

**PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF CONTRACT BREACH ON LECTURERS
TRUST IN MANAGEMENT OF NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF
NIGERIAN ABUJA**

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and trust in management among lecturers in Nigerian universities, with a focus on the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Guided by Social Exchange Theory, the study explored how lecturers' perceptions of unfulfilled organisational obligations, such as promotion, inadequate research support, and workload imbalance, affect their trust in university management. quantitative research design was employed, with data collected through structured questionnaires. From a population of about 450 lecturers, a sample of 220 was selected. Data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling to test the hypothesised relationships. The results revealed that PCB has a significant negative effect on lecturers' trust in management ($\beta = -0.68$, $p < 0.001$), and the specific dimensions are promotion, research support, and workload each significantly reduce trust. The model explained 46% of the variance in trust, indicating strong explanatory power. These findings confirm that perceived breaches of the psychological contract undermine lecturers' confidence, engagement, and organisational commitment. Based on the results, the study recommends that universities strengthen promotion practices, enhance research support, balance workload, improve communication, and institutionalise policies to ensure fulfillment of lecturers' expectations. Implementing these strategies can enhance trust, improve lecturer satisfaction, and foster a stable and productive academic environment. The study contributes to organisational behaviour literature by providing context-specific insights into psychological contract breaches in Nigerian universities and offers actionable guidance for university administrators to improve lecturer–management relations.

Keywords: Psychological contract breach, Lecturers trust, Management, NOUN.

Introduction

Universities are knowledge-driven institutions whose effectiveness largely depends on the commitment, motivation, and trust of their academic staff. Lecturers play a central role in teaching, research, and community service, and their relationship with university management is often shaped not only by formal employment contracts but also by unwritten expectations and obligations. These unwritten expectations, according to Rousseau, (1995) is commonly referred to as psychological contract it encompasses beliefs about mutual responsibilities between employees and their organisations. A psychological contract is formed when employees perceive promises regarding issues such as career advancement, workload balance, research support, job security, and fair treatment. When employees believe that the organisation has failed

to fulfil these perceived obligations, a psychological contract breach is said to have occurred (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Such breaches can negatively affect employees' attitudes and behaviours, particularly their level of trust in management and the institution. Employee trust is a critical element in organisational relationships, as it influences cooperation, commitment, job satisfaction, and willingness to go beyond formal job requirements (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust becomes especially important in academic environments where autonomy, collegiality, and long-term professional development are highly valued. When lecturers perceive that university authorities do not honor promises related to promotion, research funding, sabbaticals, or working conditions, their trust in institutional leadership may be significantly eroded.

In the Nigerian university system, issues such as delayed promotions, inadequate research support, heavy workloads, inconsistent policies, and funding constraints have intensified concerns about the fulfillment of obligations owed to lecturers. Covert resistance and frequent industrial actions by academic staff unions further suggest underlying dissatisfaction and declining trust between lecturers and university management. These challenges make the issue of psychological contract breach particularly relevant in Nigerian universities, where trust is essential for maintaining academic stability and performance. Despite the growing body of literatures on psychological contract breach and trust, empirical studies focusing specifically on lecturers in Nigerian universities remain limited. Many existing studies adopt a broad approach by examining employees across sectors, thereby overlooking the unique expectations and employment conditions of academic staff.

Problem Statement

In Nigerian universities, lecturers occupy a critical role in teaching, research, and community development, making their performance essential for the success of higher education institutions. While formal employment contracts outline the explicit obligations of both the university and its staff, many expectations are unwritten, forming what is known as the "psychological contract" (Rousseau, 1995). These expectations often include fair promotion processes, timely remuneration, research support, manageable workloads, provision of working materials and opportunities for career development.

Evidence suggests that lecturers in Nigerian universities frequently perceive a breach of these psychological contracts. Examples include delayed promotions, inconsistent application of policies, inadequate research funding, and excessive workloads. Such breaches are believed to negatively affect lecturers' trust in university management and the institution as a whole. Declining trust can result in reduced commitment, low morale, diminished performance, and industrial actions, as observed in recurring strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) (Obi, 2018; Adeyemi, 2020).

Despite the importance of trust in fostering a productive and stable academic environment, there is limited empirical research examining the relationship between psychological contract breach and lecturers' trust in Nigerian universities. Most studies focus on employees in other sectors or generalise across public institutions, failing to capture the unique conditions and challenges faced by academic staff. This gap presents a need for a focused investigation to understand how perceived breaches affect lecturers' trust, and how university management can implement policies that enhance organisational commitment and performance.

Research Objectives

To examine the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust among lecturers in Nigerian universities. Specific Objectives are to:

- i. assess the relationship and effect of psychological contract breach on lecturers' trust on NOUN management.
- ii. identify key factors of psychological contract breach that influence lecturers' trust on NOUN management.

Research Hypotheses

Ho1: Psychological contract breach has no significant effect on lecturers' trust on NOUN management.

Ho2: The proxies of psychological contract breach do not significantly affect lecturers' trust in NOUN management.

Literature Review

There is a critical component of any study, as it situates the research within the existing body of knowledge and identifies gaps that the study seeks to address. This provides an in-depth examination of psychological contract breach and lecturers' trust in Nigerian universities, two interrelated constructs that are central to organisational behaviour and human resource management. The review begins by exploring the concept of psychological contracts, which refers to the unwritten expectations and obligations between employees and their employers (Rousseau, 1995). Unlike formal employment contracts that are legally binding, psychological contracts are subjective, dynamic, and shaped by employees' perceptions of mutual promises, such as fair treatment, career development opportunities, adequate support for research, and manageable workloads. When these expectations are perceived to be unmet or violated, it results in a psychological contract breach, which can have significant implications for employee attitudes and behaviours (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Next, the review examines the concept of trust within organisations, particularly in academic institutions. Trust is defined as the confidence employees have in the integrity, fairness, and reliability of management (Mayer et al, 1995). In the context of Nigerian universities, trust plays a pivotal role in shaping lecturers' engagement, motivation, and willingness to collaborate with management. A breach of psychological contracts is likely to undermine trust, leading to reduced commitment, dissatisfaction, and even collective actions such as strikes (Obi, 2018).

Furthermore, the review discusses the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, particularly Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). This theory explains that employment relationships are based on reciprocal exchanges: when employees perceive that their organisation has failed to reciprocate promised benefits, they are likely to respond by reducing positive attitudes, including trust, loyalty, and commitment. This provides a strong theoretical foundation for understanding the link between psychological contract breach and lecturers' trust in Nigerian universities. The study also examines empirical studies, highlighting how psychological contract breaches manifest in higher education settings, the consequences of these breaches for trust and employee outcomes, and the specific dimensions of breach that are most relevant, such as promotion, research support, and workload. Finally, the review identified gaps in the literature, particularly the limited research focusing specifically on lecturers in Nigerian universities, despite evidence that they frequently experience contract breaches. These gaps justify the need for the current study, which seeks to provide context-specific insights into how psychological contract breaches affect trust among academic staff in Nigerian universities.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded on the relationship between psychological contract breach and lecturers' trust in Nigerian universities. This is essential as it explained the descriptive representation of how the variables in the study are related and guides the research design, data collection, and analysis (Okoli, 2020). In this context, 'psychological contract breach', refers to lecturers' perception of what the university management has failed to fulfill with respect to obligations or commitments. These obligations are often unwritten and include expectations about career development, research support, workload management, promotion, and fair treatment (Rousseau, 1995; Morrison & Robinson, 1997). When lecturers perceive that the institution has not met these expectations, it constitutes a breach of the psychological contract. The lecturers' trust in university management, reflects the confidence and belief lecturers have in the integrity, fairness, and reliability of the university's leadership. Trust in management is a critical component in organisational behaviour because it influences cooperation, commitment, and overall organisational effectiveness (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). In a university context, high levels of trust encourage lecturers to engage more in research, teaching, and other institutional activities, whereas low trust may lead to disengagement, dissatisfaction, or industrial action.

The conceptual framework aligning with the research hypotheses, proposes that psychological contract breach negatively affects lecturers' trust in university management. This relationship is supported by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employment relationships are reciprocal: when employees perceive that the organisation has not fulfilled its obligations, they are likely to reduce positive attitudes such as trust, commitment, and loyalty. In the Nigerian university context, examples of breaches include delayed promotions, inadequate research funding,

heavy workloads, or inconsistencies in policy implementation. These factors can significantly undermine lecturers' confidence in management and the institution.

Furthermore, the study considers the dimensions of psychological contract breach, including promotion, research support, and workload, as critical factors that may individually and collectively influence trust. By identifying which dimensions have the strongest impact, the study aims to provide actionable insights for university administrators to improve lecturer/management relations, enhance trust, and foster a more stable and productive academic environment.

Psychological Contract

The concept of the **psychological contract** is central to understanding employee/employer relationships. First introduced by Argyris (1960) and later formalised by Rousseau (1995), a psychological contract refers to the unwritten set of expectations, beliefs, and obligations that employees perceive exist between themselves and their employers. Unlike formal employment contracts, which are legally binding and explicitly stated, psychological contracts are subjective, implicit, and dynamic, shaped by individual perceptions, organisational culture, and workplace interactions. Psychological contracts encompass both transactional and relational elements. Transactional aspects involve tangible, short-term obligations such as salary, job security, and workload, whereas relational aspects are intangible and long-term, including opportunities for career development, mentorship, recognition, organisational support, and emotional engagement (Rousseau, 1995; Guest, 1998). Employees develop expectations regarding these obligations based on prior experiences, organisational communication, and perceived fairness in workplace processes.

In the context of higher education, particularly in Nigerian universities, psychological contracts are highly relevant because lecturers' work is characterised by autonomy, intellectual engagement, and professional expertise. Expectations of career progression, research funding, conference attendance, fair evaluation, and manageable workloads are often part of the unwritten agreements between lecturers and university management. When these expectations are met, they strengthen employee commitment, motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational loyalty. Conversely, in a valid opinion of Conway & Briner, (2005), when they are perceived to be unmet, it can lead to negative outcomes, including decreased trust, disengagement, and reduced productivity.

Moreover, psychological contracts are not static; they evolve over time as organisational priorities, policies, and leadership approaches change. This dynamic nature makes them particularly sensitive in academic settings, where institutional reforms, policy inconsistencies, and resource constraints can unintentionally violate the expectations of lecturers (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau, 2001). Therefore, understanding the psychological contract provides critical insights into how lecturers perceive fairness, reciprocity, and support from their institutions, and how these perceptions influence their behaviours, attitudes, and overall performance.

Psychological contract is deemed a key determinant of organisational behaviour. It shapes how employees interpret promises and obligations, influences their commitment and trust, and affects their responses to organisational policies and actions. In the university system, this concept is crucial for examining how perceived breaches impact lecturers' trust in management, which, in turn, affects institutional effectiveness and stability.

Psychological Contract Breach

This occurs when employees perceive that their employer has failed to fulfill one or more of the promised obligations or expectations, whether explicitly or implicitly conveyed (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). Unlike formal breaches of written contracts, psychological contract breaches are perception-based. They occur when employees feel that what was promised in terms of career development, recognition, rewards, or work conditions has not been delivered. These breaches can be intentional, where the organisation deliberately fails to meet obligations, or unintentional, often resulting from resource constraints, policy changes, or miscommunication (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). Psychological contract breach occurs when lecturers perceive that universities have failed to fulfill implicit promises relating to promotion, research support, workload balance, equitable rewards, and the provision of essential working resources. Such breaches are common in academic environments and signal to lecturers that institutional support and fairness are lacking (Rousseau, 1995). Empirical studies consistently show that psychological contract breach negatively affects lecturers' attitudes and behaviours, leading to reduced job satisfaction, weakened organisational commitment, increased absenteeism and turnover intentions, diminished trust in management, and both overt and covert forms of resistance to work demands (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Zhao et al., 2007).

In Nigerian universities, these breaches are particularly evident due to challenges such as delayed promotions, inadequate research funding, limited professional development opportunities, and excessive teaching and administrative workloads, which in turn contribute to declining academic quality, frequent industrial actions, and poor institutional climate (Adeyemi, 2020; Obi, 2018). Given that academic work is knowledge-driven and heavily reliant on trust and professional recognition, psychological contract breaches can significantly undermine lecturers' motivation and commitment to institutional goals. Understanding these breaches is therefore crucial for university management seeking to rebuild trust, improve job satisfaction, and enhance institutional stability and performance.

Trust in Organisations

Trust is a fundamental construct in organisational behaviour and plays a critical role in shaping employee attitudes and workplace relationships. Mayer, et al (1995) define trust as the willingness of an employee to be vulnerable to the actions of management based on the expectation that those actions will be fair, ethical, and competent. This definition emphasises that trust involves risk-taking and confidence in the intentions and abilities of organisational leaders. When employees trust management, they are

more likely to accept decisions, cooperate with authority, and align their personal goals with organisational objectives. Trust in management has been widely linked to positive organisational outcomes. Empirical studies indicate that high levels of trust are associated with greater organisational commitment, increased cooperation, improved job satisfaction, and enhanced employee performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust also facilitates open communication, knowledge sharing, and teamwork, which are essential for organisational effectiveness. Conversely, low levels of trust can create suspicion, resistance, and conflict, undermining workplace harmony and productivity.

Trust serves as a mediating factor between organisational practices and employee behaviour. When management honors its obligations and communicates transparently, trust is strengthened, leading to positive employee attitudes. However, when lecturers perceive unfair treatment or unmet promises, trust deteriorates, reinforcing feelings of dissatisfaction and disengagement. Therefore, understanding trust in organisations is essential for explaining how psychological contract breaches influence lecturers' attitudes and behaviours in Nigerian universities. Trust in organisations is a vital mechanism that sustains effective employment relationships. In university settings, where cooperation, autonomy, and professional integrity are highly valued, trust in management is indispensable for maintaining stability, commitment, and institutional effectiveness. This underscores the importance of examining how psychological contract breaches affect lecturers' trust in Nigerian universities. Empirical research shows a strong negative relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and employee trust in management. When employees perceive that their organisation has failed to fulfill promised obligations, they often experience disappointment, betrayal, and injustice, which erode confidence in management's integrity and reliability and reduce organisational commitment (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Rousseau, 1995).

Trust is especially vulnerable when breaches are repeated or perceived as deliberate, leading employees to become cautious, skeptical, and less willing to invest effort or take risks. Breaches are associated with lower cooperation, reduced job satisfaction, diminished organisational citizenship behaviours, and weakened trust in leadership, and once trust is lost, it is difficult to rebuild (Conway & Briner, 2005). Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) explains this relationship by framing employment as a series of reciprocal exchanges. When organisations honor promises, employees reciprocate with trust, loyalty, and commitment; when promises are broken, employees withdraw trust and reduce positive work behaviours.

In Nigerian universities, this relationship is particularly pronounced. Lecturers expect timely promotions, adequate research funding, manageable workloads, professional development opportunities, and fair administrative practices. When these expectations are unmet—through delayed promotions, inadequate research support, or excessive teaching and administrative duties—lecturers perceive a psychological contract breach, leading to declining trust in university management. Reduced trust can decrease engagement with institutional initiatives, discourage participation in

committees or research collaborations, and prompt resistance to management policies. In extreme cases, widespread perceptions of PCB contribute to collective actions, including strikes and work stoppages, which disrupt academic productivity, student learning, and institutional reputation.

Dimensions of Psychological Contract Breach

Psychological contract breach is a multidimensional construct, as employees may perceive unmet obligations in different areas of the employment relationship. Scholars argue that these dimensions do not affect employees uniformly; rather, each dimension may exert varying levels of influence on employee attitudes such as trust, commitment, and job satisfaction (Conway & Briner, 2005; Kutaula et al., 2018). In the university setting, where academic work is knowledge-intensive and career-oriented, breaches in specific dimensions may have particularly profound effects on lecturers' trust in management. Key dimensions relevant to this study include promotion, research support, and workload management.

Empirical Review

Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust across different organisational contexts. These studies provide strong evidence that unmet organisational obligations negatively influence employees' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of management.

Morrison and Robinson (1997) conducted a seminal study on psychological contract violation and found that employees' perceptions of unfulfilled promises significantly reduce trust in management. Their study emphasised that psychological contract breach is largely perceptual and subjective, and once employees believe that management has failed to honor commitments, feelings of betrayal emerge. These emotional responses were shown to weaken trust, making employees more cautious and less willing to cooperate with organisational authorities. Similarly, Robinson and Morrison (2000) demonstrated that psychological contract breach is strongly associated with lower organisational commitment and reduced job satisfaction. Their longitudinal study revealed that repeated breaches lead to sustained negative attitudes, which may persist even when organisations attempt corrective actions. The findings suggest that trust plays a central role in shaping how employees respond to unmet expectations, with breached contracts leading to withdrawal behaviours and reduced emotional attachment to the organisation. Within the Nigerian context, Adeyemi (2020) examined lecturers' perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment in Nigerian universities and found widespread dissatisfaction related to promotion delays, inadequate research support, and excessive workload. The study revealed that these perceived breaches significantly influenced lecturers' trust in university management and their level of engagement in teaching and research activities. Adeyemi's findings highlight the vulnerability of trust in academic environments where professional growth and institutional support are critical to employee motivation.

Obi (2018) focused on industrial relations within Nigerian universities and identified a strong link between recurring industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) and perceived breaches of the psychological contract by university management and government authorities. The study argued that prolonged unmet expectations regarding funding, working conditions, and welfare obligations have contributed to widespread mistrust and strained relationships between lecturers and university administrators. These findings underscore the collective consequences of psychological contract breach, extending beyond individual dissatisfaction to institutional instability and disrupted academic calendars.

Despite the extensive empirical evidence linking psychological contract breach to negative employee outcomes, there remains a limited focus on the Nigerian university context, particularly with respect to lecturers' trust in management. Many studies either adopt a general organisational perspective or focus on outcomes such as job satisfaction and commitment, with less attention given to trust as a central mechanism. Furthermore, few studies examine the specific dimensions of psychological contract breach, such as promotion, research support, and workload management, and how they differentially influence lecturers' trust. This gap in the literature highlights the relevance and necessity of the current study, which seeks to provide empirical insights into the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust among lecturers in Nigerian universities. By focusing on trust as a key outcome variable and examining context-specific dimensions of breach, the study contributes to both organisational behaviour theory and higher education management practice.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Social Exchange Theory (SET) as propounded by Blau (1964). Social Exchange Theory posits that social and employment relationships are built on a system of reciprocal exchanges in which both parties provide valued resources with the expectation of mutual benefit over time. In organisational settings, employees contribute effort, skills, loyalty, and commitment, while employers are expected to reciprocate through fair treatment, rewards, support, and opportunities for growth. The continuity and stability of these relationships depend largely on the perceived balance and fairness of these exchanges. According to Social Exchange Theory, when organisations fulfill their obligations and meet employees' expectations, employees respond with positive attitudes such as trust, commitment, and increased willingness to go beyond formal job requirements. Trust develops as employees consistently observe that management honors promises and acts in a reliable and ethical manner. Over time, this reciprocal exchange strengthens the employment relationship and enhances organisational effectiveness.

However, when this balance of exchange is disrupted through psychological contract breaches, employees perceive that the organisation has failed to reciprocate their contributions adequately. Such breaches signal unfairness and unreliability, leading employees to reassess the exchange relationship. In response, employees may withdraw positive attitudes and behaviours, including trust and organisational commitment, as a means of restoring balance or protecting themselves from further

disappointment (Blau, 1964). The relevance of Social Exchange Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain how and why psychological contract breach affects trust among lecturers in Nigerian universities. Lecturers invest substantial effort in teaching, research, student supervision, and administrative responsibilities, often under challenging conditions. In return, they expect timely promotions, adequate research support, manageable workloads, and fair administrative practices. When these expectations are not met, such as through delayed promotions, insufficient research funding, or excessive workloads, lecturers may perceive a breach of the psychological contract. According to Social Exchange Theory, such perceptions reduce lecturers' trust in university management and weaken their willingness to maintain positive engagement with the institution.

Furthermore, Social Exchange Theory explains both individual and collective responses to psychological contract breach. At the individual level, lecturers may reduce effort, disengage from research activities, or limit participation in institutional initiatives. At the collective level, prolonged and widespread breaches can result in mistrust toward management and governing authorities, contributing to industrial actions such as strikes. These outcomes reflect lecturers' attempts to rebalance the exchange relationship by withdrawing trust and cooperation. Social Exchange Theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for examining the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust. By emphasising reciprocity, fairness, and mutual obligation, the theory offers a clear explanation of why perceived breaches of organisational promises are likely to result in reduced trust among lecturers in Nigerian universities. This framework therefore guides the study in understanding the dynamics of lecturer–management relationships and the attitudinal consequences of psychological contract breach.

Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the relationship between psychological contract breach and trust among lecturers in Nigerian universities.

The population of this study comprised of about 450 academic staff employed at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Lecturers were selected as the target population because they perform the core academic functions of teaching, research, and community service within the university system.

A sample of 220 lecturers was drawn from the entire staff of National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) using a multi-stage sampling technique to ensure representativeness and minimise selection bias. The sample size was determined in accordance with the requirements for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which recommends an adequate number of observations to achieve reliable and stable parameter estimates. Consistent with Hair et al. (2019), a minimum of 200 respondents was targeted, which satisfies SEM standards for both measurement and structural model analysis. This sample size ensures sufficient statistical power for testing the

hypothesised relationships between psychological contract breach and trust among lecturers at NOUN.

The study questionnaire was designed in alignment with the specific objectives to capture lecturers' demographic characteristics, perceptions of psychological contract breach, and levels of trust in university management. Demographic information supported sample description and contextual analysis, while measures of psychological contract breach addressed key lecturer-relevant dimensions such as promotion, research support, workload, and access to resources. Trust in management was measured to assess the relationship and effect of psychological contract breach on lecturers' trust. The use of adapted, validated scales and a five-point Likert format ensured clarity, reliability, and relevance to the NOUN context. The questionnaire was divided into three sections to ensure clarity and ease of response.

Section A: This section gathered demographic information of the respondents, including age, gender, academic rank, years of experience, and faculty affiliation. This information was important for describing the sample and examining potential variations in perceptions across different lecturer characteristics.

Section B: This section measured trust in management, capturing lecturers' confidence in university leadership to act fairly, ethically, and competently. Items were adapted from Mayer, et al (1995) to align with the study's focus on organisational trust in higher education.

Section C: This section measured psychological contract breach, focusing on dimensions particularly relevant to lecturers in NOUN, including promotion practices, research support, workload management, and access to working materials. Items were adapted from established scales developed by Rousseau (1995) and Morrison and Robinson (1997) to ensure validity. The items were contextualised to reflect the academic environment and specific challenges of NOUN, such as promotion, limited research funding, heavy teaching and administrative loads, and inadequate access to resources necessary for academic work.

All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The use of validated scales, adapted to the NOUN context, ensured content validity, comparability with prior research, and the relevance of the measures to the specific challenges and expectations of lecturers in Nigerian universities.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure the accuracy and appropriateness of the measurement scales, the study assessed the validity and reliability of the questionnaire items. **Construct validity** was evaluated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to confirm that all measurement items loaded significantly on their respective constructs. Convergent validity was assessed by examining factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Items with factor loadings above 0.70 and AVE values above 0.50 were considered acceptable, indicating that the constructs adequately captured the intended theoretical concepts. **Discriminant validity** was assessed using

the Fornell–Larcker criterion, ensuring that each construct was distinct from others and measured a unique aspect of the psychological contract and trust.

Reliability of the measurement scales was tested using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR). Both methods yielded values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019), indicating acceptable internal consistency and stability of the constructs. These procedures ensured that the instrument was both valid and reliable for assessing the perceptions of lecturers at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) regarding psychological contract breaches and trust in management.

Data Collection Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Data were collected using electronically administered questionnaires distributed to lecturers at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without any consequences. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, no personally identifiable information was collected, and responses were treated in strict confidence. Prior to completing the questionnaire, all respondents provided informed consent, acknowledging that their participation was solely for academic research purposes and that the data would be used exclusively to investigate psychological contract breach and trust in management.

The study adhered to ethical research standards, ensuring that participants’ privacy was protected, and that data collection procedures caused no harm or undue stress. These ethical safeguards enhanced the credibility of the research and promoted honest and unbiased responses from participants.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the questionnaires were analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the aid of SmartPLS 4.0. The analysis followed a two-stage approach, consistent with SEM procedures (Hair et al., 2019):

i. Measurement Model Assessment

The first stage involved evaluating the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to ensure that all items loaded significantly on their respective constructs. The assessment included:

Convergent validity, using factor loadings (>0.70), Average Variance Extracted (AVE >0.50), and Composite Reliability (CR >0.70); **Discriminant validity**, using the Fornell–Larcker criterion to confirm that each construct was distinct from others; and, **Internal consistency reliability**, verified through Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability metrics.

ii. Structural Model Assessment

The second stage involved testing the hypothesised relationships between psychological contract breach and trust in management. Path coefficients, t-values, and p-values were examined to determine the significance and strength of relationships. Model fit was assessed using appropriate fit indices (e.g., SRMR, NFI),

ensuring that the structural model adequately represented the data. Additionally, control variables such as gender, academic rank, and years of experience were included to account for potential confounding effects. The SEM approach allowed for the simultaneous assessment of both direct and indirect effects of the dimensions of psychological contract breach (promotion, research support, workload management) on lecturers' trust in management.

Analysis, Results and Findings

Measurement Model Assessment (CFA): The measurement model was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to ensure that all constructs and items reliably captured the intended theoretical concepts. The constructs evaluated were Psychological Contract Breach (PCB) and Trust in Management (TRUST).

Convergent validity was evaluated using factor loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Items with factor loadings above 0.70, AVE above 0.50, and CR above 0.70 were considered acceptable, indicating that the constructs adequately measured the intended variables.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, which confirmed that each construct shared more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs, ensuring distinct measurement of constructs.

Reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability (CR), both exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, demonstrating internal consistency of the measurement scales. The results are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement Model Assessment (CFA, Reliability, and Validity)

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Psychological Breach (PCB)	Contract PCB1: Promotion delays	0.82	0.87	0.90	0.63
	PCB2: Lack of research support	0.85			
	PCB3: Workload imbalance	0.80			
	PCB4: Inadequate working materials	0.78			
Trust in Management (TRUST)	TRUST1: Confidence in fairness of decisions	0.84	0.89	0.91	0.65
	TRUST2: Belief in competence of management	0.86			
	TRUST3: Expectation of ethical behavior	0.83			

Notes:

- Factor loadings > 0.70** indicate strong indicator reliability.
- Cronbach's alpha > 0.70** confirms internal consistency.
- CR > 0.70 and AVE > 0.50** confirm construct reliability and convergent validity.

These results indicate that the measurement model is reliable, valid, and appropriate for structural model analysis in SEM. The **structural model** was tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in SmartPLS 4.0 to examine the hypothesised relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and trust in management

(TRUST) among lecturers at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The analysis evaluated the strength, significance, and explanatory power of the proposed relationships, as well as the overall model fit.

Path coefficients, t-values, and p-values were used to assess the significance of hypothesised relationships. Results showed a negative and significant effect of psychological contract breach of trust in management, supporting the hypothesised relationship. The R^2 value indicated that PCB explained a substantial portion of variance in lecturers' trust. Model fit was evaluated using standard SEM fit indices. The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was 0.049 (below the recommended 0.08 threshold), and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.92, indicating an acceptable fit of the structural model to the data.

The results of the structural model analysis are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Structural Model Results

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	PCB $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.68	9.15	<0.001	Supported

Additional Findings:

- The R^2 value for trust in management was 0.46, indicating that 46% of the variance in lecturers' trust is explained by perceptions of psychological contract breach.
- The negative path coefficient confirms that higher perceptions of psychological contract breach are associated with lower trust in management.
- The model demonstrates good fit and strong explanatory power, validating the theoretical assumptions based on Social Exchange Theory.

Test of Hypotheses

The study tested the hypothesised effects of psychological contract breach (PCB) on lecturers' trust in management using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results were evaluated in line with the stated null hypotheses.

Ho1: The path from PCB to TRUST yielded a **coefficient (β) = -0.68, t-value = 9.15, and $p < 0.001$** . Since the relationship is negative, statistically significant, and strong, this indicates that psychological contract breaches significantly reduces lecturers' trust in management. Building on this state of the relations between the independent and dependent variables, the SEM analysis confirmed that PCB significantly explains 46% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.46$) in lecturers' trust in management. Thus, this examination result confirms that owing to the 'significant path coefficient' and 'explanatory power' results, psychological contract breach has a meaningful effect on lecturers' trust within the Nigerian university context.

Ho2: The dimensions of PCB-promotion delays ($\beta = -0.25, p < 0.01$), lack of research support ($\beta = -0.22, p < 0.01$), and workload imbalance ($\beta = -0.21, p < 0.01$)-all showed significant negative effects on trust in management.

- Accordingly, H_{03} is **rejected**, indicating that each of these dimensions individually contributes to reductions in lecturers' trust.

Null Hypothesis	Relationship	β	t-value	p-value	Decision
H_{01}	PCB $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.68	9.15	<0.001	Rejected
H_{02}	PCB $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.68	9.15	<0.001	Rejected
H_{03}	Promotion $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.25	3.10	0.002	Rejected
	Research Support $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.22	2.95	0.003	Rejected
	Workload $\rightarrow$ TRUST	-0.21	2.88	0.004	Rejected

Interpretation: These results provide strong empirical support that perceived breaches of the psychological contract, both overall and by specific dimensions, significantly reduce lecturers' trust in university management. This finding is consistent with **Social Exchange Theory**, which emphasises that employees reciprocate organisational treatment, and highlights the critical importance of fulfilling promised obligations in higher education institutions.

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between psychological contract breach (PCB) and trust in management among lecturers at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The findings provide both theoretical and practical insights into how unfulfilled expectations influence trust within Nigerian universities. The results indicate a significant negative relationship between PCB and lecturers' trust in management ($\beta = -0.68$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that perceptions of unfulfilled promises reduce trust. This supports previous empirical research showing that psychological contract breaches lead to decreased organisational commitment, job satisfaction, and engagement. In Nigerian universities, breaches often relate to delayed promotions, inadequate research support, and workload imbalance, as reported by Adeyemi (2020) and Obi (2018). These breaches may generate feelings of betrayal and frustration, leading lecturers to question management's competence, fairness, and ethical behaviour. The findings align with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that employees reciprocate organisational treatment: when promised obligations are unmet, employees reduce positive attitudes such as trust.

The study further revealed that individual dimensions of PCB-promotion, research support, and workload management, all had significant negative effects on trust in management. Promotion delays ($\beta = -0.25$), lack of research support ($\beta = -0.22$), and workload imbalance ($\beta = -0.21$) each contributed to diminished trust. These findings suggest that lecturers' expectations are multi-dimensional, and breaches in any of these key areas are sufficient to erode confidence in university management. This is particularly critical in higher education, where lecturers' performance is closely tied to career progression, research productivity, and workload fairness. The results underscore the importance of addressing each dimension to maintain a trusting and engaged academic workforce. The study reinforces Social Exchange Theory by demonstrating that lecturers respond negatively when expectations inherent in their

psychological contracts are unmet. The model explains 46% of the variance in trust, which is substantial for organisational behaviour research, highlighting that psychological contract breaches are a central predictor of trust in university management. Furthermore, the study contributes to the limited empirical literature on psychological contracts in the Nigerian university context. Most prior studies focus on general organisational settings, whereas this study provides context-specific evidence for academic staff, offering a foundation for future research on higher education human resource management in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of psychological contract breach (PCB) on trust in management among lecturers at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). Using a quantitative SEM approach, the findings revealed that:

Psychological contract breach was found to have a negative and statistically significant effect on lecturers' trust in university management, indicating that higher perceptions of breach are associated with lower levels of trust. Again, specific dimensions of psychological contract breach, particularly promotion delays, inadequate research support, and workload imbalance were each shown to significantly undermine lecturers' trust. Overall, psychological contract breach explained 46% of the variance in lecturers' trust, demonstrating its strong explanatory power within the Nigerian university context.

It demonstrates that psychological contract breaches both overall and across specific dimensions, negatively impact lecturers' trust in university management. These results provide strong empirical support for Social Exchange Theory and offer actionable recommendations for Nigerian universities to foster positive lecturer-management relationships. These results confirm the central role of psychological contracts in shaping lecturers' attitudes and provide empirical support for Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), highlighting the importance of reciprocity in employment relationships. The study underscores that unmet expectations in career progression, research support, and workload management can significantly undermine trust, morale, and engagement in academic institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study provides the following recommendations:

- i. University management should improve communication and transparency regarding institutional policies, promotion procedures, research support, and workload expectations. Clear communication reduces misunderstandings and perceived breaches, allowing lecturers to have accurate expectations and improving trust in management.
- ii. Universities should implement timely and merit-based promotion systems, provide adequate research support, and balance lecturers' workload. Meeting these core expectations directly reduces psychological contract breaches, thereby increasing trust in management and fostering greater engagement and commitment among lecturers.

- iii. University management should institutionalise policies that monitor and ensure fulfillment of lecturers' expectations, focusing on promotion, research support, and workload. Integrating feedback mechanisms allows the university to identify areas of concern, address breaches proactively, and strengthen lecturers' confidence and trust in leadership.

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