

Psychological Contract Breach, Stress and Employee Engagement During and After COVID-19: The Role of Inclusive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

Objective – This study extends both Social Exchange Theory and the Job Demands –Resources model by examining the connection between psychological contract breach, job stress and employee engagement in relation to the role inclusive leadership plays.

Methodology – Using a quantitative approach, data was gathered from two hundred and two (202) respondents, selected using convenience sampling technique. Data gathered was analysed using SPSS version 26 and SmartPLS 4.

Findings – Results showed that Job Stress had a negative statistically significant impact on Inclusive Leadership Employee Engagement, Innovative Output and Turnover Intent. Inclusive Leadership Psychological Contract Breach had a positive significant relationship with Innovative Output but a negative relationship with Job Stress. The study also found out that Job Stress mediates the relationship between Inclusive Leadership Psychological Contract Breach and Inclusive Leadership Employee Engagement.

Novelty – The study contributes to clarifying and extend the social exchange theory (SET) by unravelling how the inclusive leader operates on respect, recognition, responsiveness and responsibility, in the reciprocal relationship between himself and their subordinates. Additionally, the study identifies the relationship between psychological contract breach, job stress and employee engagement in a developing country after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: *psychological contract breach, job stress, employee engagement, employee turnover intent, inclusive leaders*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The unpredictable and ever-changing nature of today's business climate has made it extremely difficult for firms to thrive while still managing to stay in business (Montani et al., 2014; Chowhan et al., 2017). Professional and personal lives have been profoundly altered as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Globally, there has been a dramatic acceleration in the change of working circumstances, which has posed a threat to the health and safety of millions of workers on the planet (Shahrill et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on the worldwide economy as well as the job security of employees, and almost overnight, the employment market has undergone significant shifts as a direct result of the pandemic. Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic is proving to be even more severe than the subprime crisis of 2008–2009 (PTI,

2020). The need for people to maintain a social distance from one another, working from home, among other strategies put in place to manage the spread of the corona virus have been challenging and stressful.

Thus, in order to be effective in the fight against the pandemic and minimize the stress thereof, managers have to ensure a proper design of jobs to minimize the negative effect of the pandemic. This is best done by the inclusive leader (Choi et al., 2015). Inclusive leaders care about employee's health and safety (Javed et al., 2019) and as a result ensure measures are put in place which lead to employee's safety. Employees aside being safe also need to be in good mental health during this pandemic and this can be achieved if psychological contracts are fulfilled and not breached. According to Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003), the psychological contract, which is an implicit contract between employees and businesses, plays a significant role in managing employees' work actions. This is best achieved by inclusive leaders. Inclusive leaders engage individuals and groups in open discussions, treat each unique and different, showcase behavior to encourage inclusivity in culture and address grievances arising out of diversity (Wasserman et al., 2008) to fulfil their side of the contract which facilitate the management of the pandemic. In this day and age, maintaining a competitive advantage is an additional area of focus for every firm, which is why the organization encourages innovative thought and action (Chen et al., 2014). The inventive capacity of employees at every level is required to be demonstrated (Cooke & Saini, 2010). Leaders who are inclusive demonstrate a concern for their employees' interests, expectations, and sentiments, and as a result, they are eager to offer aid (Carmeli et al., 2010; Choi et al., 2015).

Research needs to be done on leadership positions due to the fact that leaders have a substantial impact on the psychological distress levels of their workforce (Majeed & Fatima, 2020). It has been discovered that anxiety and pressures originating from work responsibilities can be mitigated by leaders who are open, available and accessible to employees, i.e., Inclusive leaders and fair (Nielsen et al., 2018). The inclusive leader, one of the current leader behaviors, who operates on the 4Rs respect, recognition, responsiveness and responsibility (Hollander et al., 2008) make it a point to reduce the inequalities that exist between themselves and their subordinates and to guarantee that all employees, regardless of where they stand in the organizational hierarchy, are recognized for the contributions they make (Hassan & Jiang, 2019). To achieve this goal, inclusive leaders place strong emphasis on procedures that provide opportunities for employees' contribution when making decisions. When inclusively, they are able to make their teams feel at ease and encourage their members to speak their minds without being inhibited by concerns regarding power dynamics or social standing (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006). According to Hollander (2012), inclusive leaders pay attention to the needs of their followers and make themselves available to support them. This, in turn, inspires a sense of dedication among their subordinates (Gill & Mathur, 2007). This increase in dedication, vigour and immersion in their work comes as a direct outcome of inclusive leadership (Choi et al., 2015).

Employees often perceive that, their organization, that is their leaders fail to fulfill their contract (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). They perceive breach of psychological contract when their employers fail to satisfy their obligations towards them (Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1995). This perception causes stress which has an impact on their innovative output (Karani et al., 2021) as well as their turnover intention (Huang et al., 2018; Li et al., 2021). To meet the demands, and support the employees to overcome the negative effects of stress, the organisations need to provide the needed support to reduce stress (Youn-Jung et al., 2022) and this will result in positive work attitude like engagement (Canboy et al., 2021), cause innovative behavior and cope with other challenges. However, where employees perceive there has been a breach of psychological contract it can lead to stress, which in turn reduce the engagement of the employees, their innovative output and turnover intention. The question then is, will employees' job stress make any difference in the relationship between psychological contract failure and turnover and innovative behavior and output?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The theories upon which this study is hooked is the Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) and Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). The SET theory postulate that, social behaviour is a two-way relationship and the rational of this exchange is to get the most out of the exchanges and minimise costs. Psychological contract can be rooted in SET, where if there is an offer, then there is a pledge or promise to reciprocate equally. Based on SET, it is argued that employees have certain expectations from their employer and when this is fulfilled or not, it impacts on their behavior and attitude towards work.

According to the JD-R model, every job includes demands as well as resources (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands refer to that part of the job that involve continual efforts and therefore require a level of psychological and physiological efforts (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources on the other hand describe the aspects of the job which help in the achievement of work-related goals and stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti et al., 2001). Thus, from this theory the demands of the job and the availability of required resources will influence employees stress, engagement, innovative behaviour and output. The argument therefore is, as a result of covid-19 and its related effect, there has been changes in the demands from work and minimal resources. Since job demands and resources are not entirely adversarial but interwoven in their effect on engagement and, in turn, innovation (Kwon & Kim, 2020), then when the covid-19 results in high job demands, and minimum resources available, it will cause employees to be stressed and reduce employee engagement as well and employee innovative behavior.

Hypothesis Development

According to Rousseau (1995) the psychological contract describes the mutual obligations in an exchange agreement between an individual (i.e., an employee) and an organization, as perceived by the individual. It is an “employees’ beliefs about the reciprocal obligations between them and their organization” (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). According to Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, (2002), psychological contract refers to individual’s unwritten and often unspoken expectation about the terms and conditions of the exchange relationships usually, between the managers and their subordinates. From the psychological contract theory’s perspective, employees expect their organization, and for that matter their leaders, to fulfill its obligations sufficiently (Restubog et al., 2013). Since the psychological contract depends on mutual promises, it can either be fulfilled, or otherwise (Robinson, & Morrison, 2000). If employees feel their organization is not leaving to expectation, and for that matter, fails to offer what is has been agreed on, a psychological contract breach occurs (Chiu & Peng, 2008). Psychological contract breach therefore occurs when one side, otherwise capable of performing the contract, refuses to do (Rousseau, 1997), and as a result there is a difference between what is promised and what is received (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). This affects employee’s behavior in general and more specifically their innovative behavior (Karani et al., 2022).

Innovative behaviour is defined as “an employee’s intentional introduction or application of new ideas, products, processes and procedures to his or her work role, work unit or organization” (Yuan & Woodman, 2010). Employees require a conducive environment and other resources to which enable them exhibit these innovative behaviours. Referencing the SET and psychological contract, leaders are to provide these resources. However, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders had to adopt new strategies to curb the spread of the virus. Some of these may not have met the needs and expectations of employees and therefore a breach in the psychological contract. Li et al. (2021) found out that there is a significant positive correlation between psychological contract and employee innovation behaviour (Karani et al., 2021) carried out a study to investigate the impact of psychological contract breach on employees’ innovative behavior and well-being (happiness, work engagement and mental well-being) who are working from home during

this COVID-19 pandemic situation. Drawing on social information processing (SIP) and job-demand resource (JD-R) theory, job stress was proposed as a mediator explaining this relationship. Karani et al. (2021) found out that psychological contract breach negatively impacted innovative behavior and well-being. Job stress mediated the relationship between psychological contract breach and innovative behavior as well as well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic situation and especially for those who are working from home only. It can be deduced that when there is a psychological contract breach, employees reduce their efforts towards innovative behavior. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H1: Inclusive leadership psychological contract breach negatively impacts employee innovative behaviour.

Psychological contract sets the dynamics for the relationship between leaders and their subordinates. A breach of this contract makes employees perceive that his or her organization has not fulfilled one or more of its promises or responsibilities associated with perceived mutual promises (Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003). Even though fulfillment of psychological contract is usually the basis for most organisations' success, employees frequently perceive that their employer has failed to fulfill that contract (Robinson & Morrison, 2000), that is a psychological contract breach. When employees perceive there has been psychological contract breach, it makes them anxious, lose concentration and exhibit negative emotions (Difonzo, et al., 2020) all antecedents of stress (Panigrahi, 2016) explaining why Arunachalam (2021) posit that Psychological contract breach causes stress. Stress reflects a detectable reaction to any change, which activates and reflects in physical and mental reactions (Faghankhani et. al, 2021). It can cause headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease, depression, and anxiety, among other conditions (Abd Alla, 2022). A study by Karani et al. (2022) in India in a different context from Ghana found out that psychological contract breach was positively impacting occupational stress. Hence, it is postulated as:

H2: There is a positive relationship between inclusive leadership psychological contract breach and job stress.

The management of human resources is one of the key organizational variables that affects employment relations at the organizational level (Restubog et al., 2013). The organizational elements, which are crucial in determining how employees would respond to a breach of the psychological contract, have, however, received very little attention (Restubog et al., 2013). A psychological contract breach is thought to result in the intention to leave an organization, which is not good for its productivity and performance. As a result of psychological contract breach, which diminish organizational commitment and ultimately raise the likelihood of turnover, employees grow dissatisfied with their work and intend to leave more frequently (Aykan, 2014). Santhanam et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between human resource management practices, psychological contract breach, and employee turnover intentions among hotel frontline employees, taking into account the paucity of research on frontline employees' perspectives in the Indian hospitality industry. It has been discovered that employee turnover intentions are influenced by methods in staff selection, training, and compensation. Despite the use of efficient human resource management techniques, it was discovered that psychological contract breach increased employee intent to leave their jobs. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H3: Inclusive leadership psychological contract breach will positively impact of employee turnover intent.

Mediator: Job Stress

Job stress describes an employees' discomfort due to work situation arising from a difference between available resources and job demands (Yasin & Jan, 2021). It the harmful physical and emotional responses that results when the requirements of the job are not adequate or does not match the capabilities, resources

or needs of the employee to perform that job (National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH, 2002). Job stress is different from general stress since it has individual element, organizational elements and job-related elements (George & Zakkariya, 2015). The individual elements of job stress are made up of the personality traits, the background, the attitudes, the self-image, the locus of control and the social networks of the individual. Organizational elements of job stress can be defined as an emotional, cognitive, behavioral and physiological response to the aggressive and harmful aspects of work, work environment and organizational climate. It is a condition characterized by feelings of helplessness in solving tasks. Job elements are the job entries and job structures associated with a specific application. An application can consist of a single job entry, multiple job entries, or a series of job entries with job structures that control complex scheduling requirements (IBM, 2022).

Ishtiaq and Zeb, (2020) examined the influence of the type of psychological contract on employee engagement by taking job-stress as a mediator. Findings indicate that the employees formed a strong psychological contract with their employer, and were actively engaged while experiencing a moderate level of job-stress. Results from a study showed that pandemic situation created the environment of stress, anxiety and depression (Szabo et al., 2020). It is argued that as when there is pandemic there is likely to be information overload, thus employees receive a lot of information from different sources which can raise their level of anxiety, stress and depression. These feeling tend to affect their level of engagement. Therefore, mentally stressful work will have a negative impact on employee engagement (Gordon & Adler, 2022; Nair & Mathew, 2022). The literature shows that job stress acts as a mediator since it acts as both antecedents and outcome (Jung & Yoon, 2014). Based on this, it is hypothesized that:

H4: Job stress negatively mediates the relationship between inclusive psychological contract breach and employee work engagement.

Stress is the cognitive response of someone towards the upcoming circumstances. The literature generally suggests the existence of a negative relationship between stress and employee engagement (e.g., Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013). The presence of high levels of stress in the organization decreases emotional and cognitive availability of employees (Ongori & Agolla, 2008; Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013) and this results in reduced levels of employee engagement (Khan, 1990). Employee engagement denotes a positive, fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is usually characterized by the degree to which individuals invest their physical, cognitive, and emotional energy in the performing their role (Rich et al., 2010). This state of mind, engagement, is arrived at when they get emotionally connected to others and cognitively vigilant (Khan, 1990). Therefore, employees tend to be engaged, i.e., emotionally cognitively and socially connected, when they know what is expected of them, have the required resources to work, and perceive they are valued. Since stress largely impacts negatively on employees' emotional and cognitive availability at work (Ongori & Agolla, 2008), it is argued and hypothesized that:

H5: Job stress at the workplace will negatively impact inclusive leadership employee engagement.

Job stress refers to levels of pressure beyond the coping ability of workers (Wang & Seifert, 2021). It is "a psychological response to the demands of something being faced that exceeds individual abilities" (Surosoa et al., 2020). This response which can be psychological reactions (emotions) and/or physical reactions (physiological) (McShane & Glinow, 2005) influence employees' behavior in general, and specifically, their readiness to think and be innovative (Karani et al., 2021).

Innovation encompasses the creation of a new service, product or process (De Brentani, 2001) by individuals (Janssen et al., 2004). One's ability to be creative and innovative depends on both personal and contextual factors (West, 2002). One of such personal factors that impact the employees' innovative behaviors and outcomes is stress (Karani et al., 2021). When employees are stressed, it causes a reduction

in their level of satisfaction (Asbari et al., 2020) and engagement (Nair & Mathew, 2022), decrease emotional and cognitive availability of employees (Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013) which affects their ability to develop creative ideas, services or products, i.e., exhibit innovative behaviours. It can be deduced from these discussions that stressed employees are not able to put out innovative ideas and behaviours. It is therefore hypothesized that:

H6: Job stress at the workplace will negatively impact employee innovative behavior/outcome.

High employee turnover is a major threat to organizational performance and success (Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013). Turnover refer to the separation of an employee from an organization or a job (Hom et al., 2017). Turnover can be voluntary, where the employee decides to leave the organization, or involuntary, where leaders of an organization ask employees to leave. One key antecedent to employee turnover is stress (Li et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018), a critical issue that all organizations have to deal with. Job stress occurs when there is an imbalance between job requirements and a worker's ability to cope (Sewwandi & Perera, 2016), a mismatch between employees' capabilities and job demands (Garg, 2010) or an incident or an expected incident within the workplace which is likely to be a threat to employees (Rangrez et al., 2022). The literature shows that, occupational stress influences employees' job satisfaction and organisational commitment, all are major antecedents to employee turnover (Mosadeghrad, 2013). Based on this argument, it is hypothesized that:

H7: Job stress at the workplace will influence employee turnover.

Mediator: Work Engagement

Innovative behavior is an employees' intentional proposal and application of fresh and improved ideas, processes, practices, and policies meant to ensure success in business, organizational effectiveness, and long-term sustainability (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Engaging in innovative activities in a workplace may bring benefits as well as costs for employees (Sulistiawan et al., 2017). It is for this reason that managers have to ensure it enjoys the benefits of this behavior and reduce the cost by identifying its antecedents. One of such antecedents which negatively impact employee's engagement.

Even though stress has a negative impact on employee innovative behavior (Mosadeghrad, 2013; Rafique et al, 2022), when employees are engaged, they tend to behave innovatively by activating coping strategies to deal with challenges they encounter (Kwon & Kim, 2020). Drawing from the social exchange theory people tend to perform certain act to gain expected consequences in the future and therefore if managers ensure employees are engaged, they will work with vigour and put in their best which will reflect in innovative behavior.

Again, employees tend to leave managers and not organisations (Kumbhar, 2016; Price, 2001). One of the causes of employee turnover is stress at the workplace (Li et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018). When leaders design employees work well, it reduces employees stress (Ravindran, 2019) which then increases their level of engagement (Mushtaque & Siddiqui, 2019) and as a result not leave the organisaiton. However, if this is not done it impacts negatively on their level of stress and therefore tend to want to leave (Li et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018). One of the best strategies to reduce employee turnover is to ensure they get engaged (Tshukudu, 2020). This is because when employees are engaged, they are inclined to be happy and would not leave the organization. It can therefore be concluded that employee engagement plays a significant role in the relationship between stress and turnover intention of employees.

H8a: It is therefore argued and hypothesized that inclusive leadership employee engagement will positively mediate the relationship between job stress and employee innovative behavior/outcome.

H8b: Thus, it is hypothesized that inclusive leadership employee engagement mediates the relationship between job stress and turnover intention of employees.

Conceptual Framework

Building upon the JD-R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) and social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) the study identifies the relationships between the inclusive leadership psychological contract breach, innovative behaviour and inclusive leadership employee turnover intention, with the mediation of job stress and work engagement. The conceptual model for the study is given in Figure 1. The framework illustrates the relationship that exist between the variables.

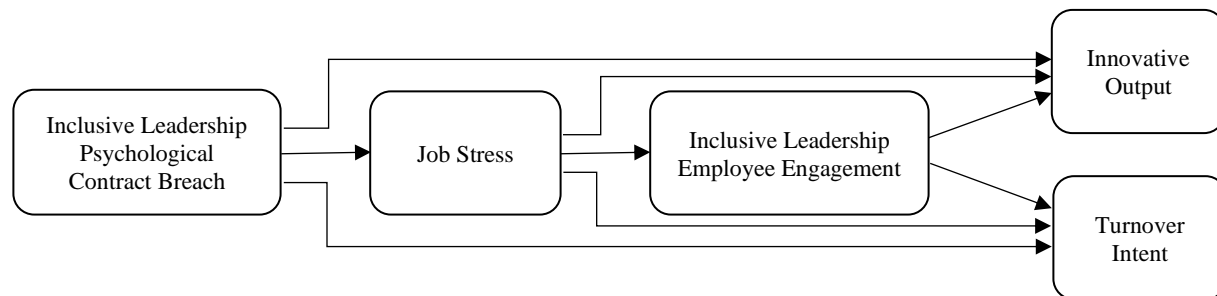


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative cross-sectional study approach. This approach was deemed appropriate since respondents are not comfortable with interviews (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021) due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Additionally, the use of this approach helped to identify the relationship between the variables in the study (Creswell, 2014), as well as the covid-19 era where respondents of research studies are not comfortable with conducting interviews (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Probability sampling technique, which involves a sampling technique where every individual within the population has a known, nonzero chance of being included in the sample (Chermack & Passmore, 2005) was used to select the sample. Specifically, Stratified sampling which focus on dividing the population based on certain characteristics and then using simple random sampling to pick the respondents from each stratum (Creswell, 2014) was adopted. The adoption of probability sampling therefore ensured that the sample selected was a good representative of the population and therefore findings from the study could be generalised to the population. Thus, sample was selected from both the private and public sector. After the identification of the different institutions, the HR officials were contacted and 250 questionnaires were handed over to them. Using these officials were appropriate as it helped alley fear of the employees of results being used against them. Also, it helps gather more data as the administrators of the questionnaires were their colleagues. Lastly, it helped save time on the part of the researchers as we had to deal with only the representatives of the institutions and not the individual respondents. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 202 was received, giving a return rate of 80.8% which is acceptable for quantitative studies (Babbie, 2020). Data was collected from employees in both public and private institutions in the Accra Metropolitan Area via self-designed questionnaire. Accra was selected as it is the capital town and so most of the headquarters of institutions of the public sector are located hence a suitable target population.

Access to these organizations was gained by sending a request letter to each organization, with which permission was granted. In all 15 letters were sent to 15 institutions. However, only 12 responded and therefore respondents were selected form these 12 institutions, 5 from the public sector and 7 from the private sector. The respondents were from all levels of the organizational i.e., both senior management and operational levels as leadership relationship is formed within the hierarchy of the organization and to ensure

holistic view of the phenomenon. Employees were assured of anonymity and allowed to respond to the questionnaires at their own free will. In all 250 printed questionnaires were distributed as follows: (160) private and (90) public organizations. Out of these 202 useful questionnaires was retrieved and used for the analysis. This number is considered suitable and adequate for analysis since, a return rate of 50% from a survey is acceptable (Babbie, 2020).

SPSS version 26 was used to conduct a descriptive statistic on the demographic profile of respondents. SmartPLS 4 SEM was used to examine the relationship between Psychological contract breach, stress, employee engagement and inclusive leadership Convergent validity, reliability and discriminant validity tests were carried out to assess the measurement model. Finally, the structural equation was employed to identify the relationship between the variables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 is the demographic profile of the respondents which covers the respondent’s gender, age, position and sector. In conducting the descriptive statistics, the study used frequencies and percentages to determine the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	115	56.9
Female	87	43.1
Age		
21-30	73	36.1
31-40	45	22.3
41-50	57	28.2
51-60	27	13.4
Position		
Senior Staff	60	29.7
Junior Staff	142	70.3
Sector		
Public sector	75	37.1
Private sector	127	62.9

From Table 1, it is observed that majority of respondents, representing 56.9% were males while 43.1% of the respondents were females. In terms of age, a total percentage of 36.1% forming a majority were between ages 21 and 30 years, while minority 13.4% were feel between ages 51-60 years. With respect to job position, a vast majority (70.3%) were junior staff with 29.3% being senior staff. Respondents from the private sector constituted 62.9% while 37.1% were from the public sector.

Assessment of Measurement Model

Convergent Validity

A test was conducted in stages (iteration) using SmartPLS 4, to obtain a fit test result. Table 2 presents the factor loadings of the variables (convergent validity). Factor loadings are a part of the factor analysis result, which is a data reduction approach for explaining correlations between observable variables with a smaller number of factors (Salkind, 2010). Many studies have indicated that factor loadings greater than 0.5 improve outcomes (Fisher et al., 2011). Chen and Tsai (2007) similarly utilized 0.5 as a cut-off for

acceptable loadings. As a result of those that were below the cut off were deleted and the rest used for the analysis.

Table 2. Factor Loadings

Variables	Measurement Items	Factor Loadings
Incl. Leadership Employee Engagement	EEA	0.866
	EED	0.984
	EEV	0.947
	IL1	0.774
	IL2	0.901
Turnover Intent	IL3	0.898
	IL4	0.929
	IL5	0.910
	IL6	0.949
	IL7	0.887
	IL8	0.932
Innovative Output	IO1	0.918
	IO2	0.956
	IO3	0.518
	IO4	0.924
	IO5	0.529
	IO6	0.782
Job Stress	JS1	0.905
	JS2	-0.067
	JS3	0.022
	JS4	0.026
	JS5	0.922
Incl. Leadership Psychological Contract Breach	PCB1	0.068
	PCB2	0.980
	PCB3	0.986
	PCB4	-0.439
	PCB5	-0.265

Table 2 shows the factor loading of the variables; Inclusive Leadership Employee Engagement, Turnover Intent, Innovative Output, Job Stress, and Inclusive Leadership Psychological Contract Breach. As presented in Table 2, some of the values of loading factors were below 0.5 which meant they have to be dropped from the research model, namely job stress variables (JS2, JS3 and JS4) and psychological contract variables (PCB1, PCB4 and PCB5) which is in line with Chen and Tsai (2007) factor loading criteria.

Reliability and Validity

After dropping the variables, reliability and validity was conducted using Cronbach’s alpha and average variance extraction (AVE) as well as discriminant validity. Reliability is a measure of the internal consistency of indicators of a construct that shows the degree to which each indicator shows a general latent construct (Hair et al., 2021). Reliability test was therefore conducted to measure the stability and consistency of the results (data) at different times (Hair et al., 2021). To test the reliability of the construct, this study used the value of Cronbach’s Alpha value > 0.6 (Hair et al., 2021), confirming the variables used were reliable. According to Hair et al. (2021) the validity test is intended to measure the extent to which the accuracy of a measuring instrument performs the function of its measuring instrument or provides appropriate measurement results by calculating the correlation between each statement with a total score. Average variance extracted (AVE) was tested with acceptable value of ≥ 0.50 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3. Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach’s Alpha	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Incl. Ld. Employee Engagement	0.929	0.872
Innovative Output	0.866	0.629
Job Stress	0.927	0.932
Incl. Ld. Psychological Contract Breach	0.984	0.984
Turnover Intent	0.966	0.808

Table 3 above shows the reliability and validity of the variables; Incl. Leadership Employee engagement, Turnover Intent, Innovative Output, Job Stress and Incl. Leadership Psychological Contract Breach. With Cronbach’s alpha values being greater 0.6, it meant that all variables were reliable and met the test criteria (Hair et al., 2021). The AVE values were above 0.5 and therefore acceptable (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Incl. Ld. Employee Engagement	Innovative Output	Job stress	Incl. Ld. Psychological Contract Breach	Turnover Intent
InclLd Employee Engagement					
Innovative Output	0.506				
Job Stress	0.260	0.419			
Incl. Ld. Psyc. Contract Breach	0.620	0.567	0.391		
Turnover Intent	0.755	0.818	0.255	0.552	

Table 4 is the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) table and revealed values for Inclusive Leadership Employee engagement, Turnover intent, Innovative output, Job stress and Inclusive Leadership Psychological contract breach. Using the “Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)” which is regarded as the significant measure for testing the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015), it can be seen from Table 4 that the HTMT ratio is confirmed as all the values were below the suggested value of 0.85.

Assessment of Structural Equation Model

Table 5 reveals the relation that exist between the variables. It entails the relationship of IncLd PsyConB → InnovOut, IncLd PsyConB → JobStress, IncLd PsyConB → TurnInt, IncLd PhysConB → JobStress → IncLd EmplEng, JobStress → IncLd EmplEng, JobStress → InnovOut, JobStress → TurnInt, JobStress → IncLd EmplEng → InnovOut, and JobStress → IncLd EmplEng → TurnInt.

Table 5. Test of Hypothesis

	Standardized Path	Beta	p-value	Decision
H1	IncLd PsyConB → InnovOut	0.281	0.002	Rejected
H2	IncLd PsyConB → JobStress	-0.375	0.000	Rejected
H3	InclLd PsyConB → TurnInt	0.152	0.011	Accepted
H4	IncLd PhysConB → JobStress → IncLd EmplEng	0.087	0.029	Rejected
H5	JobStress → IncLd EmplEng	-0.232	0.000	Accepted
H6	JobStress → InnovOut	-0.232	0.002	Accepted
H7	JobStress → TurnInt	-0.043	0.026	Accepted
H8a	JobStress → IncLd EmplEng → InnovOut	-0.065	0.006	Accepted
H8b	JobStress → IncLd EmplEng → TurnInt	-0.149	0.001	Accepted

Note:
 IncLd PsyConB stands for Inclusive Leadership Psychological Contract Breach
 IncLd EmplEng stands for Inclusive Leadership Employee Engagement
 InnovOut stands for Innovative Output
 JobStress stands for Job Stress
 TurnInt stands for Turnover Intent

The result of the hypothesis test indicated that IncLd Psychological Contract Breach had a positive significant relationship towards Innovative Output (Beta = 0.281; p-value = 0.002) and also towards Turnover Intent (Beta = 0.152; p-value = 0.011). However, IncLd Psychological Contract Breach had a negative significant relationship towards job stress (Beta = -0.375; p-value = 0.000). Furthermore, job stress had a negative statistically significant impact on IncLd Employee Engagement (Beta = -0.232; p-value = 0.000), Innovative Output (Beta = -0.232; p-value = 0.002) and Turnover Intent (Beta = -0.043; p-value = 0.0260). In addition, Job Stress positively mediate the relationship between IncLd Psychological Contract Breach and IncLd Employee Engagement (Beta = 0.087; p-value = 0.029). The result indicates that employees were unable to fulfill their part of the obligation, which led to a IncLd Psychological Contract Breach and eventually made employees came out with innovative ideas to help their respective sector engagement. Employee Engagement negatively mediates the relationship between Job Stress and Innovative Output (Beta = -0.065; p-value = 0.006) and also the relationship between Job Stress and Turnover Intent (Beta = -0.149; p-value = 0.001). The result stated that H1, H2 and H4 were rejected while H3, H5, H6, H7, H8a and H8b were accepted. Figure 2 illustrated the relationship that exist between the variables.

Discussion

Normally, if employees recognize they have espoused their own end of the contract but the organization has not, they are likely to feel let down and betrayed (Rousseau, 1995). From the psychological contract theory’s perspective, leaders of organisations are expected to fulfil certain obligations sufficiently (Restubog et al., 2013) to ensure increase in employees’ innovative behaviour. However, the onset of COVID-19 resulted in negative effect on most organisations finances (Faghankhani et al., 2021). As a result, several managers had to make changes in certain things like the introduction of remote work. This may have resulted in employees perceiving the leader to have breached the contract between them and thus these results. Therefore, if the leader does not fulfil his side of the bargain the employee too tends not to

act to fulfil his part and vice versa, consistent with findings of Li et al. (2021). Results related to the first hypothesis however shows that, even though employees in both public and private sector perceive there exist an inclusive leadership psychological contract breach, they still came up with innovative ideas. Employees know they play significant roles in the survival of organisations during crisis (Chen et al., 2014). Most employees appreciate the negative effect the pandemic had on organisations (Ghana Statistical Services, 2020), and therefore the need to contribute towards the continuous survival of these organisation. This may explain why even though leaders breached the contract between themselves and their subordinates they continued to come up with innovative ideas to ensure the continuous survival of these organisations.

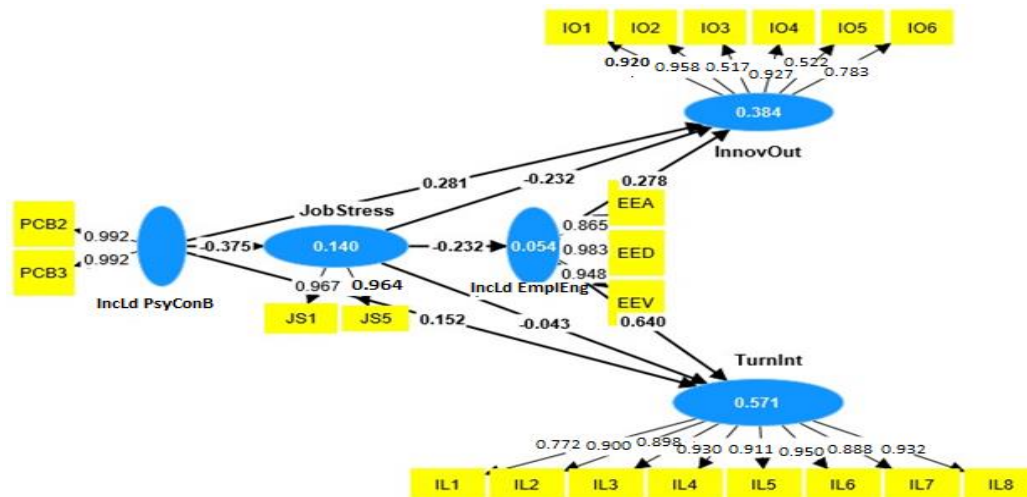


Figure 2. Path Diagram

When employees perceive there has been psychological contract breach, it makes them anxious, lose concentration and exhibit negative emotions (DiFonzo, et al., 2020) all antecedents of stress (Panigrahi, 2016) explaining why Arunachalam (2021) posit that psychological contract breach causes stress. Contrary to this, the second hypothesis result revealed that employees in both public and private sector admits there exist an inclusive leadership psychological contract breach but leads to a drop in job stress. The inclusive leader is known to care for employees’ health and safety (Javed et al., 2019) and therefore ensures measures are put in place like training them on how to stay safe and formulating and enforcing certain policies like working from home (Obuobisa-Darko, 2022) all with the aim to ensure employees’ safety. Even though some of these were a breach of psychological contract, it did not result in employees’ stress. This is because first, it reduced the workload of employees and the stress involved in moving from home to work (DiFonzo et al., 2020). More importantly, it led to employees perceiving their leaders to be interested in their health and safety and general wellbeing and thus causing the reduction in stress confirming the assertion by (DiFonzo et al., 2020). Based on the SET theory, it is argued that employees have certain expectations from their employer and when this is fulfilled, it impacts on their behavior and attitude towards work (Blau, 1964); which leads to less workloads of employees making them not stress up at work.

Results from the study revealed that as a result of inclusive leadership psychological contract breach employees in general, have high tendency to leave their organisations, confirming the third hypothesis. This result is in line with that of Santhanam et al. (2017). They discovered that when there is a psychological breach between the leader and his subordinates, it increases their intention to leave the organization. From the SET perspective, when an employee’s psychological contract with their employer is met, they become

happy (Roy & Konwar, 2019), and they are more inclined to stay and vice versa. The SET theory postulates that when an employee's psychological contract with their employer is met, they become happy (Roy & Konwar, 2019), and they are more inclined to behave positively at work. Employees, however, retaliate when a psychological contract is broken by engaging in unfavorable behavior. Again, the results can also be explained from the JD-R theory. Job demands and resources are not entirely adversarial but interwoven in their effect on engagement (Kwon & Kim, 2020). The covid-19 led to a high job demands (Hayes et al. 2021), to ensure organizational survival with minimum resources available due to the pandemic (Karani et al., 2022). Thus, it caused employees to wish to leave the organization, since high demands for work can be achieved when employees have the needed resources (Shahrill et al., 2021), explaining the results.

Based on the fourth hypothesis, employees in both sectors indicate that job stress is present in the workplace. This implies that inclusive leadership psychological contract breach will lead to a higher level of job stress resulting to an inclusive leadership employee engagement. This means that workloads will be high when there exists an inclusive leadership psychological contract breach, resulting in employee being engaged by the inclusive leader. Ishtiaq and Zeb (2020) revealed that the employees formed a strong psychological contract with their employer, and were actively engaged while experiencing a moderate level of job-stress which is in line with the study finding. According to JD-R model, it is assumed that stress will lead to health problems, such as depression, cardiovascular disease, or psychosomatic complaints. Thus, stress is expected to mediate the relation between job demands and employee health and well-being (at least partly), through the gradual draining of mental resources (i.e., stress) (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Outcome of the analysis showed that job stress results in employees not being engaged, supporting our fifth hypothesis. With the inclusive leader being respectful, responsive and recognizing employees' worth (Hollander et al., 2008) it causes a reduction in stress (Huang et al., 2019.) and this is able to increase employees' engagement. This is because recognition and involvement in decision making is said to be a major antecedent of employee engagement (Obuobisa-Darko & Ameyaw-Domfeh, 2019). Thus, when the inclusive leader behaves so employees perceive him to recognize their worth by listening and involving them in decision making, know their concerns and address them, it reduces their stress and anxiety and as a result they become engaged (Obuobisa-Darko, 2022), he is able to identify employees needs during the pandemic and respond to them.

The sixth hypothesis revealed that both public and private sector workers acknowledge that, job stress has led to them presenting fewer innovative ideas. As long as employees are under a lot of stress at work, the amount of innovation that comes from the employees will be quite low. When employees are stress, it reflects in their level of satisfaction (Asbari et al., 2020), reduce the engagement levels (Nair & Mathew, 2022), decrease emotional, and cognitive availability of employees (Velnampy & Aravinthan, 2013) which affects their ability to develop creative ideas, services or products which is in line with the study result. According to JD-R theory, the demands of the job and the availability of required resources will influence employees stress, engagement, innovative behaviour and output (Nair & Mathew, 2022). The argument therefore is, as a result of COVID 19 and its related effect, there has been changes in the demands from work and minimal resources (Kwon & Kim, 2020), then when the covid-19 results in high job demands, and minimum resources available, it causes employees to be stressed and reduce employee innovative behavior.

Based on the seventh hypothesis, the obvious expectation will be that an increase in job stress will lead to an increase in employee turnover; However, in the Ghanaian context, employees in both the public and private sectors have acknowledged that job stress is prevalent in the workplace, however, has led to a decrease in the number of employees leaving their respective sector. This has been the outcome because in as much as employees are stressed in their workplaces, the employees form of satisfaction is that at the end of the day they will be paid. Similarly, when employees leave the job place, it will be extremely difficult to get another job. Hence, regardless of the increase in job stress, employee turnover is still reduced. Stress

may come about as a result of an incident or an expected incident within the workplace which is likely to be a threat to employees (Rangrez et al., 2022). Occupational stress influences employees' job satisfaction and organisational commitment, which are major antecedents to employee turnover (Mosadeghrad, 2013) which is in line with the study findings. According to the JD-R paradigm, there are two distinct processes that lead to stress. To begin with, prolonged exposure to excessive job demands from which employees do not have sufficient time off to recover can result in continuous activation and overtaxing, which can eventually lead to exhaustion, which is the energetic component of stress. Second, when there is a lack of resources, it is impossible to meet the demands of the job or the goals that have been set for the task, and this results in withholding behavior (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The eighth result showed that, employees in both the public and private sectors confessed that they were less engaged, and as a consequence, they did not show signs of stress at work and exhibited very little innovative behavior or outcome. This means that when employees are not well engaged in their work, it will contribute to a high level of job stress which will cause a decline in employees exhibiting great innovative ideas. In addition, the empirical study, employees in both the public and private sectors reported that they were less engaged, and as a direct consequence, they did not experience much stress at work and have less intention of leaving the job. Employees that are very engaged in their work have a significant amount of personal involvement (Kopperud et al., 2014). Therefore, it is possible that it will be necessary to cultivate a social context in which people feel it is safe to voice their minds—a situation that is manifested through an inclusive leadership style (Carmeli et al., 2010). Employee engagement has been about explaining negative things like stress (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2008), and engagement has been called the exact opposite of stress (Arrowsmith & Parker, 2013). When employees are engaged at work and get consistently stressed out, it greatly increase their desire to leave their jobs. In line with the study findings, Li et al. (2021) and Huang et al. (2018) established that one of the causes of employee turnover is stress at the workplace. When managers design employees work well it reduces employees stress (Ravindran, 2019). However, if this is not done it impacts negatively on their level of stress and therefore tend to want to leave (Li et al., 2021; Huang et al., 2018). JD-R theory included work engagement in addition to stress and considered stress and work engagement to be mediators of the relation between job demands and health problems, and job resources and turnover intention, respectively (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014).

Practical Implication

The study has some practical nuances. The study is an attempt to understand the psychological contract breach, job stress and employee engagement in relation with the role of inclusive leadership. In this pandemic period, inclusive leaders should make clear what they demand from employees and what employees want in return from them. Psychological contract breach positively contributes to employees' innovative behavior/ output and also contribute positively to employee's turnover intent, but negatively contribute to job stress. Job stress negatively impact employee engagement, innovative output and turnover intent. Job stress and employee engagement act as mediators. Bakker and de Vries (2021) suggest that human resource (HR) managers and companies should keep in mind that internal resources are highly important when there is an increase in the amount of stress that employees face at work. A workforce that is disengaged may decide to leave their employer, whereas employees who are engaged in their work are more likely to stay with their company. One strategy to prevent declines in satisfaction and work engagement linked to psychological contract breach is to manage and fulfill employee expectations. Inclusive leaders must, however, manage the effects of psychological contracts being broken on employee job stress and subsequent work engagement if they want to help employees stay in their jobs and prevent turnover.

V. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic scenario has had an impact on the worldwide economy as well as the job security of employees. The unemployment rate in wealthy countries has increased from 3.5 percent to 15 percent. Research shows that anxiety and pressures originating from work responsibilities can be mitigated by fair and inclusive leaders. Employees see breach of psychological contract when their employers fail to fulfil their obligations. This perception causes stress which has an impact on their innovative output and turnover intention. To meet the demands, and support the employees to overcome the negative effects, organisations need to provide the needed support to reduce stress. Based on the empirical result inclusive leadership psychological contract breach had a positive significant relationship towards innovative output and also towards turnover intent, however, inclusive leadership psychological contract breach had a negative significant relationship towards job stress. Job stress had a negative statistically significant impact on inclusive leadership employee engagement, innovative output and turnover intent. The study also found out that job stress positively mediates the relationship between inclusive leadership psychological contract breach and inclusive leadership employee engagement. Inclusive employee engagement negatively mediates the relationship between Job stress and Innovative output and also the relationship between Job stress and Turnover intent. Even though the literature shows a breach of psychological contract will negatively impact on employee's innovative behavior, our results is in variance. This may be because of employees' awareness of the significant role they play in organisational survival during crisis.

Limitation and Future Studies

The study was limited to inclusive leadership and his role in psychological contract breach and employee's engagement in relation to job stress, innovative outcome and employee's turnover. The study suggests a further study to be conducted involving the other leadership styles roles in psychological contract and employee's engagement.

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