable benefits gained (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The last dimension is “normative commitment” – the employees’ feeling of an obligation to stay with the organization regardless of what it offers them (Meyer & Allen, 1997) because they feel a sense of duty, responsibility and obligation towards the organization based on internalized moral beliefs (Balassino & Salles, 2012). The three dimensions are correlated with each other (Cohen, 2014), and have different consequences in terms of work behaviour (Horta *et al.*, 2019; Meyer *et al.*, 2002), hence the justification for using organizational commitment as a multidimensional construct in empirical studies.

However, the present study focused on affective commitment because, in addition to being the essence of the organizational commitment construct, it also serves as the base for organization commitment theories (Mercurio, 2015). Moreover, affective commitment has been shown to have stronger relationships with positive work outcomes (Nkhukhu-Orlando *et al.*, 2019), and more effect on the individuals’ perceptions (Mercurio, 2015), than both the continuance and normative commitment, which focus more on rewards/benefits and obligation (Randall *et al.*, 1999). The continuance and normative commitment signal obligation because individuals commit to the organization out of feeling the obligation to do so either because of the perception of investment value they might lose if they leave (continuance) or because they feel the need to return the investment the organization has made on them over time (normative). This study, therefore, focused on the academicians’ commitment to their universities that arise from affectionately and emotionally identifying themselves with the universities’ goals and values, i.e., the affective commitment.

The power of organizational commitment as a source of organizational outcomes has led to a growing research effort to populate its antecedents. The literature identifies such antecedents to include, among others, psychological contract breach (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014; Matoka, 2020) and job satisfaction (Bennett, 2019; Cherian, Alkhatib & Agarwal, 2018; Chordiya *et al.*, 2017; Markovits *et al.*, 2010). A psychological contract breach refers to an employee’s perception that his/her employer has failed to honour one or more obligations associated with perceived

mutual promises (Conway & Coyle-Shapiro, 2006). Although these contracts are unwritten, employees would reciprocate with less commitment to their organizations when they perceive these contracts as having been breached by the employer. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, is the employee's positive assessment of his/her job (Weiss, 2002). It is "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating one's job values" (Locke, 1969), short of which it results in job dissatisfaction – "the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one's job values" (p.317). It is an employee's self-assessment of the extent to which actual outcomes of various aspects of the job match their expectations. The degree of any mismatch triggers various positive and negative attitudinal and behavioural responses by employees, such as commitment, turnover intentions and absenteeism (Aboramadan, 2021; Meyer *et al.*, 2002).

Past researches linking organizational commitment to psychological contract breach and job satisfaction individually are many and vary in context. Studies by Amoah *et al.* (2021) on a sample of teachers in private and public basic schools in Ghana, Ampofo *et al.* (2022) on a sample of frontline staff from small-sized hotels in Ghana and Matoka (2020) on a sample of academicians from five public universities in Tanzania, all found a negative and statistically significant effect of psychological contract breach on organizational commitment. Moreover, studies have reported a negative and significant impact of psychological contract breaches on job satisfaction. See, for example, Ihsan *et al.* (2020) on a sample of university staff in Pakistan, Milanović *et al.* (2018) on a sample of employees from a manufacturing firm in the Serbia Republic, Mensah and Koomson (2021) on a sample of medical doctors in Ghana, and Collins and Beauregard (2020) on a sample of medical doctors in Ireland. In addition, other studies have reported a positive and significant effect of job satisfaction on organizational commitment. See, for example, Al-Hussein (2020) on a sample of nurses in India, Ashraf (2020) on a sample of academicians from private universities in Bangladesh, Bashir and Gani (2020) on a sample of university academicians in India, Bennett (2019) on a sample of fast-food restaurant employees in the Caribbean, Dirani and Kuchinke (2011) on a sample of banking sector employees in Lebanon, and Gultekin (2022) on a sample of public sector forest engineers in Turkey. Others include Jonathan, Darroux, and Massele (2013) and Johnathan, Darroux and Thibeli (2013), both on samples of secondary

school teachers in Tanzania, Saridakis *et al.* (2018) on a large sample of employees in Britain, exploring methodological and estimation differences, and Valaei and Razael (2016) on a sample of ICT-SMEs employees.

From the afore-reviewed studies, a few gaps exist: The first is that despite the importance of affective commitment among academicians in the performance and success of universities, studies on its determinants in higher learning institutions are generally scarce (Wilkins *et al.*, 2017) globally and in the African continent (Fako *et al.*, 2018). A few exceptions are those of Matoka (2020) who linked it to psychological contract breach and Ashraf (2020) and Bashir and Gani (2020) both of which linked it to job satisfaction. The second gap is that while there have been several studies linking job satisfaction to psychological contract breach in other sectors, little is done in higher education institutions. The third gap is that none of the studies that examined affective commitment in higher learning institutions examined the joint and relative effect of psychological contract breach and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the past research evidence presented in the preceding paragraph suggests that both psychological contract breach and job satisfaction have a significant effect on affective commitment while psychological contract breach also has a significant effect on job satisfaction. According to Field (2018), this evidence suggests a potential mediation of job satisfaction in the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. Job satisfaction as a mediator has also been shown in the relationship between job stress, workload and turnover intentions in universities (Anees *et al.*, 2021), job involvement and organizational commitment among banking employees in Jordan (Abdallah *et al.*, 2016), and between psychological contract breach and organizational citizenship behaviour among medical doctors (Koomson & Mensah, 2020). However, while job satisfaction has been shown to mediate the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment in the banking sector (Antonaki & Trivellas, 2014) in Turkey, no such studies exist in higher learning institutions globally, and especially in the frontier markets like Tanzania.

This study, therefore, attempted to fill these gaps by examining the relationships between job attitudes of perceived psychological contract breach and job satisfaction and the work outcome of affective commitment in a sample of academicians from five public universities in

Tanzania. The objectives were to determine (i) whether their level of affective commitment to the university is predicted by the two job attitudes of psychological contract breach and job satisfaction, and (ii) whether the effect of perceived psychological contract breach on affective commitment is mediated by job satisfaction. The study borrowed a leaf from two theories - the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) and the equity theory (Adams, 1965).

According to the social exchange theory, there exists a reciprocal relationship between two parties, which creates obligations in response to the beneficial acts of the other party. This study argues that the academicians' commitment to the university may increase as an obligation on their part (a reciprocal response) to the satisfaction they draw from the job and the university (employer). That is, when academicians feel that their university is engaged actively in policies and human resource management practices that give them satisfaction with their job, they may feel obligated to reciprocate that treatment. Among the ways through which they may do so is by committing emotionally and affectionately to the university. This happens because the reciprocal exchanges between them and their employer are important components of the social exchange between them.

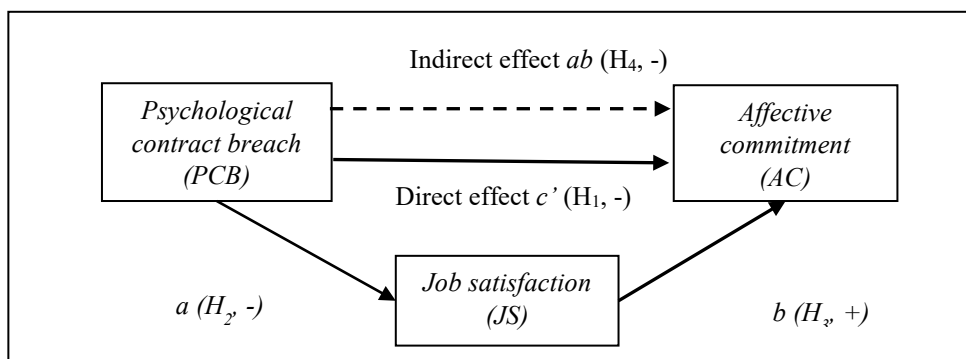
Adams' equity theory, on the other hand, suggests that a perception of equity exists in the exchange relationship at work between employees' input and outputs. It assumes that employees pursue a balance between what they invest (input) in a particular relationship (e.g., time, skills, effort, etc.) and the benefits they gain from it (outputs) (e.g., status appreciation, pay, recognition, etc.). If the input-output balance is disturbed, the employees are pushed to restore it. If inputs are higher than the outputs, the employees tend to restore it by for example, decreasing their investment in the relationship – psychological withdrawal, committing less to the organization's goal and values, or in general, by engaging in negative work attitudes, behaviours and outcomes. From these social exchanges, it is argued that psychological contract breach and job satisfaction will have a negative (positive) effect on affective commitment. It is also argued that the fulfilment of the unwritten contracts may trigger higher affective commitment directly but it may also enhance employees' satisfaction with their job (written promises such as pay promotion opportunities, supervision, working conditions etc.), which in turn leads to higher affective commitment. This situation

fulfils the conditions for a potential mediation effect of job satisfaction in the relationship between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment (Figure 1).

From the background review presented above, the following hypotheses were specified and tested

- H<sub>1</sub>. Perceived psychological contract breach will have a negative effect on affective commitment
- H<sub>2</sub>. Perceived psychological contract breach will have a negative effect on job satisfaction
- H<sub>3</sub>. Job satisfaction will have a positive effect on affective commitment
- H<sub>4</sub>. Job satisfaction will mediate the relationship between perceived psychological contract breach and affective commitment.

The study contributes to the organizational commitment’ literature in higher education in several ways. It contributes empirical evidence from public university academicians in a frontier market on (i) the job attitudes of psychological contract breach and job satisfaction as predictors of affective commitment; and (ii) job satisfaction as a mediator in the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. In doing these, the study also contributes evidence, from the stated context, in support of both the social exchange and the equity theories.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**

**METHODOLOGY**

**Sampling Techniques**

Anchored in the positivist philosophy and deductive approach, the study adopted a cross-sectional explanatory research design with a survey strategy to collect the primary data required to confirm the hypotheses. It



drew participants from selected public universities in Tanzania. As of January 2020, there were 43 university institutions in Tanzania – 30 Universities (12 public and 18 private) and 13 university colleges (4 public and 9 private) (TCU, 2020). However, the study focused on public universities, and based on size and age, only the big five universities were targeted – namely, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), The Open University of Tanzania (OUT), Muhimbili University of Health and Allied Sciences (MUHAS) and Mzumbe University (MU). Despite being a big university, the University of Dodoma was left out not only for being newer but also for logistics reasons. These big and older public universities were targeted not only because they are the universities with a significant number of academicians but also because they have a mixture of short and long-serving academicians. They are viewed as universities with well-established human resource management systems. This implies that finding a significant level of affective commitment among their academicians may reflect their experiences on the job and their systems being developed and supported. The academicians were conveniently sampled. The convenient sampling method was considered the best-fit method to mitigate the challenges of accessibility/availability of academic staff (during visits) due to the nature of their work schedules (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). It was not easy to find all academic staff present in their duty stations as some were on long study leave, on annual leaves, on short training or attending seminars and conferences. Moreover, others were on other university activities like conducting research and consultancies out of their duty stations. Li (2014) recommends convenience sampling as a preferred method for sampling participants from a population of individuals with irregular work schedules and unfixed workplaces. Thus, academicians who were found in their offices and willing to participate were given the questionnaires to fill out. The filled questionnaires were left at an agreed-upon point for collection later on. The academicians were fully informed that participation was voluntary. Besides, they were fully informed that all of their responses would be confidential and that the results of the analysis would be reported in aggregate terms.

### **Variables and their Measurements**

*Psychological contract breach:* Psychological contract breach was measured by adapting the global scale with five (5) items from Robinson and Morrison (2000). This scale assessed the respondent's overall perception of how the university has fulfilled or failed to fulfil its



obligations and promises. An example of items from this scale is “Almost all the promises made by the university during recruitment have been kept thus far” (negatively worded). Academicians responded to these items on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The global scale was preferred over both the alternatives (composite and weighted average measures) for its realistic representation of perceived psychological contract breach as well as for its dominance in prior research. For further comparative and preferences among these three measures, see Zhao *et al.* (2007, 656).

*Affective Commitment:* was measured by eight items (four of them negatively worded) adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Sample items were “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this university”, “I feel as if this university’s problems are my own” and, “I think that I could easily become as attached to another university as I am to this one” (negatively worded). Academicians responded to these items on a 7-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7).

*Job satisfaction:* was measured using the five-item scale (one of them negatively worded) adapted from Brayfield and Rothe’s (1951) scale. Sample items included “I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job” and “I consider my job rather unpleasant” (negatively worded). Academicians responded to these items on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

### **Data Processing and Analysis**

The negatively worded items on each of the three measurement scales - psychological contract breach (3), job satisfaction (1) and affective commitment (4) - served as attention traps. As a result, 35 respondents with zero variability in their responses i.e., the same responses irrespective of the directional wording of the scale items were identified and removed, reducing the sample size to 188 cases. No respondents with out-of-range responses were found using frequency distribution statistics. Eleven items had between 1 and 3 missing values all < 5 percent missing. The Little’s (1988) test was used to assess the hypothesis of whether these values were missing completely at random (MCAR), one construct at a time. The hypothesis of data missing completely at random was accepted for the psychological contract breach ( $\chi^2 = 13.93$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $\rho = .305$ ) and job satisfaction ( $\chi^2 = 7.63$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $\rho = .938$ ) but not for the affective commitment ( $\chi^2 = 67.81$ ,  $df = 35$ ,  $\rho = .001$ ). Subsequently, the missing

values in both psychological contract breach and job satisfaction were imputed with Expectation-maximization (EM) method. However, for the affective commitment, the nine (9) cases with missing values were identified and trimmed off, reducing the sample to 179 cases. The univariate normality assumption was met as all indicator variables produced skewness values  $< 2.0$  (West *et al.*, 1995).

The scale test for reliability analysis was used to evaluate the internal consistency of each of the three scales, but after the negatively worded indicators were reverse-coded. Optimization by deleting items with potential improvement on Cronbach's alpha resulted in  $\alpha = .871$  for the psychological contract breach (4 items),  $\alpha = .887$  for job satisfaction (2 items) and  $\alpha = .855$  for the affective commitment (4 items). All  $\alpha_s$  fell into the good internal consistency range (George & Mallery, 2020) (Table 2). Scale validity was assessed with the Pearson product-moment correlation technique in which bivariate correlation ( $r$ ) between indicators and scale total scores were computed. All  $r_s$  were significant at  $p = .001$  and higher than the cut-off points of .075 drawn from the critical values in the Pearson correlation table with a degree of freedom =177, and  $p = .05$ . This result indicates that all indicators were valid measures of their respective constructs.

Mean scores were computed for each of the three constructs and tested for multivariate outliers, normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity assumptions. Although none of the constructs failed the Mahalanobis Distance cut-off ( $\chi^2 = 13.816$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .001$ ), two more cases were deleted for failing both of the other two criteria of Cook's Distance and Centered leverage value, reducing the sample to 177 cases. The normality assumption was met based on skewness statistics  $z < 3.29$  (Kim, 2013). The linearity assumption was met ( $r > .30$ ), and so were the no multicollinearity (VIF = 2.08) (Menard, 2002; Rogerson, 2001) and homoscedasticity (BP LM,  $\chi^2 = 1.493$ ,  $p = .474$ ; Koenker,  $\chi^2 = 0.977$ ,  $p = .614$ ) assumptions. The final sample of 177 cases and the associated data were subjected to the analysis using multiple regression analysis with the help of IBM SPSS statistics v.26 software, and Process Macro v. 4.0 (Hayes, 2022) to test the hypotheses of the study.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Participants' profile**

The final sample (N=177) involved more middle-aged academicians (65%) followed by senior academicians (27.7%) and young academicians

(7.3%). The age cut-offs used (Table 1) are consistent with those recommended by Yarlagadda *et al.* (2015). Thus, the size of the middle-aged group (30-50) suggests maturity which places them in a better position to partake informatively in the study. Typical of the gender profile of universities' academic staff, male respondents dominated the sample at 74 per cent. The majority (86.7 per cent) had family responsibilities (married) and there was about a fifty-fifty split between PhD holders and those with Master's and Bachelor's degrees (7.4%). Fifty-nine per cent were lecturers and above (with Professors making only 15.3 per cent of the total sample). Lastly, about 28.2 per cent of the sample were participants holding administrative responsibilities. Participants had been on their job for a period ranging from one to 43 years ( $M = 12.67$ ,  $S.D. = 8.6$ ) with 64.2 per cent of them having been on the job for 10 or more years.

**Table 1. Participants**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20-30	13	7.3
31-50	115	65.0
51+	49	27.7
Sex		
Male	131	74.0
Female	46	26.0
Marital Status		
Married	150	86.7
Others	23	13.3
Education		
Masters or lower	87	49.4
PhD+	89	50.6
Academic rank		
Assistant Lecturer or lower	72	40.9
Lecturer or higher	104	59.1
Administrative responsibility		
Yes	46	28.2
No	117	71.8
Years of experience		
Min	1	
Max	43	
Mean	12.86	
SD	8.79	

### Descriptive and Correlation Statistics

Following the descriptive classification in Albdour and Altarawneh (2014), participants were moderately affectively committed to their respective universities, moderately satisfied with their jobs and

moderately perceived that the psychological contracts between them and their universities were breached (Table 2). Further comparison of the constructs was done considering homogeneity of variance and appropriate post hoc test (age groups only). The older academics (51+ years) were significantly more affectively committed to their universities than their younger (30 or younger) counterparts (Mdiff. = 1.334,  $p = .034$ ). Academicians with administrative responsibilities were also significantly more affectively committed to their universities than those without such responsibilities (Mdiff. = 0.813,  $t(161) = 2.798$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Only the academicians with administrative responsibilities significantly perceived less than those without that their psychological contract with their universities was breached (Mdiff. = -0.494,  $t(161) = -2.788$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Job satisfaction was significantly higher in the older academicians' group than in both the middle group (Mdiff. = 0.579,  $p = .006$ ) and the younger group (Mdiff. = 1.224,  $p = .039$ ). Job satisfaction was also significantly higher in male academicians (Mdiff. = 0.55,  $t(175) = 2.455$ ,  $p = .015$ ), academicians with a doctorate or higher degree (Mdif = 0.450,  $t(174) = 2.452$ ,  $p = .015$ ) and academicians with Lecturer or higher ranks (Mdiff. = 0.503,  $t(174) = 2.721$ ,  $p = .007$ ). Only job satisfaction was significantly positively related to academicians' work experience ( $r = .230$ ,  $p = .002$ ) representing a low effect (Cohen, 1988).

**Table 2. Descriptive, Reliability And Correlation Results**

Variable	M	S.D.	$\alpha$	1	2	3
1. Affective Commitment ( $k = 4$ )	4.2	1.693	.855			
2. Psychological Contract Breach ( $k = 4$ )	3.22	1.034	.871	-.725***		
3. Job Satisfaction ( $k = 2$ )	3.33	1.232	.887	-.731***	-.722 ***	
4. Tenure	12.86	8.79		.132	.002	.230***

\*\*\*.  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < .05$  level (2-tailed).

$k$  = number of scale items retained

### Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis technique was used to test the ability of the two independent variables of psychological contract breach and job satisfaction to predict levels of academicians' affective commitment to their respective universities. The results (Table 3) show that the total variance in affective commitment explained by the model was 61.6%,  $F(2, 174) = 139.348$ ,  $p < .001$ . While psychological contract breach had a statistically significant negative effect on affective commitment ( $b = -$

0.675,  $t(174) = -6.068$ ,  $p < .001$ ), job satisfaction had a statistically significant positive effect on their affective commitment to their universities ( $b = 0.596$ ,  $t(174) = 6.384$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Comparatively, job satisfaction contributed more impact ( $beta = 0.434$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than psychological contract breach ( $beta = -0.412$ ,  $p < .001$ ) on affective commitment.

**Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis Results**

	b	SE(b)	beta	t	p-value
Constant	4.385	0.626		7.004	<.001
Psychological contract breach	-0.675	0.111	-.412	-6.068	<.001
Job satisfaction	0.596	0.093	0.434	6.384	<.001
R <sup>2</sup>	.616				
F-Stat. (2,174)		139.374			<.001

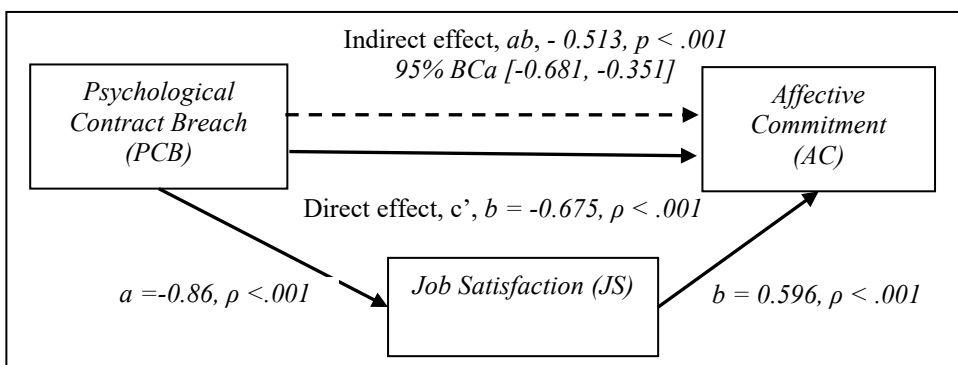
### Mediation Analysis

The study also examined the impact of psychological contract breach on affective commitment as mediated by job satisfaction. It was hypothesized that perceiving the psychological contract with the university as having been breached will negatively predict affective commitment. Additionally, it was hypothesized that job satisfaction will mediate this relationship. Process Macro v. 4.0 (Hayes (2022) was used to test the hypotheses, application details of which are well demonstrated in Field (2018). The results (Figure 2), show that psychological contract breach negatively predicted affective commitment ( $b = -1.188$ ,  $t = -14.171$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (The total effect). Analyzing the indirect effect, the results reveal that job satisfaction significantly mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment ( $ab = -.513$ ,  $p < .001$ ; 95%CI  $-0.681$  to  $-0.351$ ). Psychological contract breach negatively affected job satisfaction ( $b = -.860$ ,  $t = -13.639$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and job satisfaction in turn positively affected affective commitment ( $b = .596$ ,  $t = 7.040$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Nevertheless, the results also suggest that even after accounting for the mediating role of job satisfaction, psychological contract breach still had a significant impact on affective commitment ( $b = -.675$ ,  $t = -6.548$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Job satisfaction accounted for 43.2 percent of the total effect. The findings provide some evidence that academicians who perceive their psychological contracts with their respective universities as having been breached are less likely to identify, and develop affection, with them because they tend to be dissatisfied with their jobs. Nevertheless, academicians' mere perceived psychological

contract breach still contributed negatively and significantly to their affection and identification with their universities beyond what was accounted for by job dissatisfaction. Thus, these results indicate that job satisfaction significantly mediated, but partially the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. Put differently, job satisfaction reduced the negative effect of perceived psychological contract breach on academicians’ level of affection and identification with their respective universities. There could, therefore, be other potential mediators to include in the model in addition to job satisfaction.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study examined the relationship between two job attitudes (psychological contract breach and job satisfaction) and one behavioural outcome - affective commitment among academicians in five public universities in Tanzania. The objectives were to assess whether the two job attitudes significantly predict the academicians’ affective commitment and whether job satisfaction mediates the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. Based on the reviewed theoretical and empirical literature, four hypotheses were developed and tested and all were supported.



**Figure 2: The Indirect effect**

From the descriptive statistics, academicians were found to have moderate psychological contract breach perceptions, job satisfaction and affective commitment (Albdour & Altarawneh, 2014). Older academicians as well as those who had administrative roles were significantly more committed to their universities than those who were younger and had no administrative roles, respectively. These findings are consistent with the results reported by Anthun and Innstrand (2016).

Anthun and Innstrand associated the findings with the notion that older academicians have a favourable position which is graced with tenured status and better working conditions. Perceived psychological breach was significantly lower among the academicians with administrative roles than among those without such roles. Job satisfaction was significantly higher in older academicians than those in each of the other two age groups, in male than in female academicians, in doctorate holders and lecturers or higher rank than in their respective counterparts. Furthermore, job satisfaction was significantly positively correlated with academicians' work experience (in years).

Job satisfaction was found to be a significant positive predictor of affective commitment. The finding implies that academicians who are satisfied with their jobs are likely to develop emotional attachment and affection to their universities, supporting hypothesis H<sub>2</sub>. The findings are similar to those reported in previous studies, e.g., Chordya *et al.* (2017), Jonathan, Darroux, and Massele (2013), and Jonathan Darroux and Thibeli (2013).

The study also found that both the psychological contract breach and the job satisfaction significantly negatively and positively affected affective commitment, respectively, supporting hypotheses H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>3</sub>. These findings imply that both job attitudes are important predictors of the academicians' affective commitment to their universities. The results on each of the links of psychological contract breach - job satisfaction and job satisfaction – affective commitment lend support to the social exchange theory which posits that academicians would report a lower satisfaction with their jobs the more they perceive a breach has occurred in their psychological contracts with their universities. It also posits that academicians are more likely to develop more (less) affection and emotional attachment with the university as a reciprocation to their feeling of being satisfied with their job (perceiving a breach of their psychological contract). Support is also offered to the equity theory. That is, the employees commit more to their universities (inputs) if they feel satisfied or perceive their psychological contract breach is fulfilled (outputs) to restore the balance.

Job satisfaction was found to significantly but partially mediate the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. These findings, in addition to confirming hypothesis H<sub>4</sub>, are



also consistent with previous studies, for example, Antonaki and Trivellas (2014). The findings are consistent with those that assessed the mediation effect of job satisfaction in the relationship between perceived psychological contract breach and other work attitudes and outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviour (Koomson & Mensah, 2020), work engagement (Rayton & Yalabik, 2014), and workplace deviance (Balogun *et al.*, 2016). These findings are new in Tanzania as none had been done on the trio, let alone in the higher education sector. Likewise, the findings on the psychological contract breach – job satisfaction link are also new in Tanzania

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concludes that psychological contract breach has a negative and significant effect on job satisfaction and the two, respectively, have a significant positive and negative effect on affective commitment, with job satisfaction contributing the most impact. It also concludes that job satisfaction significantly but only partially mediates the relationship between psychological contract breach and affective commitment. This finding of partial mediation signals the possibility that there are more potential mediators than just job satisfaction. Despite that, the present findings of job satisfaction's partial mediation may imply that honouring psychological contracts is good for cultivating affection and identification of academicians with their universities, but these outcomes would be enhanced if job satisfaction-enhancing measures are also stepped up. In so doing, job satisfaction would reduce the negative impact that a perceived psychological contract breach has on affective commitment. Moreover, the fact that the two variables only explained under 61.6 percent of the variance in affective commitment, more predictors could be at play. Likewise, following the findings that job satisfaction only partially mediates the relationship calls for the identification of other potential mediators.

The study has an important implication for human resources management practices. The affective commitment of academicians needs to be managed and monitored in ways in which an appropriate level is attained and its consequences are amplified (Philips & Connell, 2003). The finding implies that when an academician identifies and develops an affection with the university especially a doctorate holder, lecturer and above, or a leader, he/she is more likely to lead, develop and support others towards the fulfilment of the fundamental roles of the university.

Human resource managers should proactively identify and implement practices that encourage staff to like, and commit to, their jobs and their universities. One of the ways to do so is to improve the working environment e.g. rewarding Heads of Department, Faculty/School Deans, and College Principals, who will create a satisfying and empowering environment. Initiatives for academic staff training and development as well as research support are called for. Through such measures, the perception of psychological contract breach is also reduced among academicians. This will in turn make the academicians more satisfied with their jobs which will subsequently amplify their affective commitment.

The study is not without limitations. The sample is limited to public universities, leaving out private universities as well as non-university higher learning institutions. These exclusions limit the generalization of the results to the universities and more broadly to the higher education sector. The study tested the prediction of affective commitment using only two of the key job attitudes. Other job attitudes include job involvement, work engagement, organizational support (supervisory and managerial) (Robbins & Judge, 2018), as well as organizational politics. Future research should consider these other job attitudes to expand on the literature on the determinants of organizational commitment. An expansion of the mediating variables (simple, serial and parallel) is encouraged and so are the multi-sectoral studies. Given the many important positive consequences of organizational commitment especially among university academicians, a better understanding of the factor that could amplify this potential behavioural outcome is welcome.

Despite such limitations, this study's findings linking the two job attitudes (psychological contract breach and job satisfaction), especially the former to affective commitment and the mediation of job satisfaction are new. They are new, not only to the affective organizational commitment literature in the higher education sector but also from a frontier market – Tanzania. The direct effect of psychological contract breach on affective commitment is not eliminated even after accounting for the effect of job satisfaction as a mediator. It calls for the investigation of other potential mediators.

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