

Schuster, Tassilo; Bader, Anna Katharina; Bader, Benjamin; Rousseau, Denise M.

Article — Published Version

Does what happens abroad stay abroad? Displaced aggression and emotional regulation in expatriate psychological contracts

Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

Provided in Cooperation with:

John Wiley & Sons

Suggested Citation: Schuster, Tassilo; Bader, Anna Katharina; Bader, Benjamin; Rousseau, Denise M. (2022) : Does what happens abroad stay abroad? Displaced aggression and emotional regulation in expatriate psychological contracts, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, ISSN 2044-8325, Wiley, Hoboken, NJ, Vol. 95, Iss. 4, pp. 867-888, <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12405>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/266670>

Standard-Nutzungsbedingungen:

Die Dokumente auf EconStor dürfen zu eigenen wissenschaftlichen Zwecken und zum Privatgebrauch gespeichert und kopiert werden.

Sie dürfen die Dokumente nicht für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, öffentlich zugänglich machen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Sofern die Verfasser die Dokumente unter Open-Content-Lizenzen (insbesondere CC-Lizenzen) zur Verfügung gestellt haben sollten, gelten abweichend von diesen Nutzungsbedingungen die in der dort genannten Lizenz gewährten Nutzungsrechte.

Terms of use:

Documents in EconStor may be saved and copied for your personal and scholarly purposes.

You are not to copy documents for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the documents publicly, to make them publicly available on the internet, or to distribute or otherwise use the documents in public.


If the documents have been made available under an Open Content Licence (especially Creative Commons Licences), you may exercise further usage rights as specified in the indicated licence.



<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

ARTICLE

Does what happens abroad stay abroad? Displaced aggression and emotional regulation in expatriate psychological contracts

Tassilo Schuster¹  | Anna Katharina Bader²  | Benjamin Bader³  |
Denise M. Rousseau⁴ 

¹University of Bamberg/Fraunhofer Institute for Integrated Circuits IIS, Nuernberg, Germany

²Northumbria University, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

³Newcastle University Business School, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

⁴Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Correspondence

Tassilo Schuster, Nordostpark 84, 90411 Nuernberg, Germany.

Email: tassilo.schuster@iis.fraunhofer.de

Funding information

Funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), Grant/Award Number: 447585650

Abstract

The effects of psychological contract violation are the subject of considerable research. Yet, their effects in work arrangements with more than two parties are largely unknown. Multi-party work arrangements differ from traditional ones because individuals may be vulnerable to psychological contract breach and violation by more than one party, potentially directing negative emotional responses not only towards the responsible party but also displacing it to the other (innocent) party. Primary data from a two-wave survey of 221 current expatriates is used to test the effects of displaced aggression and emotion regulation in multi-party psychological contracts. We find that the negative emotions (violation experiences) associated with breach predict reduced commitment both to the perpetrating organization and the innocent party. However, this spillover effect is asymmetric and follows displaced aggregation theory: Expatriates displace their aggressive behaviour on to the host when the home organization violated the psychological contract, not the reverse.

KEYWORDS

displaced aggression, expatriation, organizational commitment, psychological contract

This is an open access article under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/) License, which permits use and distribution in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, the use is non-commercial and no modifications or adaptations are made.

© 2022 The Authors. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd on behalf of The British Psychological Society.

Practitioner points

- Expatriate success abroad is closely tied to the home organization keeping its commitments. Failure to do so can spillover, damaging the expatriate's relationship with the host organization. Three success factors help organizations keep their psychological contract.
 - Manage expectations carefully. Be candid about the conditions that expat will face during and after the assignment – *before* sending the expatriate abroad. Work to reach an agreement the expatriate finds attractive and motivating.
 - Clearly communicate to the host organization the expectations created with the expatriate, including the expatriate's manager abroad.
 - Once the assignment starts, hold regular follow-up to conversations to support the expatriate and the host organization's management.
- Psychological contract violation by either the home or host organization can reduce expatriate commitment to the violator. Both organizations should engage in joint expectation management following the three steps above. Such practices increase the likelihood that expatriates feel treated fairly, permitting early detection and mitigation of unfulfilled psychological contracts.

INTRODUCTION

The psychological contract (PC) is an individual's system of beliefs regarding the obligations of a reciprocal exchange with another, typically the employer (Rousseau, 1989). The PC includes returns from employment 'when an individual believes that contributions he or she makes obligate the organization to reciprocity (or vice-versa)' (Rousseau, 1989). Extensive research indicates that the extent to which one party is judged to have fulfilled its obligations (psychological contract fulfilment, PCF) is critical to the responses of the other (Lee et al., 2011; Turnley et al., 2003). When one party is judged to fail to fulfil the PC – commonly referred to as PC breach (PCB) – negative emotions can be generated in the other (i.e., the victim), an outcome referred to as psychological contract violation (PCV; Tekleab et al., 2005). While sometimes incorrectly used interchangeably, PCV is conceptually and empirically distinct from PCB, as the latter is the cognitive trigger of the affective PCV (Tomprou et al., 2015). The assessed level of PCB, therefore, affects the intensity of the affective state of PCV (Robinson & Morrison, 2000) but not every incidence of breach triggers a violation (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Rousseau, 2011). PCV consequences tend to be detrimental to both organizations and employees, involving reduced trust, job dissatisfaction and lowered commitment (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018; Zhao et al., 2007).

Scholars recognize that PCs are more complex in certain work arrangements than others. Individuals in many workplaces experience multiple PCs (e.g., Alcover et al., 2017b). In professional service firms (Dawson et al., 2014), the gig economy (Bankins et al., 2020) or temporary employment agencies (Lapalme et al., 2011) employees can form PCs with both the employing firm *and* their clients' organizations. Moreover, multi-party work arrangements can also occur within a single organization. On international assignments, MNCs temporarily relocate expatriates to a foreign subsidiary to transfer knowledge or coordinate business activities across borders (Harzing, 2001). In such a work arrangement, expatriates might form PCs with two entities in the same organization: their home (headquarters) and their host organization (subsidiary) (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017; Schuster et al., 2022). Compared to other multi-party work arrangements, prior research has argued that expatriates face additional PC challenges as they need to adjust to a new working and living environment (Bader et al., 2017; Black et al., 1991), leading to heightened expectations towards their home and host organization. Specifically, the home organization might be held responsible for the employment

relationship, assignment support and future career opportunities, while the host organization is expected to allocate resources and support and empower the expatriate to succeed in their assignment (Chen et al., 2010; Haslberger & Brewster, 2009; Knocke & Schuster, 2017; McNulty et al., 2013; Pate & Scullion, 2009).

Psychological contracts in multi-party employment are rarely studied compared to conventional two-party PCs (Alcover et al., 2017b; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019), raising concerns regarding how well we understand their dynamics and whether it is appropriate to assume that the underlying mechanisms follow established patterns. For instance, the forms reciprocity can take are multiplied in multi-party psychological contracts and can go beyond the targeted tit-for-tat of two-party exchanges to include spillover effects among several parties and broad-scale reciprocity within a system of exchanges (Alcover et al., 2017a).

The present study investigates the differential outcomes of PCF and PCV among expatriates working in multi-party arrangements. Our study makes four important contributions to theory. First, in the context of PC dynamics, we identify how violations by various parties can have differential implications for the individual employees' interests and goals by virtue of the nature of the resources exchanged (Rousseau et al., 2018). The implications of one party's violation for the individual employee are expected to depend on which party it is (i.e., home or host) and the relationship the exchange involves, giving rise to differences in the individual's response to violations. Investigation of these response differences advances theory regarding the PC's self-regulatory dynamics (Rousseau et al., 2018).

Second, building on displaced aggression theory, we identify an explanatory mechanism for spillover in multi-party work arrangements (Dawson et al., 2014; Lapalme et al., 2011). Displaced aggression is the act of redirecting responses onto an innocent target (Hoobler & Brass, 2006; Liu et al., 2015). It is evident in the metaphor of the angry man, berated by his boss, who says nothing at work but goes home and kicks his dog (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Our study identifies displaced aggression as a mediator between PCV by one party and commitment to the other. In doing so, we advance understanding of whether and why individuals direct aggression towards innocent others. At the same time, building on determinants of displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000), we unravel its asymmetric effects and show that whether expatriates displace their aggression depends on situational factors, specifically which party evokes feelings of violation in the first place. Displaced aggression also provides new insight into how reciprocity functions in social exchange. Reciprocity is recognized as a mechanism to attain balance in an exchange, where a person investing in a relationship expects a return, a central tenet in psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989). Research calls attention to reciprocal acts where individuals redirect reciprocity to people not involved in the original exchange (Alcover et al., 2017a, 2017b). Such is the case where a well-treated person contributes to the benefit of a third party (e.g., Baker & Bulkley, 2014). On the other hand, little is known regarding the consequences to third parties of negative reciprocity, that is, when PC obligations are unfulfilled and this adverse treatment is reciprocated. By introducing displaced aggression, we specify a mechanism in the aftermath of violation that explains spillover effects to third parties.

Third, focusing on how emotions are caused (e.g., PCV) and displaced (displaced aggression) as result of low PCF, our study is interested in whether individual differences in the ability to handle emotions can alter the proposed effects. We introduce an important individual characteristic as a boundary condition in multi-party work arrangements: emotion regulation self-efficacy (ERSE) (Kiewitz et al., 2009). ERSE builds on emotion regulation theory, which argues the way individuals manage emotions, shapes when and how emotions are experienced (Gross, 1998). ERSE is the self-perceived competence for managing emotions and individuals with high ERSE are confident in their ability to control their emotions and overcome negative emotions quickly (Wong & Law, 2002). Combining displaced aggression theory and theories of emotion regulation, we theorize the role of ERSE in (a) the aftermath of unfulfilled psychological contracts and propose that ERSE weakens the effect that unfulfilled psychological contracts have on emotions experienced in PCV, and (b) in the process of spillover following violation (Tomprou et al., 2015), altering the spillover of adverse consequences onto an innocent target.

Finally, by studying the multi-party dynamics of expatriate PCs, our work provides insight into an important context of contemporary employment. International assignments are distinct from other multi-party settings because (1) multiple PCs are formed within the same firm and (2) working abroad demands high contributions from the employee beyond those in domestic settings (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). Accordingly, expatriates may be particularly vulnerable to both unfulfilled psychological contracts and feelings of violation (Schuster et al., 2022) as they are highly dependent on their employers in order to realize important goals, a condition strengthening their reliance on employer fulfilment of its obligations (Rousseau et al., 2018). The strong emotions characterizing contract violation are more likely to be redirected and spill over to innocent parties if the parties involved are more strongly connected (Moody, 2008). As the expatriate's home and host organization are part of the same firm, the relationship between these two parties is likely to be stronger than in the settings of prior multi-party research (e.g., consulting firms and their clients). By examining expatriate employment, this study adds an important context to investigate the underlying mechanisms of psychological contracts in multi-party arrangements.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Psychological contract research dates from the 1960s (Argyris, 1960), when the concept served as a metaphor for implicit aspects of employment (Roehling, 1997). Rousseau's (1989) article marked a transition by conceptualizing the PC differently, defining PC as 'individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization' (Rousseau, 1989). The perception of unfulfilled psychological contracts (as a cognitive trigger) was theorized to create feelings of violation (e.g., an affective state), ranging from disappointment to shock (Tomprou et al., 2015). This response, in turn, leads to negative attitudinal and behavioural consequences (Zhao et al., 2007).

Psychological contract dynamics occur across the entire expatriation process, from experiences prior to departure, through interactions with the foreign host employer, to the aftermath on return to the home organization (Yan et al., 2002). Expatriation demands high employee contributions with far-reaching consequences for individual careers, as well as for their personal lives and families. Expatriates, in return, tend to expect their employer's support, including future opportunities, and enhanced compensation (De Ruiter et al., 2018; Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). These features make it likely that the expatriate's PCs with the home and host organization are relied upon to realize personally valuable goals (Rousseau et al., 2018).

Expatriates are theorized to form two distinct PCs, one with the home and the other with the host organization (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017). Evidence indicates that employees can clearly distinguish among their exchange relationships with different parties and respond distinctively to each (Lavelle et al., 2007; Liao & Rupp, 2005). The home organization is typically the expatriates' primary referent, having the main influence over their assignment and being the primary source of support abroad. Nonetheless, expatriates often recognize unfulfilled psychological contracts by the home organization due to insufficient organizational support or strategic changes disrupting attainment of assignment objectives (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009; Pate & Scullion, 2009). Moreover, expatriate attributions regarding the home organization's PC pertain not only to the present international assignment but also to their future career progression (Ren et al., 2013). Thus, the PC with the home organization typically is multi-faceted incorporating present and future obligations.

In contrast, the host organization constitutes the locus of task fulfilment during the assignment, giving rise to obligations pertinent to the work environment, including resources that allow expatriates to succeed. Not receiving critical information and other resources can prevent expatriates from achieving their objectives (Toh & Srinivas, 2012), evident in the lack of social acceptance, support and mentoring expatriates often experience (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). Expatriates tend to perceive that the host organization has broken the PC if it fails to allocate adequate resources for task execution, insufficiently

empowers expatriates or offers them few opportunities to participate in strategic decisions (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017).

Following this logic, expatriates are expected to differentiate the two entities in terms of PC obligations and in their responses to low fulfilment by either party. Consequently, prior research suggests that spillover effects regarding PC obligations are likely, which can mean that the home (or host) organization's failure to fulfil its obligations can affect how expatriates judge the fulfilment of obligations by the other (Bader et al., 2022; Dawson et al., 2014; Lapalme et al., 2011). In the following sections, we will develop hypotheses regarding these PC dynamics during expatriation. To explain the outcomes of PCV we enrich psychological contract theory by incorporating two additional theories to inform how individuals respond to the experience of unfulfilled psychological contracts and violation by different parties. First, we integrate the theory of displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000) to better conceptualize the differential effects of PCV, specifying mechanisms whereby individuals respond to harms by one party by redirecting aggression to another. We propose that this phenomenon can be observed in multi-party arrangements where potential targets for displacement are readily identifiable. The second theory informing our investigation is emotion self-regulation (Wong & Law, 2002), which specifies how individuals can respond to situational demands that evoke emotion in socially acceptable ways, providing insight into how emotional responses contribute to the psychological processes associated with PC violation. Together these theories provide conceptual instruments to investigate whether and how the negative emotions (i.e., PCV) associated with low psychological contract fulfilment by one party (home or host organization) can be evoked and spillover to the non-violating party and which individuals are more prone to this effect.

Hypotheses development

A large body of research finds that low PC fulfilment by one party is positively related to PCV by that party and results in reduced organizational commitment to it (Wei et al., 2015; see Zhao et al., 2007 for a meta-analysis). The target similarity model (Lavelle et al., 2007) proposes that experiences caused by an entity provoke responses towards that entity as individuals can distinguish between the perpetrators. Accordingly, direct effects of PCF by one entity on PCV and work outcomes towards this entity have been established in the expatriation literature (Chen & Chiu, 2009; Ren et al., 2013), as well as in prior research on multi-party work arrangements highlighting that low PCF by one entity increases PCV by that entity and eventually reduces work outcomes to this entity as well (Dawson et al., 2014). Our theorizing and research model builds on the well-established sequences of PCF outcomes, and we will not propose hypotheses on these main effects, for example from low psychological contract fulfilment from the home (host) organization to psychological contract violation towards the home (host) organization, as well as the main effects from psychological contract violation towards the home (host) organization to commitment towards the home (host) organization. Instead, we will focus on the novel mechanisms proposed in our research model that extend these main effects: the mediating effect of displaced aggression and the moderating effects of ERSE. The proposed key effects are highlighted in bold in [Figure 1](#).

PCV, displaced aggression and affective commitment

Research highlights that PCV is an intense emotional state following failure to fulfil the PC and is characterized by deep disappointment and frustration (Tomprou et al., 2015). Intense feelings of frustration are known to give rise to aggression (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007), that is, behaviour intended to harm another (Bushman et al., 2005). Aggression sometimes is tied to acts of violence; however, it also can take more subtle forms like verbal and passive damage (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). In this study, we focus

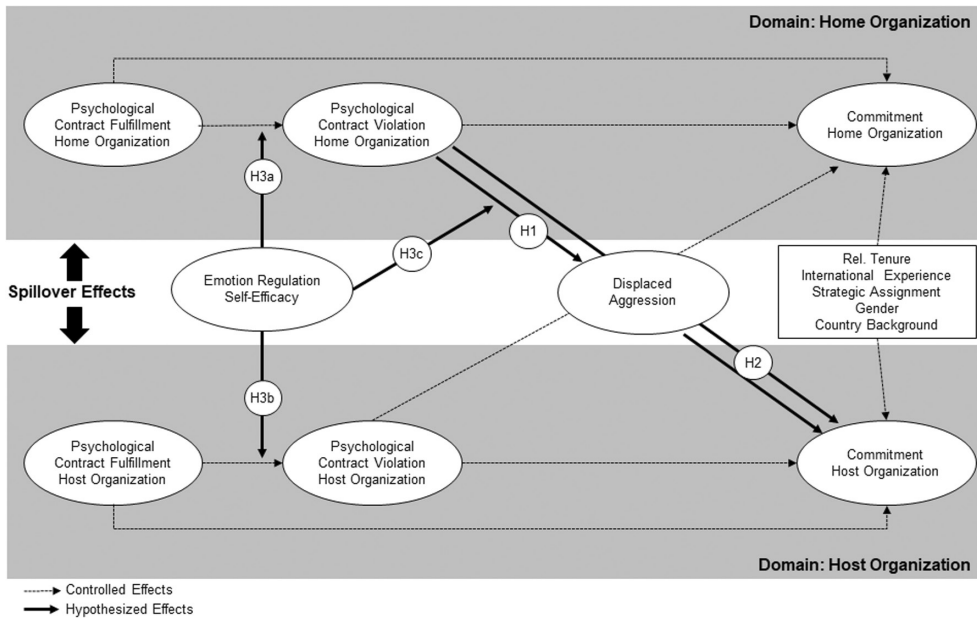


FIGURE 1 Research model

on subtle forms of aggression related to verbal harassment or negative acts such as ‘taking it out’ on others or ‘blowing off steam’ (Liu et al., 2015).

Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) argue that individuals, when frustrated, tend to have difficulty controlling or regulating their aggressive impulses. Nonetheless, individuals who experience negative emotions do not always focus on the cause of the emotion. In fact, they can redirect their aggression towards others for various reasons (Eby et al., 2010). For instance, employees may respond to a supervisor’s PCV by arguing with friends and family (Hoobler & Brass, 2006). Such redirection constitutes displaced aggression, ‘when the target is innocent of any wrongdoing but is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time’ (Bushman et al., 2005). Displaced aggression tends to occur when the actual violator is either inaccessible or in a powerful position, leading to fear of retaliation or punishment (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000).

We argue that power dynamics and accessibility of the PCV perpetrator influences whether displaced aggression occurs. First, since expatriate careers normally depend more on the home organization (Breitenmoser & Bader, 2021), they are likely to consider it to be more powerful than the host, particularly regarding goals for future opportunities and advancement (Nguyen et al., 2013). Adding to this, as the home organization has sent the expatriate abroad and is the main assessor of the success of the expatriate assignment (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017) they are in a position of power towards the expatriate as they can end the assignment at any point. Based on displaced aggression theory we suggest that expatriates redirect aggression onto a third party only when it is the more powerful actor who violates the contract (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Accordingly, when the home organization is the cause of feelings of violation, displacement towards the host is likely due to the power dynamics. Second, accessibility influences displaced effects (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). As expatriates reside in the country of the host and conduct their daily work there, the host organization is a more accessible target. Communication with the home organization is, in contrast, often indirect and less frequent. Thus, the home organization is less accessible, contributing to post-PCV displacement.

In contrast, we expect expatriates to react differently if they experience feelings of violation towards the host. Due to its lower power position and accessibility while on assignment (Kumarika Perera et al., 2017), aggression towards the host is unlikely to be displaced onto the home organization (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Instead, PCV by the host is likely to lead to adverse emotion and behaviour targeting the host alone. In other words, no spillover is expected to the home organization following PCV

by the host to avoid impairing the expatriate's more important relationship with the home organization. Although one could argue that the home organization might be blamed for the negative experience as they have caused the situation by sending the expatriate in the first place, due to the host's less powerful and relatively accessible position, this situation meets none of the conditions for displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). Building on this theoretical rationale, we thus expect a spillover effect for PCV by the home organization to the host organization but not from the host organization to the home organization:

Hypothesis 1 *PCV by the home organization is positively related to displaced aggression directed towards the host organization.*

Prior research identified a negative impact of the cognition of unfulfilled PCs on affective commitment and a mediating role of PCV (Cassar & Briner, 2011; Ng et al., 2010). Turning towards displaced effects, when expatriates displace aggression towards the host organization due to PCV by the home organization, we expect that PCV will translate into reduced affective commitment towards the host. Thus, we propose that PCV by the home organization will reduce affective commitment towards the host through displaced aggression.

Low PCF is known to lead to negative emotions (PCV) and alter attitudes towards the perpetrator (Zhao et al., 2007). In the context of expatriate PCs, we proposed above that PCV by the home organization can trigger displaced aggression, which, in turn, will alter attitudes towards the innocent host. Comprehensive research provides evidence that if behaviour and attitude are not compatible the attitude is likely to be amended (Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019). As displaced aggression is characterized by negative behaviour intended to harm a third party, it is incompatible with positive attitudes towards that party. Consequentially, as PCV by the home organization is manifest in displaced aggression towards the host, expatriates are expected to change their attitude towards the host by reducing their affective commitment to it, thus re-aligning their behaviour and attitude. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2 *The relationship between PCV by the home organization and the expatriate's affective commitment towards the host organization is mediated by displaced aggression.*

Moderating effects of emotion regulation self-efficacy

We propose an important boundary condition for the aftermath of unfulfilled PCs, that is, emotion regulation self-efficacy. Individuals are generally able to control emotions, which is a useful form of self-regulation to help individuals realize their goals (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). However, individuals differ in their ability to do so (Hagger et al., 2010) with some better able to overcome affective states more quickly than others (Wong & Law, 2002). This individual difference reflects emotion regulation self-efficacy (ERSE), that is the self-perception regarding one's ability to regulate emotions (Deng et al., 2017). ERSE mitigates the emotional response that follows the cognition of unfulfilled PCs (Deng et al., 2017). In fact, the extent to which a low PCF cause feelings of violation has been theorized to depend on a sense-making process through which individuals process information related to breach of the psychological contract and attach meaning to it (Parzefall & Coyle-Shapiro, 2011). This process can activate control over negative emotions to reduce adverse effects (Heuven et al., 2006). ERSE inhibits the translation of emotions into attitudes and behaviour (Deng et al., 2017) such that high ERSE individuals are confident in their emotional control, particularly when their actions can be construed as inappropriate. Indeed, since displacing aggression onto others violates social norms, this impulse tends to be regulated and inhibited (Bushman et al., 2005). As such, Deng et al. (2017) find that ERSE moderates the impact of aggressive emotions on third parties.

We build upon these considerations and propose that ERSE moderates both the effect of psychological contract fulfilment on PCV and of PCV on displaced aggression. Individuals with higher efficacy

in regulating their emotions are less likely to develop feelings of PCV following unfulfilled PCs due to their ability to suppress emotions. High ERSE individuals, on the other hand, are expected to show less displaced aggression following PCV as people with high ERSE are less likely to transfer their emotions into behaviour. We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a *The relationship between PCF by the home organization and PCV by the home organization is moderated by emotion regulation self-efficacy, such that high ESRE weakens the effects of unfulfilled PCs on PCV.*

Hypothesis 3b *The relationship between PCF by the host organization and PCV by the host organization is moderated by emotion regulation self-efficacy, such that high ESRE weakens the effects of unfulfilled PCs on PCV.*

Hypothesis 3c *The relationship between PCV by the home organization and displaced aggression is moderated by ERSE, such that high ERSE weakens the effects of PCV on displaced aggression.*

METHOD

Participants

Data were collected at two points in time. To study employees currently on international assignment, we identified expatriates based on their profiles on two online platforms, InterNations and LinkedIn. We emailed a token-based link to our online questionnaire, attaching a personalized letter of invitation that described the study's purpose and asked the expatriates to participate. In total, we reached out to 2307 expatriates in our initial survey, followed by a reminder 2 weeks later. We received 455 completed responses, a response rate of 19.7%. In a follow-up survey 6 months after the first survey, we invited the 455 respondents from wave one to participate in the second wave. Of these 455 respondents, we reached 415 with 40 email addresses having been suspended in the interim. In total, 221 completed questionnaires were received, a response rate of 53.3%. All respondents were still on assignment during both times of measurement. In our sample, 23% are female and the average age 40.4 years. Regarding time abroad, 14.6% had <1 year on the assignment, 24.2% between 1–2 years, 26.0% between 2–3 years and 35.2% more than 3 years. The five main assignment locations were China (21.4%), USA (13.2%), Germany (11.8%), Singapore (9.1%) and Japan (5.0%). Finally, 73.2% were from companies headquartered in Europe, 14.5% in Asia, 5.5%, 3.6% in North America and Latin America, respectively, and 3.2% in the rest of the world.

Measures

The survey was administered in English, using established multi-item scales. If not otherwise stated, we used a 5-point Likert scale.

Psychological contract fulfilment and violation

Psychological contract fulfilment and PCV were assessed with a 5-item scale and a 4-item scale, respectively, developed by Robinson and Morrison (Robinson & Morrison, 2000). These measures are widely used in PC research (Raja et al., 2004) and successfully applied in multi-party settings (Dawson et al., 2014). To match our context, items were included at Time 1 on two separate scales measuring our two independent variables – adapting the original wording from ‘organization’ to ‘assigning parent company’ and ‘receiving foreign subsidiary’. Items included statements such as ‘I have not received everything promised to me by the assigning parent company (foreign subsidiary) in exchange for my

contributions'. The measure of PCV included statements such as 'I feel a great deal of anger toward my assigning parent company (foreign subsidiary)'. Alpha was .95 for PCV by home organization and .96 by host.

Displaced aggression

Displaced aggression was measured with four items at Time 2 and is based on Denson et al. (2006). Similar to Liu et al. (2015), we adapted the items to the expatriation context. Two items measured displaced aggression from the home to the host and two items displaced aggression from the host towards the home. Items are 'When I felt that I had been treated unfairly by the parent company (subsidiary), I blamed the subsidiary (parent company) for this' and 'When I got upset by the subsidiary (parent company) during the assignment I took it out on the parent company (subsidiary)'. Alpha is .86 for displaced aggression towards the host and .90 towards the home.

Emotion regulation self-efficacy

Following Deng et al. (2017), we measured ERSE at Time 2 using four items developed by Wong and Law (Wong & Law, 2002). A sample item is 'I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally'. Alpha is .95.

Affective commitment

The two dependent variables, affective commitment towards the home and the host were measured at Time 2, each via three items from a well-established commitment scale (Mowday et al., 1979) used in the context of international assignments (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Items regarding the focal company (home or host) were rated separately: A sample item is 'I am "emotionally attached" to the assigning parent company (foreign subsidiary)'. Alpha towards the home is .92 and .94 towards the host.

Control variables

We controlled for several variables that might impact commitment towards home and host (Guzzo et al., 1994). First, we measured the expatriate's overall international work experience in years (Takeuchi, 2010). Second, we included tenure as a control (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), asking respondents to indicate (1) how many months they had been on the international assignment and (2) how many years (subsequently transformed to months) they worked in the home organization prior to their assignment. We then computed the quotient of these two items to indicate relative tenure. Third, we included gender (0 = female; 1 = male) to control for potential gender differences. Fourth, we included dummy variables for Europe, Asia, Americas and Australia and the Pacific to control for the geographic background of expatriates. Finally, respondents indicated whether they were on a technical, functional, developmental or strategic assignment (Kraimer et al., 2009). The dummy variable (1 = strategic assignment; 0 = other types) accounted for assignment differences. Following prior PC studies, we controlled for the direct effect of PC fulfilment by home and host on affective commitment to home and host (Zhao et al., 2007).

Several remedies reduced the likelihood of common method variance (CMV). Ex ante, we followed Podsakoff et al. (2003), using a temporal design measuring predictors and outcomes at different points in time. Moreover, we informed respondents that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers and that we sought honest, spontaneous responses. Ex post, we first ran Harman's single factor test (Harman, 1976) indicating that neither a single nor a general factor accounted for the majority of variance. In addition,

we performed a common latent factor (CLF) test as recommended by Podsakoff et al. (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Results indicate that CMV is not a major concern.

RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analyses (CFA)

We applied a two-step procedure to analyse our data (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). A CFA tested the discriminant validity of variables. Then we tested our hypotheses using structural equation modelling (SEM) with AMOS 24 as it offers advantages over multiple regression (James et al., 2006).

Our CFA with maximum likelihood estimation examined discriminant validity (Table 1). The first model grouped items under the study's nine constructs: (1) PCF by host, (2) PCF by home, (3) PCV by host and (4) PCV by home, (5) displaced aggression towards home, (6) displaced aggression towards host, (7) emotion regulation self-efficacy, (8) affective commitment to host and (9) to home. Results confirm the nine-factor model had a good fit: [$\chi^2/df = 1.72$; CFI = .96; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .06]. We then compared this first model with three competing models, beginning with the model in which all study items were grouped under a single factor [$\chi^2/df = 11.76$; CFI = .34; SRMR = .19; RMSEA = .22], followed by a five-factor model to ensure that respondents were able to distinguish between different organizational entities [$\chi^2/df = 6.51$; CFI = .67; SRMR = .21; RMSEA = .16]. Finally, we compared it to a four-factor model treating PCF and PCV as a single factor [$\chi^2/df = 7.25$; CFI = .62; SRMR = .17; RMSEA = .17]. As Table 1 shows, our nine-factor model is the best fit with the relative/normed chi-square (χ^2/df) below 2.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), RMSEA below .06, CFI above .95 and SRMR < .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999), indicating good fit on all indices. Table 2 displays means, standard deviations, correlations and reliabilities.

Structural equation modelling and hypotheses testing

We tested our hypotheses using SEM (see Figure 2 and our model provides a good fit [$\chi^2/df = 1.66$; CFI = .94; SRMR = .08; RMSEA = .06] (see Table 3). In Hypothesis 1 we proposed a positive relationship between PCV by the home organization and displaced aggression. Analyses reveal that PCV by the home organization is positively related to displaced aggression ($\beta = .38, p = .001$), supporting Hypothesis 1.

To test the mediating effect in Hypotheses 2, we applied a bootstrapping procedure with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals (Cheung & Lau, 2008). Bootstrapping indicates an indirect effect of PCV by the home on commitment towards the host via displaced aggression ($\beta = -.09, p = .02$), supporting Hypothesis 2. Finally, Hypothesis 3a-c predicted that emotion regulation self-efficacy moderates the relationship between PCF by the home (host) organization and PCV by the home (host), as well as between PCV by the home and displaced aggression towards the host. Our results indicate that ERSE indeed buffers the effects of PCV by the home on displaced aggression towards the host ($\beta = -.22, p = .00$); individuals high on ERSE show lower displaced aggression in situations of high PCV. Figure 3 plots the two-way interaction, illustrating the moderating effect. However, our results

TABLE 1 Results of confirmatory factor analyses

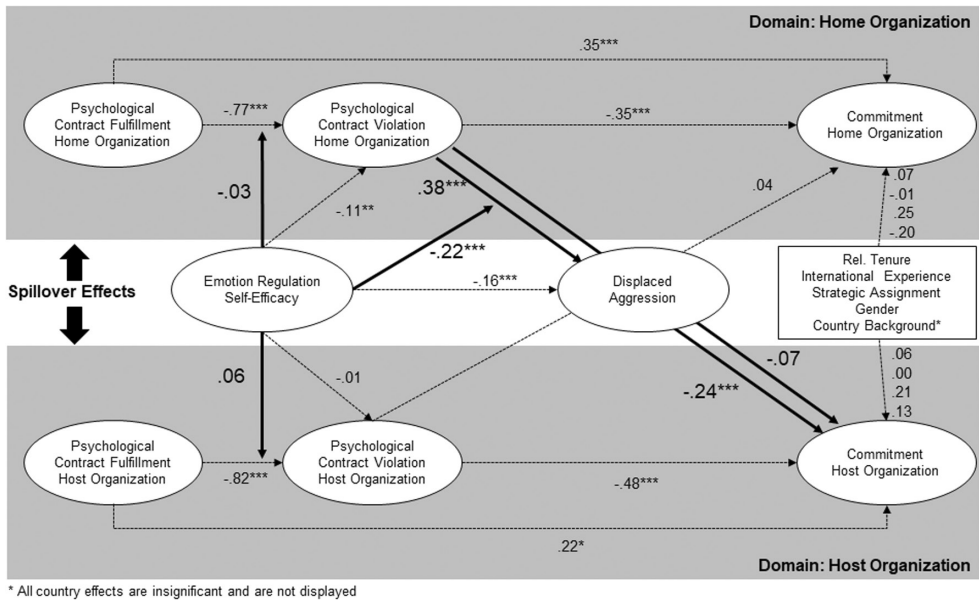
Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	χ^2/df	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
1. 9-factor model	728.98	425	1.715	.960	.045	.057
2. 1-factor model	5785.57	492	11.759	.343	.193	.221
3. 5-factor model	3138.18	482	6.511	.670	.210	.158
4. 4-factor model	3523.09	486	7.249	.623	.172	.169

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations

	MEAN	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Psychological contract fulfilment (PCF' host)	3.94	0.99	(.93)							
2. Psychological contract fulfilment (PCF' home)	3.82	1.08	-.41**	(.95)						
3. Psychological contract violation (PCV' host)	1.68	1.09	-.74**	-.30**	(.96)					
4. Psychological contract violation (PCV' home)	2.08	1.25	-.29**	-.60**	.34**	(.95)				
5. Displaced aggression	1.82	1.11	-.23**	-.35**	.29**	.49**	(.86)			
6. Emotion regulation self-efficacy	4.34	1.79	.08	.03	-.09	-.15*	-.34**	(.95)		
7. Commitment (host)	3.59	1.18	.55**	.21**	-.62**	-.35**	-.36**	.24**	(.94)	
8. Commitment (home)	3.44	1.10	.20**	.49**	-.15*	-.50**	-.39**	.15*	.33**	(.92)

Note: Alpha reliability coefficients for the measures are shown in parentheses $n = 221$.

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.



* All country effects are insignificant and are not displayed

FIGURE 2 Results of SEM analysis of the theorized research model

show that ERSE does not buffer the effects of low PCF on PCV (home: $\beta = -.03, p = .70$ | host: $\beta = .06, p = .21$). Thus, Hypotheses 3a and b are not supported, while Hypothesis 3c involving the effect of PCV on displaced aggression is. Additionally, we tested moderated mediation, and employed bootstrapping (# bootstrap samples = 5000) with bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals at different levels of ERSE ($-1 SD$, mean, $+1 SD$). Results show the mediated path from PCV to commitment via displaced aggression is not significant at low ($\beta = .04, p = .13$), but significant at medium ($\beta = .13, p = .02$) and high levels ($\beta = .22, p = .01$) of ERSE.

Robustness tests

To strengthen confidence in our results, we ran a set of robustness tests (available upon request). First, we tested for symmetrical spillover effects to confirm our hypothesized asymmetrical spillover effect. Results show no relationship of PCV by the host on displaced aggression ($\beta = .02, p = .52; \chi^2/df = 1.70$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .06). Second, we ran a model, which excluded the direct paths from PCF to commitment and the path from PCV by the host and commitment towards the home organization [$\chi^2/df = 1.68$; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .06]. All robustness checks confirm asymmetric spillover effects and increase confidence in our findings with respect to the hypothesized model.

To replicate and confirm the logic of our main relationships (from PCV via displaced aggression to commitment) and address potential methodological concerns regarding our measure for displaced aggression (two items for displaced aggression towards the home and two items towards the host), we compiled an additional dataset of 103 expatriates who completed questionnaires at three time points to assess whether similar results occur. Although we used the same measures for PCV and affective commitment, we extended the measurement of displaced aggression and included a total of 10 items for displaced aggression (five items for displaced aggression towards the home and five towards host) in order to get a more comprehensive picture of displaced aggression as our explanatory mechanism. We applied a regression-based mediation analysis using a bias-corrected bootstrapping procedure. Comparable with our main findings, results from this supplementary dataset show a positive relationship between PCV by the home organization and displaced aggression ($b = .48, p < .001$). The bias-corrected bootstrap

TABLE 3 Results of SEM analysis

Path	Path	Estimate	p-values	SE
Control effects				
Relative tenure	→ Commitment (home)	.07	.62	.15
International experience	→ Commitment (home)	-.01	.35	.01
Strategic assignment	→ Commitment (home)	.25	.08	.14
Gender	→ Commitment (home)	-.20	.20	.16
Europe	→ Commitment (home)	.60	.26	.54
Asia	→ Commitment (home)	.67	.25	.58
America	→ Commitment (home)	.57	.32	.58
Australia and the pacific	→ Commitment (home)	1.15	.11	.71
PCF home	→ Commitment (home)	.35	.00	.09
Relative tenure	→ Commitment (host)	.06	.69	.14
International experience	→ Commitment (host)	.00	.89	.01
Strategic assignment	→ Commitment (host)	.21	.13	.14
Gender	→ Commitment (host)	.13	.40	.15
Europe	→ Commitment (host)	-.54	.30	.52
Asia	→ Commitment (host)	-.57	.31	.56
America	→ Commitment (host)	-.66	.24	.56
Australia and the Pacific	→ Commitment (host)	-.14	.84	.69
PCF host	→ Commitment (host)	.22	.03	.10
Displaced aggression	→ Commitment (host)	-.24	.00	.08
PCF home	→ PCV home	-.77	.00	.08
PCF host	→ PCV host	-.82	.00	.06
PCV home	→ Commitment (home)	-.35	.00	.07
PCV host	→ Commitment (host)	-.48	.00	.09
Main effects (Hypotheses)				
H1: PCV home	→ Displaced aggression	.38	.00	.05
Mediating effect				
H2: PCV home (<i>direct effect</i>)	→ Commitment (host)	-.07	.30	.06
H2: PCV home via Displaced aggression (<i>indirect effect</i>)	→ Commitment (host)	-.09	.01	.05
Moderator effect				
Emotion regulation self-efficacy (ERSE)	→ PCV home	-.11	.01	.04
H3a: ERSE × PCF home	→ PCV home	-.03	.69	.07
ERSE	→ PCV host	-.01	.78	.03
H3b: ERSE × PCF host	→ PCV host	.06	.20	.05
ERSE	→ Displaced Aggression	-.16	.00	.03
H3c: ERSE × PCV home	→ Displaced Aggression	-.22	.00	.05
Fit indices				
$\chi^2/df = 1.662$ CFI = .941 RMSEA = .055 SRMR = .076				

results further indicated an indirect relationship between PCV by the home organization and commitment towards the host via displaced aggression ($b = -.15$, $BootSE = .06$; 95% CI = $[-0.28; -0.04]$). To check if our asymmetric assumption held true, we re-ran the model, finding no relationship between

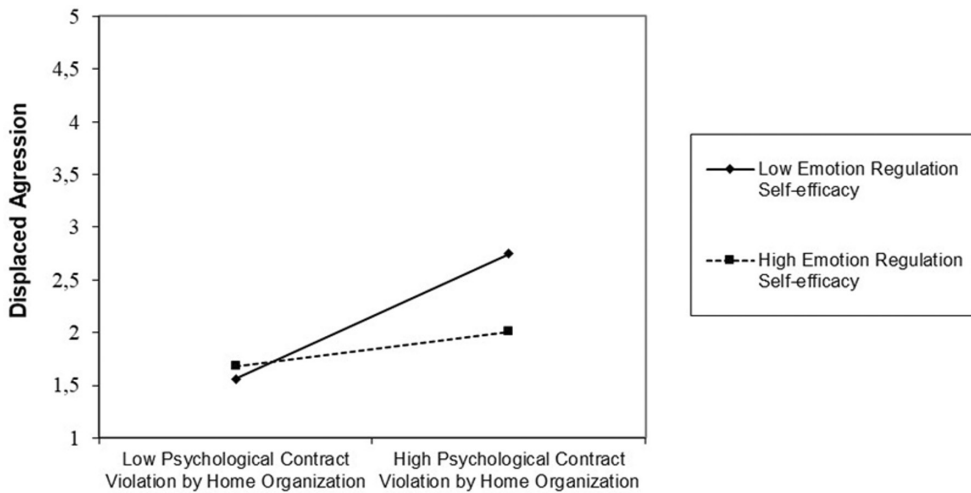


FIGURE 3 PCV by home organization and displaced aggression at low and high levels of emotion regulation self-efficacy

PCV by the host and displaced aggression ($b = .10, p > .05$). The bias-corrected bootstrap analysis further indicated no indirect relationship between PCV by the host and commitment towards the home organization via displaced aggression ($b = -.02, \text{BootSE} = .02; 95\% \text{ CI} = [-0.06; 0.01]$). Table 4 in the Appendix displays the results of this robustness check. (More details on the sample and descriptive statistics are available from the authors).

DISCUSSION

With our study, we advance the understanding of PCs in multi-party work arrangements. First, we uncover a mechanism underlying spillover effects whereby displaced aggression mediates the effect of PCV by the home on affective commitment towards the host. In line with displaced aggression theory (Bushman et al., 2005; Liu et al., 2015), our asymmetric effects depend on the relative power and accessibility of the parties. That is, although PCV by the home organization (high power and low accessibility) leads to higher displaced aggression, which, in turn, lowers commitment towards the host (low power and high accessibility), no displaced effect is triggered when the host is the violator. These effects are confirmed in a replication study we conducted based on an additional three-wave-study of a sample of 103 expatriates. Second, ER is an important boundary condition, which can buffer the negative effects of PCV. However, ERSE does not moderate the relationship between PCF and PCV, highlighting that this relationship depends on different mechanisms than the relationship of PCV to displaced aggression. The fact that emotional self-regulation does not influence the link between PCF and PCV suggests that the sense-making process theorized to operate between the cognition of low fulfilment and the emotional response of violation is largely cognitive rather than emotional in nature (Rousseau et al., 2018). ERSE moderation of the PCV—displaced aggression relationship also provides support for the post-violation model of Tomprou et al. (2015) in which emotion-related processes are theorized to operate post-violation.

Theoretical implications

Our study makes several contributions to theory. First and foremost, we contribute to PC research on spillover effects in multi-party settings, demonstrating that effects are more complex than identified in

TABLE 4 Results of robustness check from a three-wave survey with 103 expatriates

	Displaced aggression					Commitment host organization				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
Constant	.84	.15	.000	.53	1.14	3.78	.20	.000	3.39	4.18
PCV Home	.48	.08	.000	.33	.63	-.13	.10	.192	-.34	.07
Displaced Aggression						-.32	.11	.006	-.54	-.10
R ²	.28					.16				
<i>F</i>	39.55					9.52				
	<i>B</i>	(boot)SE			<i>p</i>	95% CI				
Total	-.29	.09			.002	-.47		-.11		
Direct	-.13	-.10				-.192		-.34		
Indirect ^a	-.15	.06						-.28		
	Displaced aggression					Commitment home organization				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	
Constant	1.47	.14	.000	1.19	1.75	4.06	.22	.000	3.61	4.50
PCV Host	.10	.07	.138	-.03	.24	-.30	.08	.001	-.45	-.15
Displaced aggression						-.16	.11	.147	-.38	.06
R ²	.02					.17				
<i>F</i>	2.24					9.99				
	<i>B</i>	(boot)SE			<i>p</i>	95% CI				
Total	-.32	.08			.000	-.47		-.17		
Direct	-.30	.08			.000	-.45		-.15		
Indirect ^a	-.02	.02						-.06		

n = 103.

^aBootstrapping (sample = 5000).

traditional work arrangements. Beyond direct effects we identified the role played by interdependencies among parties in shaping post-PCV responses, a limitation of previous PC research on multiple parties (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). In this study, we provide evidence that the psychological processes following the cognition of unfulfilled psychological contracts and PCV are not parallel and likely to differ in the emotional and cognitive processing, as well as in the following attitudinal and behavioural response involved.

Prior research indicated that spillover effects can occur among multiple parties but tends to report simple effects such as from one party's PCF (or PCV) to PCF (or PCV) by another, but found no complex spillover effects (Dawson et al., 2014). Dawson and colleagues reasoned that that study's operationalization of in-role behaviour (in its sample of consultants) might have limited the observability of spillover and they attributed non-findings to situational constraints. In the present study, our use of expatriates with two focal employers (home and host) might make spillover more observable. We detect both complex spillover effects between different constructs and identify displaced aggression as a mechanism to explain *whether* and *when* PCV spills over to a third party. Our research may be better positioned to find such complex effects by virtue of its dual employer focus. In contrast to studies involving employees of consulting firms working in client settings, expatriates have two distinct employers each shaping the terms and conditions of their employment. An individual working daily in a host organization often is subject to local demands, norms and expectations to a greater extent than a consultant

providing services to a client. That context makes relevant the use of parallel employment-related indicators like commitment to characterize the individual's exchange with each party. That is, an individual working for both host and home organizations can experience the same dimensions of commitment (e.g., affective or continuance) to each, even if commitment levels differ. In other multi-party arrangements, the parties ('organizations') to the exchange may not be commensurate and the constructs used to characterize their relationships to the employee might be less parallel.

Building on displaced aggression theory, we reasoned that spillover occurs through the effect of negative emotions on aggression displaced to an innocent party. This spillover is asymmetric as only PCV by the (typically more powerful and less accessible) home organization leads to higher displaced aggression, which, in turn, reduces commitment to the host but not vice-versa. Any spillover from PCV to other exchanges is likely to depend on situational factors, including as noted the relative power of the actors and their accessibility or social distance.

A major factor often overlooked in PC research is the *nature* of the other party, including whether it is viewed as an employer, a customer or an entity with moral standing (e.g., patients or citizens). PCs, as systems of beliefs regarding an exchange, are influenced by the individual's schemata regarding responsibilities to other parties, as well as normative beliefs regarding obligations that pre-exist a specific employment arrangement (Rousseau, 1995). We posit that multi-party PCs display different dynamics as a function of the embeddedness the employee experiences in each party and his or her pre-existing schemata regarding the nature of each party. Multi-party PCs operate in many different environments. Normative beliefs regarding the nature of the multi-party arrangement are likely to vary with that environment. Employees of professional service firms working with clients and physicians hired as temps caring for a hospital's patients have distinct relationships with both their employer and the work setting - the latter being subject to stronger normative beliefs. Employees embedded in settings outside their primary employer who hold strong pre-existing professional beliefs (e.g., visiting educators working with students from another institution) are likely to experience different PC dynamics than other employees in multi-employer temporary arrangements (e.g., temporary clerical support, gig workers).

Second, while reciprocity is an important mechanism, to date it has largely been taken for granted in PC research with only a few studies investigating the forms it takes (e.g., Baker & Bulkley, 2014; Moody, 2008). Extending findings by Baker and Bulkley (2014) regarding positive reciprocity, our study looks at negative reciprocity in the effects of negative emotions on third parties following PCV. Our study reveals that PCV can induce negative reciprocity towards an innocent party (the host), though only for PCV by the home organization, supporting the theoretical argument that displaced aggression is triggered if the violator has a more powerful position than the target and not readily accessible. Differentiating these effects helps to better explicate the largely unexplored mechanisms of reciprocity in the aftermath of negative events. The dynamics of negative reciprocity pertain not only to expatriation research, but to other multi-party arrangements and multi-actor working settings. As argued, PCs involve 'all parties and all aspects constituting the reciprocal promises (entitlements and obligations) implied in the employment relationship' (Claes, 2005). Since negative reciprocity is motivated by strong affect in the case of PCV, displaced aggression should be considered in accounting for PCV effects generally. At the same time, the nature of employment may suppress the effect of spillover from PCV in certain multi-party arrangements. The forbearance of employees in such arrangements who sustain positive attitudes and behaviours towards non-violating parties despite PCV by one party is itself worthy of attention.

Third, we consider the role of individual differences (Kiewitz et al., 2009) and identify a boundary condition that influences how PCF and PCV unfold. Introducing ERSE, a relatively stable individual characteristic (Deng et al., 2017), we find a strong suppression mechanism preventing individuals from displacing emotions in ways that could damage important relationships. We highlight its relevance for PC theory, as we found individuals with high ERSE engaged in less post-PCV displaced aggression than their low ERSE counterparts. We note that ERSE did not moderate the relationship of PCF with PCV. This supports the notion that PCV is distinct from the cognition of unfulfilled psychological contracts and that their effects are likely to depend on different psychological processes (Rousseau et al., 2018;

Tomprou et al., 2015). Although the effect of the cognitive trigger PCF on PCV does not depend on ERSE, the translation of the emotion-based PCV to behaviour (i.e., displaced aggression) does appear to weaken under high ERSE. Consistent with Tomprou et al. (2015) and Restubog et al. (2015), post-violation phenomena are likely to be closely tied to the organizational and personal resources available to help the victim cope in the aftermath of violation. In contrast, the cognitive experience of breach or low fulfilment is likely to be influenced by perceived discrepancies between actual experiences and PC obligations and their links to important personal goals (Rousseau et al., 2018; Woodrow & Guest, 2020).

Practical implications

Our findings have several implications for practice. First, we show that PCF by the home organization is associated with PC violation, a negative emotion that can direct both negative feelings and behaviour towards the host. The home organization's efforts to fulfil its commitments are crucial to supporting expatriate success abroad. Managing expatriate expectations increases the likelihood that expatriates perceive the home organization to meet its obligations. Candid conversations regarding anticipated conditions during and after the assignment should occur *before* expatriates go abroad. The outcome of these conversations should be clearly communicated to the host organization, including the individual's manager abroad, and, once the assignment starts, regular follow-up conversations benefit both the individual expatriate and host organization management. Such practices increase the likelihood that expatriates will feel treated fairly and provide a basis for early detection and mitigation of unfulfilled psychological contracts.

Second, PCV caused by either the home or host organization can reduce expatriate commitment to the violator. Our study shows that expatriates do differentiate between PCV by the home and host organization. Accordingly, both organizations should engage in joint expectation management, at the outset of the assignment and over time via frequent communication. Aligning practices in the home and host organization can prevent confusion and negative effects. For instance, while ensuring organizational support from the home organization, its management should monitor whether the host is also providing sufficient support.

Limitations and avenues for future research

First, while our time-lagged design mitigates some limitations of cross-sectional studies, it still used data from a single informant (i.e., individual expatriates). Although we found no evidence of common method bias, we encourage future studies to use data from different sources particularly regarding outcomes. Use of actual performance measures, including assignment success and failure, are desirable. Second, though we relied on employees from different countries to enhance generalizability, most worked for European MNCs. Thus, our data collection may have a regional bias, limiting generalizability to non-Western MNCs, even though we applied a simple control for the geographical background of expatriates. In addition, apart from ERSE, other important individual characteristics that regulate emotion, such as emotional intelligence or resource depletion as outlined in previous research, may affect the underlying mechanism (Deng et al., 2018; Jordan et al., 2002) and could be explored in further research.

Finally, our research on expatriates' psychological contracts enables us to improve our understanding of underlying mechanisms in multi-party employment relationship, but we need to be careful when generalizing our findings to other multi-party contexts. Comparing expatriates with new forms of multi-party employments, such as gig or platform-mediated work, it is often argued that the latter are no longer based on traditional employment relationships (Duggan et al., 2020; Sherman & Morley, 2020). This is because long-term, relational and secure employments are being replaced by insecure, short-term or on-demand hires (Coetzee & Deas, 2021). Recent research on these alternative employment forms indicates that some platforms do not even consider their workforce as employees of their organization

(Duggan et al., 2020). Consequently, expectations of mutual trust and the establishment of psychological contracts might differ compared to more traditional forms of multi-party work arrangements (Ashford et al., 2018). This, in turn, leads to the implication that ‘for app-workers, traditional understandings around reciprocity and organizational support no longer apply or, at a minimum, are considerably different’ (Duggan et al., 2020, p. 123). Accordingly, the components and dimensions of psychological contracts in those types of multi-party employments might be less comparable to the expatriate context. Whether, for instance, the psychological contracts of platform workers are purely transactional in nature is frequently discussed (Duggan et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020) but no consensus exists as research in this area is still in its infancy. Mechanisms in the context of transaction/relational contract fulfilment are, for example, length of service and organizational identification (Liu et al., 2020) or leadership perceptions and techniques (Ravenelle, 2019).

Despite these limitations, our study provides insights into an understudied phenomenon and opens several new research directions. First, we suggest extending research on spillover effects in multi-party work arrangements, going beyond the consequences of PCV to address antecedents and boundary conditions for low fulfilment and violation by different parties. In the context of international assignments, one avenue is the various objectives MNCs pursue with an assignment. Assignments differ in their technical, developmental and strategic objectives (Bader, 2017; Kraimer et al., 2009), which can influence the PC through expatriate goal striving (Rousseau et al., 2018) and the employment conditions prompting perceived low fulfilment and feelings of violation. Expatriates, in turn, have diverse reasons (e.g., monetary or family considerations, developmental opportunities or adventure-seeking) for accepting an international assignment (Breitenmoser et al., 2018). We posit that when either the home or host organization fails to fulfil elements of the PC associated with important expatriate goals, the feeling of violation will be higher (Rousseau et al., 2018) than when the unmet PC elements are less goal-relevant. We call for research to better account for PC-related goals among expatriates and other employees in multi-party arrangements.

Second, individual factors not studied here can contribute to understanding the boundary conditions of displaced aggression. Individuals with greater personal resources, such as optimism, emotional intelligence and self-control, tend to feel less strain and are more capable of navigating difficult situations (Deng et al., 2018). Attention to issues related to the resources individuals possess highlights the importance of the context of alternative work arrangements (Zhu et al., 2016), making some employees more or less vulnerable to PCV. Therefore, we believe that personal characteristics are fruitful avenues for further research on multi-party psychological contracts (Zagenczyk et al., 2013).

Third, the role of emotion regulation self-efficacy raises the question of how this trait and others might affect the link between PCF and PCV. How individuals make sense of the perceived failure by their employer to fulfil its obligations is critical for the development of violation feelings. Research is needed to understand how individual differences account for effects of PCF and PCV in multi-party work arrangements where individual goals and interdependence with employers can vary.

Finally, as the context of multi-party work arrangements might be an important boundary condition for the underlying mechanisms, we suggest that further research needs to theorize what context dimensions needs to be considered in multi-party psychological contract research to better understand the role of each contract party. This means the parties should be theoretically characterized by including contextual dimensions (e.g., stable vs. unstable, transactional vs. relational, long-term vs. short-term, secure vs. insecure, narrow vs. pervasive, static vs. dynamic relationships) (McLean Parks et al., 1998). These aspects might be of particular relevance when looking at digitalized employment arrangements (Tomprou & Lee, 2022).

CONCLUSION

We conclude that what happens abroad can stay abroad at least during the expatriate assignment. Yet, expatriate success depends on support from both home and host organizations and is undermined by

violations attributed to either. The home organization exacerbates the challenges of expatriation by failing to honour important commitments. Spillover from its PC violation can undermine an otherwise successful working relationship with the host, a heretofore unrecognized danger in expatriate assignments.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Tassilo Schuster: Conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; funding acquisition; investigation; methodology; project administration; supervision; validation; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Anna Katharina Bader:** Conceptualization; methodology; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Benjamin Bader:** Conceptualization; methodology; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing. **Denise M. Rousseau:** Conceptualization; writing – review and editing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Funding received by the German Research Foundation: Project number: 447585650 <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/447585650>.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT


Data cannot be shared due to privacy restrictions.

Templates available at: <https://authorservices.wiley.com/author-resources/Journal-Authors/open-access/data-sharing-citation/data-sharing-policy.html>).

ORCID

Tassilo Schuster  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7123-2720>

Anna Katharina Bader  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2447-2187>

Benjamin Bader  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7925-0007>

Denise M. Rousseau  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0712-7189>

REFERENCES

- Alcover, C.-M., Rico, R., Turnley, W., & Bolino, M. (2017a). Multi-dependence in the formation and development of the distributed psychological contract. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 26*(1), 16–29.
- Alcover, C.-M., Rico, R., Turnley, W. H., & Bolino, M. C. (2017b). Understanding the changing nature of psychological contracts in 21st century organizations: A multiple-foci exchange relationships approach and proposed framework. *Organizational Psychology Review, 7*(1), 4–35.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin, 103*(3), 411–423.
- Argyris, C. (1960). *Understanding organizational behavior*. Dorsey.
- Ashford, S. J., Caza, B. B., & Reid, E. M. (2018). From surviving to thriving in the gig economy: A research agenda for individuals in the new world of work. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 38*, 23–41.
- Bader, B. (2017). Motivations of global careers among expatriates in German companies: A comparison with the year 2002. In B. Bader, T. Schuster, & A. K. Bader (Eds.), *Expatriate management: Transatlantic dialogues* (pp. 1–26). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bader, B., Bader, A. K., Rousseau, D. M., & Schuster, T. (2022). Expatriation in high-risk countries: A review and dynamic psychological contract perspective. In S. M. Toh & A. DeNisi (Eds.), *Expatriates and managing global mobility* (pp. 306–328). SIOP Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Organizational Frontiers Series.
- Bader, B., Schuster, T., & Bader, A. K. (Eds.) (2017). *Expatriate management: Transatlantic dialogues*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Baker, W. E., & Bulkley, N. (2014). Paying it forward vs. rewarding reputation: Mechanisms of generalized reciprocity. *Organization Science, 25*(5), 1493–1510.
- Bankins, S., Griep, Y., & Hansen, S. D. (2020). Charting directions for a new research era: Addressing gaps and advancing scholarship in the study of psychological contracts. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 29*, 159–163.
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1991). Toward a comprehensive model of international adjustment: An integration of multiple theoretical perspectives. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(2), 291–317.

- Breitenmoser, A., Bader, B., & Berg, N. (2018). Why does repatriate career success vary? An empirical investigation from both traditional and protean career perspectives. *Human Resource Management, 57*(5), 1049–1063.
- Breitenmoser, A., & Bader, A. K. (2021). Retaining repatriates. The role of career derailment upon repatriation and how it can be mitigated. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 32*, 1509–1536.
- Bushman, B. J., Bonacci, A. M., Pedersen, W. C., Vasquez, E. A., & Miller, N. (2005). Chewing on it can chew you up: Effects of rumination on triggered displaced aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 88*(6), 969–983.
- Cassar, V., & Briner, R. B. (2011). The relationship between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment: Exchange imbalance as a moderator of the mediating role of violation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 78*(2), 283–289.
- Chen, G., Kirkman, B. L., Kim, K., Farh, C. I. C., & Tangirala, S. (2010). When does cross-cultural motivation enhance expatriate effectiveness? A multilevel investigation of the moderating roles of subsidiary support and cultural distance. *Academy of Management Journal, 53*(5), 1110–1130.
- Chen, H.-F., & Chiu, Y.-H. (2009). The influence of psychological contracts on the adjustment and organisational commitment among expatriates: An empirical study in Taiwan. *International Journal of Manpower, 30*(8), 797–814.
- Cheung, G. W., & Lau, R. S. (2008). Testing mediation and suppression effects of latent variables: Bootstrapping with structural equation models. *Organizational Research Methods, 11*(2), 296–325.
- Claes, R. (2005). Organization promises in the triangular psychological contract as perceived by temporary agency workers, agencies, and client organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal, 17*(3), 131–142.
- Coetzee, M., & Deas, A. (2021). *Redefining the psychological contract in the digital era: Issues for research and practice*. Springer.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Conway, N. (2005). Exchange relationships: Examining psychological contracts and perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(4), 774–781.
- Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., Pereira Costa, S., Doden, W., & Chang, C. (2019). Psychological contracts: Past, present, and future. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior, 6*(1), 145–169.
- Dawson, G. S., Karahanna, E., & Buchholtz, A. (2014). A study of psychological contract breach spillover in multiple-agency relationships in consulting professional service firms. *Organization Science, 25*(1), 149–170.
- De Ruitter, M., Lub, X., Jansma, E., & Blomme, R. J. (2018). Psychological contract fulfillment and expatriate intrinsic career success: The mediating role of identification with the multinational corporation. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29*(8), 1426–1453.
- Deng, H., Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M., & Yang, Q. (2018). Beyond reciprocity: A conservation of resources view on the effects of psychological contract violation on third parties. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 103*(5), 561–577.
- Deng, H., Walter, F., Lam, C. K., & Zhao, H. H. (2017). Spillover effects of emotional labor in customer service encounters toward coworker harming: A resource depletion perspective. *Personnel Psychology, 70*(2), 469–502.
- Denson, T. F., Pedersen, W. C., & Miller, N. (2006). The displaced aggression questionnaire. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(6), 1032–1051.
- Duggan, J., Sherman, U., Carbery, R., & McDonnell, A. (2020). Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: A research agenda for employment relations and HRM. *Human Resource Management Journal, 30*(1), 114–132.
- Eby, L. T., Maher, C. P., & Butts, M. M. (2010). The intersection of work and family life: The role of affect. *Annual Review of Psychology, 61*(1), 599–622.
- Griep, Y., & Vantilborgh, T. (2018). Reciprocal effects of psychological contract breach on counterproductive and organizational citizenship behaviors: The role of time. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 104*, 141–153.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). The emerging field of emotion regulation: An integrative review. *Review of General Psychology, 2*(3), 271–299.
- Guzzo, R. A., Noonan, K. A., & Elron, E. (1994). Expatriate managers and the psychological contract. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 79*(4), 617–626.
- Hagger, M. S., Wood, C., Stiff, C., & Chatzisarantis, N. L. D. (2010). Ego depletion and the strength model of self-control: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(4), 495–525.
- Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Bowler, W. M. (2007). Emotional exhaustion and job performance: The mediating role of motivation. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(1), 93–106.
- Harman, H. H. (1976). *Modern factor analysis*. University of Chicago Press.
- Harmon-Jones, E., & Mills, J. (2019). An introduction to cognitive dissonance theory and an overview of current perspectives on the theory. In E. Harmon-Jones (Ed.), *Cognitive dissonance: Reexamining a pivotal theory in psychology* (pp. 3–24). American Psychological Association.
- Harzing, A.-W. (2001). Of bears, bumble-bees, and spiders: The role of expatriates in controlling foreign subsidiaries. *Journal of World Business, 36*(4), 366–379.
- Haslberger, A., & Brewster, C. (2009). Capital gains: Expatriate adjustment and the psychological contract in international careers. *Human Resource Management, 48*(3), 379–397.
- Heuven, E., Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., & Huisman, N. (2006). The role of self-efficacy in performing emotion work. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 69*(2), 222–235.
- Hoobler, J. M., & Brass, D. J. (2006). Abusive supervision and family undermining as displaced aggression. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*(5), 1125–1133.
- Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 6*(1), 1–55.
- James, L. R., Mulaik, S. A., & Brett, J. M. (2006). A tale of two methods. *Organizational Research Methods, 9*(2), 233–244.

- Jordan, P. J., Ashkanasy, N. M., & Hartel, C. E. J. (2002). Emotional intelligence as a moderator of emotional and behavioral reactions to job insecurity. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(3), 361–372.
- Kiewitz, C., Restubog, S. L. D., Zagenczyk, T., & Hochwarter, W. (2009). The interactive effects of psychological contract breach and organizational politics on perceived organizational support: Evidence from two longitudinal studies. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(5), 806–834.
- Knocke, J., & Schuster, T. (2017). Repatriation of international assignees. *Journal of Global Mobility*, 5(3), 275–303.
- Kraimer, M. L., Shaffer, M. A., & Bolino, M. (2009). The influence of expatriate and repatriate experiences on career advancement and repatriate retention. *Human Resource Management*, 48(1), 27–47.
- Kraimer, M. L., & Wayne, S. J. (2004). An examination of perceived organizational support as a multidimensional construct in the context of an expatriate assignment. *Journal of Management*, 30(2), 209–237.
- Kumarika Perera, H., Yin Teng Chew, E., & Nielsen, I. (2017). A psychological contract perspective of expatriate failure. *Human Resource Management*, 56(3), 479–499.
- Lapalme, M.-È., Simard, G., & Tremblay, M. (2011). The influence of psychological contract breach on temporary workers' commitment and behaviors: A multiple agency perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 26(3), 311–324.
- Lavelle, J. J., Rupp, D. E., & Brockner, J. (2007). Taking a multifoci approach to the study of justice, social exchange, and citizenship behavior: The target similarity model. *Journal of Management*, 33(6), 841–866.
- Lee, C., Liu, J., Rousseau, D. M., Hui, C., & Chen, Z. X. (2011). Inducements, contributions, and fulfillment in new employee psychological contracts. *Human Resource Management*, 50(2), 201–226.
- Liao, H., & Rupp, D. E. (2005). The impact of justice climate and justice orientation on work outcomes: A cross-level multifoci framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 90(2), 242–256.
- Liu, W., He, C., Jiang, Y., Ji, R., & Zhai, X. (2020). Effect of gig workers' psychological contract fulfillment on their task performance in a sharing economy—A perspective from the mediation of organizational identification and the moderation of length of service. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 1–20.
- Liu, Y., Wang, M., Chang, C.-H., Shi, J., Zhou, L., & Shao, R. (2015). Work–family conflict, emotional exhaustion, and displaced aggression toward others: The moderating roles of workplace interpersonal conflict and perceived managerial family support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 100(3), 793–808.
- Marcus-Newhall, A., Pedersen, W. C., Carlson, M., & Miller, N. (2000). Displaced aggression is alive and well: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78(4), 670–689.
- McLean Parks, J., Kidder, D. L., & Gallagher, D. G. (1998). Fitting square pegs into round holes: Mapping the domain of contingent work arrangements onto the psychological contract. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 19(S1), 697–730.
- McNulty, Y., Cieri, H., & Hutchings, K. (2013). Expatriate return on investment in the Asia Pacific: An empirical study of individual ROI versus corporate ROI. *Journal of World Business*, 48(2), 209–221.
- Mezias, J., & Scandura, T. (2005). A needs-driven approach to expatriate adjustment and career development: A multiple mentoring perspective. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 36(5), 519–538.
- Mitchell, M. S., & Ambrose, M. L. (2007). Abusive supervision and workplace deviance and the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(4), 1159–1168.
- Moody, M. (2008). Serial reciprocity: A preliminary statement. *Sociological Theory*, 26(2), 130–151.
- Mowday, R. T., Steers, R. M., & Porter, L. W. (1979). The measurement of organizational commitment. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 14(2), 224–247.
- Muraven, M., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle? *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(2), 247–259.
- Ng, T. W. H., Feldman, D. C., & Lam, S. S. K. (2010). Psychological contract breaches, organizational commitment, and innovation-related behaviors: A latent growth modeling approach. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(4), 744–751.
- Nguyen, P., Felfe, J., & Fookien, I. (2013). Antecedents of commitment to a parent company and to a local operation: Empirical evidence from Western employees working for multinational companies in Vietnam. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(7), 1346–1375.
- Parzefall, M.-R., & Coyle-Shapiro, J. A. M. (2011). Making sense of psychological contract breach. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 26(1), 12–27.
- Pate, J., & Scullion, H. (2009). The changing nature of the traditional expatriate psychological contract. *Employee Relations*, 32(1), 56–73.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Raja, U., Johns, G., & Ntalianis, F. (2004). The impact of personality on psychological contracts. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(3), 350–367.
- Ravenelle, A. J. (2019). “We’re not uber:” control, autonomy, and entrepreneurship in the gig economy. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 34(4), 269–285.
- Ren, H., Bolino, M. C., Shaffer, M. A., & Kraimer, M. L. (2013). The influence of job demands and resources on repatriate career satisfaction: A relative deprivation perspective. *Journal of World Business*, 48(1), 149–159.
- Restubog, S. L. D., Zagenczyk, T. J., Bordia, P., Bordia, S., & Chapman, G. J. (2015). If you wrong us, shall we not revenge? Moderating roles of self-control and perceived aggressive work culture in predicting responses to psychological contract breach. *Journal of Management*, 41(4), 1132–1154.

- Robinson, S. L., & Morrison, E. W. (2000). The development of psychological contract breach and violation: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21(5), 525–546.
- Robinson, S. L., & Rousseau, D. M. (1994). Violating the psychological contract: Not the exception but the norm. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 15(3), 245–259.
- Roehling, M. V. (1997). The origins and early development of the psychological contract construct. *Journal of Management History*, 3(2), 204–217.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1989). Psychological and implied contracts in organizations. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 2(2), 121–139.
- Rousseau, D. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Sage publications.
- Rousseau, D. M. (2011). The individual-organization relationship: The psychological contract. In S. Zedeck (Ed.), *APA handbook in psychology. APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, vol. 3. Maintaining, expanding, and contracting the organization* (pp. 191–220). American Psychological Association.
- Rousseau, D. M., Hansen, S. D., & Tomprou, M. (2018). A dynamic phase model of psychological contract processes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(9), 1081–1098.
- Schuster, T., Bader, B., Bader, A. K., & Rousseau, D. M. (2022). When foreign waves hit home shores: Organizational identification in psychological contract breach–violation relationships during international assignments. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 43(3), 369–385.
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (1998). Expatriates' psychological withdrawal from international assignments: Work, nonwork, and family influences. *Personnel Psychology*, 51(1), 87–118.
- Sherman, U. P., & Morley, M. J. (2020). What do we measure and how do we elicit it? The case for the use of repertory grid technique in multi-party psychological contract research. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 29(2), 230–242.
- Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics*. Allyn & Bacon/Pearson Education.
- Takeuchi, R. (2010). A critical review of expatriate adjustment research through a multiple stakeholder view: Progress, emerging trends, and prospects. *Journal of Management*, 36(4), 1040–1064.
- Tekleab, A. G., Takeuchi, R., & Taylor, M. S. (2005). Extending the chain of relationships among organizational justice, social exchange, and employee reactions: The role of contract violations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 146–157.
- Toh, S. M., & Srinivas, E. S. (2012). Perceptions of task cohesiveness and organizational support increase trust and information sharing between host country nationals and expatriate coworkers in Oman. *Journal of World Business*, 47(4), 696–705.
- Tomprou, M., & Lee, M. K. (2022). Employment relationships in algorithmic management: A psychological contract perspective. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 126(1), 1–20.
- Tomprou, M., Rousseau, D. M., & Hansen, S. D. (2015). The psychological contracts of violation victims: A post-violation model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 36(4), 561–581.
- Turnley, W. H., Bolino, M. C., Lester, S. W., & Bloodgood, J. M. (2003). The impact of psychological contract fulfillment on the performance of in-role and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Management*, 29(2), 187–206.
- Wei, X., Ma, L., Zhang, Z. X., Showail, S. J., Jiao, J., & Wang, X. (2015). Understanding psychological contract breach due to labour costs reduction: Contingent upon employee sex and managerial control. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 88(4), 679–701.
- Wong, C.-S., & Law, K. S. (2002). The effects of leader and follower emotional intelligence on performance and attitude: An exploratory study. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 13(3), 243–274.
- Woodrow, C., & Guest, D. E. (2020). Pathways through organizational socialization: A longitudinal qualitative study based on the psychological contract. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 93(1), 110–133.
- Yan, A., Zhu, G., & Hall, D. T. (2002). International assignments for career building: A model of agency relationships and psychological contracts. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(3), 373–391.
- Zagenczyk, T. J., Cruz, K. S., Woodard, A. M., Walker, J. C., Few, W. T., Kiazad, K., & Raja, M. (2013). The moderating effect of Machiavellianism on the psychological contract breach–organizational identification/disidentification relationships. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 28(3), 287–299.
- Zhao, H., Wayne, S. J., Glibkowski, B. C., & Bravo, J. (2007). The impact of psychological contract breach on work-related outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 60(3), 647–680.
- Zhu, J., Wanberg, C. R., Harrison, D. A., & Diehn, E. W. (2016). Ups and downs of the expatriate experience? Understanding work adjustment trajectories and career outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(4), 549–568.

How to cite this article: Schuster, T., Bader, A. K., Bader, B., Bader, B., & Rousseau, D. M. (2022). Does what happens abroad stay abroad? Displaced aggression and emotional regulation in expatriate psychological contracts. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 95, 867–888. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12405>