

MEDIATING EFFECT OF PERCEPTION OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT FULFILMENT (PCF) AND EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, MUBI

¹Linus Nanse Lengpang, ²David Philip Ndalnamu and ³Nuhu Ezra

^{1,2 &3} Department of Public Administration, School of Business Administration and
Management Technology, Federal Polytechnic Mubi, Adamawa State, Nigeria.

lengpanqlinus248@gmail.com¹ ndalnamu4real@gmail.com²
nuhuezra13@gmail.com³

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the mediating effect of distributive justice in the relationship between Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) and employee commitment among academic staff of Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. Guided by Social Exchange and Equity theories, a descriptive survey design was employed using validated scales for PCF, distributive justice, and employee commitment. Data were analyzed with Hayes' PROCESS Macro. Findings revealed that PCF significantly influenced both distributive justice and employee commitment, with distributive justice partially mediating the relationship. This indicates that when employees perceive promises as fulfilled and outcomes as fair, their trust and commitment to the organization strengthen. The study concludes that fairness in outcome distribution is essential for translating fulfilled obligations into higher commitment levels. It recommends that management ensure fair reward systems, transparent communication, and policies promoting reciprocity and trust to enhance employee commitment and organizational stability.

Keywords: Psychological Contract Fulfilment, Distributive Justice, Employee Commitment, Social Exchange Theory, Equity Theory

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's organizational landscape, employee commitment and performance are increasingly understood through the lens of psychological and social contracts between employers and employees. The concept of psychological contract fulfillment (PCF), defined as employees' perception that their employers have honored promised obligations, plays a central role in shaping trust, loyalty, and motivation in the workplace (Coyle-Shapiro & Kessler, 2000). In tertiary institutions, where intellectual capital drives productivity, ensuring that staff perceive fairness and reciprocity in their employment relationships is vital for institutional effectiveness. Conversely, the breach or non-fulfillment of psychological contracts often results in low morale, dissatisfaction, and weakened organizational commitment (Rousseau, 1995; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Closely connected to PCF is the concept of distributive justice, which refers to employees' perception of fairness in the allocation of organizational rewards such as pay, promotions, and recognition (Colquitt, 2001). Fairness perceptions are central to employee behavior, with studies consistently linking distributive justice to higher levels of satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013). Social Exchange

Theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958) provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding this link, as it emphasizes reciprocal obligations in employment relationships; when employees perceive fairness and fulfilled promises, they tend to reciprocate with positive attitudes and behaviors, including stronger commitment. Similarly, Equity Theory posits that employees continuously evaluate the balance between their contributions and the rewards they receive, with perceived inequities undermining their sense of fairness and reducing commitment (Adams, 1965).

The Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, as a public tertiary institution in Adamawa State, occupies a unique position in Nigeria's higher education landscape. Charged with producing skilled manpower to support regional and national development, the institution faces challenges common to many Nigerian public tertiary institutions, including underfunding, limited infrastructure, and politically influenced reward systems (Adeyemi & Salami, 2020; Obanya, 2018; Nwadiani, 2019). These contextual factors can affect academic staff perceptions of fairness and the fulfillment of promised organizational obligations, making the examination of distributive justice especially pertinent. In this setting, understanding how psychological contract fulfillment translates into employee commitment through perceptions of fairness provides insights that are both practically and theoretically significant, highlighting mechanisms that can strengthen workforce motivation and institutional performance.

While prior research has examined the direct impact of PCF on employee commitment and its relationship with organizational justice (Koç, Koç & Avcı, 2013; Nawaz et al., 2020), relatively little attention has been given to the mediating role of distributive justice in translating fulfilled psychological contracts into stronger commitment outcomes. This gap is particularly pronounced in Nigerian public tertiary institutions, where challenges such as underfunding, politicized reward systems, and strained labor relations may distort fairness perceptions and weaken the link between PCF and employee commitment.

Therefore, this study examines the mediating effect of distributive justice in the relationship between psychological contract fulfillment and employee commitment among academic staff of Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. By integrating insights from Social Exchange Theory and Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), the study not only contributes to theoretical discourse but also provides practical implications for improving trust, fairness, and performance in public education systems.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Employee commitment is critical for the effectiveness of tertiary institutions, where academic and administrative staff play a central role in achieving institutional objectives. While psychological contract fulfillment (PCF), the perception that an employer has honored promised obligations, has been shown to influence employee attitudes and behaviors, evidence suggests that PCF alone may not fully account for variations in employee commitment (Rousseau, 1995; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). In particular, the role of distributive justice, or employees' perceptions of fairness in the allocation of rewards and resources, has received limited empirical attention as a mediating mechanism between PCF

and commitment, especially within Nigerian public tertiary institutions (Greenberg, 1990; Mentari & Ratmawati, 2018).

This gap is pronounced in the Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, where structural and contextual factors, such as underfunding, limited infrastructure, and politically influenced reward systems, may shape staff perceptions of fairness and, consequently, their commitment to the institution (Adeyemi & Salami, 2020; Obanya, 2018; Nwadiani, 2019). From a theoretical perspective, Social Exchange Theory suggests that employees are likely to reciprocate fulfilled obligations with higher commitment, while Equity Theory emphasizes that perceptions of unfairness in rewards can undermine this relationship (Blau, 1964; Adams, 1965).

Despite the importance of these mechanisms, existing studies have largely focused on the direct effects of PCF on employee attitudes, without exploring how distributive justice mediates this relationship in the Nigerian tertiary education context. Therefore, there is a critical need to examine how psychological contract fulfillment translates into employee commitment through distributive justice among academic staff at Federal Polytechnic, Mubi, providing both theoretical insights and practical implications for enhancing fairness, trust, and institutional effectiveness.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the Mediating Role of Distributive Justice in the Relationship between Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) and Employee Commitment among academic staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. Other specific objectives of the study include:

- i. To examine the effect of Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) on employee commitment among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi.
- ii. To assess the influence of Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) on perception of distributive justice among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi
- iii. To determine the effect of perception of distributive justice on employee commitment among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi
- iv. To investigate the mediating role of perception of distributive justice in the relationship between Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) and employee commitment among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi

2.0 Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Employee Commitment

Employee commitment, has been variously defined as the emotional tether that engages the employees with their employers (Don-baridam, 2021, Guzeller & Celiker, 2020). It is a positive psychological orientation that captures the essence of the relationship that exists between the employee and the organization (Zayas-Ortiz et al., 2015), motivating the employee to maintain their membership and strive for excellence (Hamonangan et al., 2020, Yao et al., 2019). According to Alrowad et al., (2020), commitment is a force that obliges,

directs behavior to; more than just a motive to engage in certain actions, or a positive attitude towards an entity to encourage people to act in a way that benefits the entity.

Employee commitment is the relative strength of an employee's attachment to, or involvement with, the organisation where she/he is employed (Stup, 2006). It refers to the psychological attachment and loyalty an employee feels toward their organization, which fosters relationship between employees with their employers, and ultimately influencing their willingness to remain with the organization or to leave (Kotzé and Nel, 2020). It is a state where an employee recognizes and commits to the goals of the organization (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2012:121).

Allen and Meyer (1990), state that there are three dimensions of organizational commitment, namely 1) affective commitment, 2) continuance commitment and 3) normative commitment. Gibson et al., (2011:152), state that a person's commitment to the organization involves three attitudes, namely 1) identification with organizational goals, 2) feelings of involvement in organizational tasks and 3) feelings of loyalty to the organization. Steers (1977), states the characteristics of someone who has a high commitment, namely 1) a strong drive to remain a member of the organization, 2) a willingness to try their best for the benefit of the organization and 3) a strong belief in and acceptance of the values and goals of the organization.

Employee commitment is necessary for organization to be effective; it can lead to various organizational outcomes such as increased employee performance, reduction in the turnover and absenteeism rate, and enhanced organizational citizenship behavior (Brown, Hillman & Okun, 2012). A committed employee is determined to work towards the attainment of the objectives or goal of the organization, determined to remain with the organization despite unpleasant prevailing conditions and is willing to accomplish challenging tasks.

2.2 The Concept of Distributive Justice

Distributive justice is concerned with the individual's perception of fairness with regards to the allocation and distribution of organizational resources. It results from an individual's awareness or perception of fairness or otherwise in the distribution of benefits after making comparison with others. The contemporary philosopher Frankena (1962) describes justice in the following way: Justice, whether social or not, seems to involve at its center the notion of an allotment of something to persons-duties, goods, offices, opportunities, penalties, punishments, privileges, roles, status, and so on. Moreover, at least in the case of distributive justice, it seems centrally to involve the notion of comparative allotment.

Distributive justice concerns itself with the question of 'who gets what' (Cohen, 1987) and as a consequence, a normative valuation of the aggregate distribution over individuals (Jonkman et al., 2018). There are various standards for the valuation of distributive justice which Jonkman (2020) identified as equality, beneficence, efficiency (Cohen, 1987), utility (Feldman, 1995), sufficiency (Frankfurt, 1987) and priority (Casal, 2007).

Distributive justice is understood as involving the balancing of competing claims among individuals with conflicting interest regarding what is distributable which results from

relative material scarcity (neither great abundance nor extreme scarcity in the resources people need and want) and demand for principles necessary to resolve the conflicting claim equitably. The demand for distributive justice finds relevance within social corporations. This implies that, individuals claim to fair distribution of benefits within a social corporation only finds relevance within the context of relational reciprocity (Rawl, 1971). Again distributive justice are pertinent when there are shared institutions through which demands are articulated and within the context of shared institution on disadvantages that are intentionally or avoidably caused by these institutions rather than natural causes are considered unjust (Nagel 1997).

Justice is perceived to be institutionalist and what characterize distributive justice is the demand for justice in the distribution of whatever benefit or burden which a particular social institutions must satisfy (Tan, 2004), in which sense, legal institutions, social norms, and individuals act can be adjudged just or unjust based on the extent to which they foster or disrupt just distribution (Cohen, 2008).

In a narrow sense, distributive justice has been defined based on its object in which sense it implies justice of the mechanisms and procedures that allocate distributable economic goods such as income and wealth. In a broader sense, distributive justice borders on the way individuals fare on account of certain advantage they enjoy or have access to, which they hold morally relevant but may not necessarily be distributable (non-economic goods), often associated with social goods (Olsaretti, 2021).

Theorists of justice widely endorse shared, abstract concepts of justice and of distributive justice: they agree that justice consists in giving each person his or her due, or treating like cases alike; and that distributive justice is justice in the distribution of benefits and burdens to individuals, or consists in the balancing of the competing claims persons make on the benefits that are up for distribution.

2.3 The Concept of Psychological Contract

Psychological contract is an individual's belief in a reciprocal obligation between a person and another party, such as an employer (Rousseau, 1989). This belief, which is predicated on the perception that an exchange of the reciprocal promises and obligations implied in their relationship has been made to which the parties are bound (Guest, 2007). It comes about as a result a series of expectations that are mutual of which the parties to the relationship may not themselves be dimly aware but which nonetheless govern their relationship to each other (Liu, 2020).

Psychological contract is distinct from legal contract. Unlike the legal employment contract, the psychological contract is abstractive and does not require formalized contract, exhibits a subjective character because it is implicit but relies on individuals' perception regarding reciprocal obligations between themselves and their employing organization (Rodwell, et al, 2015). Psychological contract is not legally binding but rather it relies on beliefs regarding a reciprocal relationship which creates an entitlement and expectation that is basically perceptual, unwritten, and implicit on the part of both employer and employee

(Elsouk et al., 2021). A critical aspect of the definitions of the concept should include elements such as values, beliefs, expectations and aspirations of both the employee and employer (Middlemiss, 2011) which assist in determining whether both parties' obligations are arrived at (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995).

The psychological contract is utilized to explain how organizational relationships are met or not met based on shared obligations, expectations, and commitments (Savarimuthu and Rachael, 2017). Employee job-related outcomes and performance are connected to Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF) (Bellou, 2017), this implies that employers' fulfillment of the contract could result in positive employee behavior and improve performance. In contrast, breaching the contract leads to negative effects on the employee-organization relationship (Coyle-Shapiro et al, 2000). The negative consequence of psychological contract bridge may manifest in the form of labour unrest, employee dissatisfaction and worker alienation (Cullinane and Dundon in 2006). Hence, it is of critical importance that employers understand these mutual obligations and expectations and how employees perceive the extent to which these obligations are met to avert the negative outcomes. To reduce psychological contract breaches with its concomitant negative outcomes, organization need to implementing more formalized and internally consistent human resource practices that allows them to communicate the expectations that create employees' psychological contracts (Shen and Zhao, 2019).

2.3.1 Types/Dimensionality of the Individual's Psychological Contract

Rousseau's Psychological Contract Inventory provides a universal framework for assessing psychological contracts across individuals and contexts (Rousseau, 2000). It classifies these contracts into four types; relational, balanced, transactional, and transitional, each further divided into cohesive components measured from the individual's perspective. This study focuses on the relational, balanced, and transactional components, excluding the transitional type, as Rousseau (2008) noted that it is not a true psychological contract form but rather a cognitive state arising from organizational changes that disrupt previously established employment arrangements.

Relational scale: reflects long-term, trust-based employment relationships where employees are expected to provide stability by staying with the organization and showing loyalty, while employers ensure stable wages, job security, and support for the wellbeing of employees and their families.

Balanced scale: describes flexible arrangements linked to both organizational success and employee career growth. Employees are expected to develop skills, pursue internal advancement, and meet evolving performance goals, while employers work to enhance employability, create growth opportunities, and support continuous learning.

Transactional scale: focuses on short-term, task-specific arrangements. Employees carry out only agreed duties for a limited period, while employers provide minimal engagement, no training, and no long-term employment commitments.

2.4 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.4.1 Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF) and Employee Commitment

Research on psychological contracts largely focuses on two aspects; fulfillment and breach. Empirical studies consistently show that fulfillment of the psychological contract is positively related to employee commitment (Jacob, Madighi, Nwiyii, & Alobari, 2019; Nawaz et al., 2020; Bulawat, Barlis, & Bulawit, 2023). For instance, Jacob et al. (2019) demonstrated that both transactional and relational contracts significantly influence loyalty and employees' intention to remain in the organization. Similarly, Bulawat et al. (2023) highlighted that when employees' psychological contracts are fulfilled, they display stronger loyalty and retention, reflecting higher organizational commitment.

Conversely, research has established a negative relationship between psychological contract breach and organizational commitment (Cassar & Briner, 2011; Lapointe, Vandenberghe, & Boudrias, 2013). Studies conducted across different countries and within the public sector (Shahnawaz & Goswami, 2011; Simosi, 2013) reveal that violations of psychological contracts reduce employees' commitment levels. When employees perceive unfulfilled promises, they become less attached to the organization and may express stronger intentions to quit or engage in unproductive behaviors (Brewster et al., 2003).

Zhao et al. (2007) argued through the continuance theory of commitment that psychological contract fulfillment shapes employees' attitudes and behaviors by influencing their evaluation of the risks of leaving an organization. When promises are kept, employees enhance their contributions and adopt positive attitudes to sustain the exchange relationship, whereas breaches weaken both continuance and affective commitment (Matoka, Rwegoshora, & Pallangyo, 2019; Cassar & Briner, 2011; Simosi, 2013; Maia & Bastos, 2015). Fulfillment also fosters trust, reduces stress, improves job design, and strengthens job security, ultimately boosting organizational commitment (Dordevic, 2004), suggesting that psychological contract fulfillment positively influences employee commitment. Basing on the forgoing, the study hypothesize thus;

H₁: Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) has a significant effect on employee commitment among Academic Staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi

2.4.2 Psychological Contract Fulfillment (PCF) and Distributive Justice

Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Rousseau's psychological contract theory (1989, 2000) both emphasize that when employers fulfill obligations such as fair treatment, rewards, career development, or long-term job security, employees perceive distributive outcomes as fair and just. However, breaches of these expectations undermine perceptions of justice, trust, and satisfaction, often leading to feelings of unfairness, dissatisfaction, and reduced confidence in organizational distributive mechanisms (Cullinane & Dundon, 2006; Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2000).

Empirical evidence reinforces this link. Tekleab, Takeuchi, and Taylor (2005) found that when employees perceive their psychological contracts as fulfilled, especially in areas related to pay, promotion, and job security, they are more likely to view outcome distributions as fair. This is because fulfilled expectations reinforce the belief that organizational rewards are aligned with individual contributions, thereby enhancing perceptions of equity. Additionally,

psychological contract fulfillment fosters trust in management, which in turn strengthens the legitimacy of distribution mechanisms and reduces ambiguity in reward allocation (De Vos et al., 2003).

Similarly, Koç, Koç, and Avcı (2013), in their study of 307 employees across six 4- and 5-star hotels in Turkey, reported strong positive correlations between psychological contracts and distributive justice, as well as procedural, interactional, and overall organizational justice. This underscores the role of PCF in shaping distributive justice, particularly in labor-intensive contexts where working conditions and mutual obligations directly influence fairness perceptions.

According to Estreder et al. (2020), psychological contract violation had a strong negative relationship with organizational justice, beyond the effects of fulfillment. a strong normative contract; shared positive perceptions of psychological contract fulfillment, generally increased justice perceptions but could intensify negative reactions when individual employees felt worse treated than their peers. This suggests that while PCF generally strengthens distributive justice, the organizational climate and the transparency of agreements play critical roles in sustaining fairness perceptions.

Distributive justice depends not only on outcomes but also on whether they align with promised or expected obligations, with psychological contract fulfillment shaping how fairness is perceived; breaches, even amid equitable outcomes, weaken these perceptions. Based on this, the study hypothesized accordingly.

H₂: Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) has a significant influence on perception of distributive justice among academic staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi

2.4.3 Distributive Justice and Employee Commitment

Aquino (1995) found that both distributive justice and procedural justice are positively related to affective commitment. Similarly, Masterson et al. (2000) observed a positive relationship between organizational justice and organizational commitment. In a meta-analysis, Colquitt et al. (2001) further confirmed that three forms of organizational justice; procedural, distributive, and interactional, are all significantly correlated with organizational commitment.

Empirical evidence shows that distributive justice positively influences organizational commitment, with studies confirming its role in enhancing employee loyalty, attachment, and positive work attitudes (Durrani et al., 2015; Akanbi & Ofoegbu, 2013; Mendryk, 2017; Abdi, Butali, & Ayora, 2020). Research further indicates that perceptions of fairness across distributive, procedural, and interactional justice strongly correlate with commitment, fostering greater effort, adaptability, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Blakely et al., 2005; Judge & Piccolo, 2023; Cropanzano & Ambrose, 2015).

Distributive justice shapes employees' perceptions of fairness in outcomes like pay, promotions, benefits, and recognition, where fairness promotes trust, commitment, and citizenship, while perceived unfairness triggers negative emotions and behaviors such as

absenteeism, low commitment, and turnover (Mehrabi et al., 2012; Konvsky & Cropanzano, 1993; Ali & Mohsen, 2008).

Distributive justice reflects employees' judgments of fairness in the balance between their contributions and rewards, as explained by Adams' (1965) Equity Theory. When this balance is perceived as fair, it fosters satisfaction and promotes positive behaviors such as extra-role activities (Adams, 1965; Greenberg, 1990; Janssens, 2004).

Based on the theoretical arguments presented, it is reasonable to expect that when employees perceive distributive justice within their organization, their commitment will be positively influenced. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: Perception of Distributive justice has a significant effect on employee commitment among academic staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi

2.4.4 Distributive Justice as a Mediator in the Relationship between Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) and Employee Commitment

When employees feel that promises regarding rewards, promotions, and work conditions are honored, it enhances their perception of fairness in outcome distribution (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Zhao et al., 2007). This perception is closely linked to the construct of Distributive Justice, which emphasizes the fairness of outcome allocations based on the contributions of individuals (Adams, 1965).

Existing studies support the notion that PCF positively influences perceptions of Distributive Justice (Turnley & Feldman, 1999; Montes & Irving, 2008). For example, psychological contract breaches have been found to decrease perceptions of distributive fairness (Robinson, 1996), suggesting that the fulfilment of contracts should conversely enhance justice perceptions. Additionally, research by Tekleab et al. (2005) found that fulfilment of psychological contracts is a significant predictor of perceived organizational justice, including distributive fairness.

In turn, Distributive Justice has been consistently linked to critical employee outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and employee performance (Colquitt et al., 2001; Sweeney & McFarlin, 1993). According to Colquitt et al. (2013), fairness in outcomes increases employees' loyalty and engagement, which are important drivers of commitment. Likewise, Greenberg (1990) emphasized that employees are more willing to exert effort when they perceive rewards and recognition to be fairly distributed.

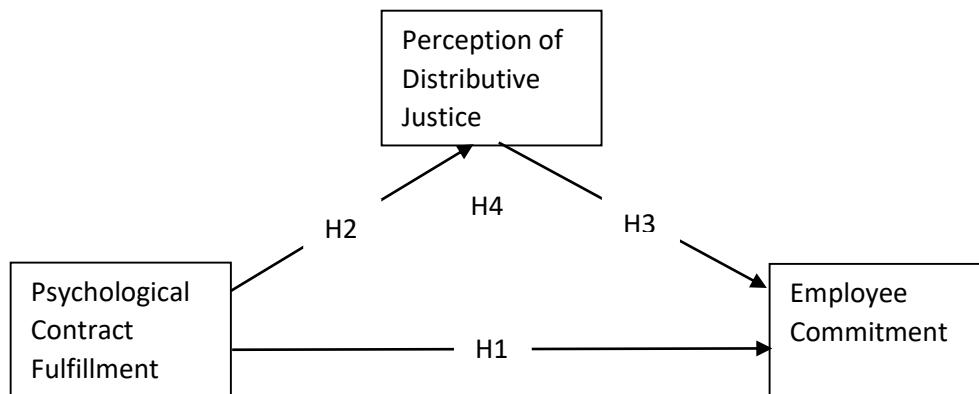
Drawing from Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and Equity Theory (Adams, 1965), the fulfillment of psychological contracts is expected to foster perceptions of fairness, which employees reciprocate through higher commitment (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, Distributive Justice serves as a psychological mechanism translating the positive effects of Psychological Contract Fulfilment into enhanced Employee commitment. Based on the foregoing, the study proposed the following hypothesis;

H₄: Perception of distributive justice significantly mediates the relationship between Psychological Contract Fulfilment (PCF) and employee commitment among academic staff in Federal Polytechnic, Mubi.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is presented in figure I below in a pictorial form to clarify the direction of the study at a glance.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on two theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Equity Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET), developed by Homans (1961), Blau (1964), and Emerson (1962, 1972), posits that social behavior is driven by reciprocal exchanges aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs. Interactions are governed by the norm of reciprocity, where one party's behavior reinforces the others. In organizational settings, SET explains how psychological contract fulfillment (PCF) shapes employee commitment: when employees perceive that rewards, recognition, or career advancement are fairly distributed relative to their contributions, trust and commitment are strengthened, whereas breaches or perceived unfairness can lead to disengagement and reduced performance (Blau, 1964; Cook & Rice, 2013).

The psychological contract provides a lens for understanding how fulfillment or non-fulfillment of mutual obligations affects employee behavior, with distributive justice acting as a key mediator in this process (Savarimuthu & Rachael, 2017). When organizations meet their obligations, fair distribution of outcomes reinforces positive work behaviors and performance. Conversely, perceived inequities can weaken commitment and deteriorate the employee-organization relationship. Thus, SET offers a strong theoretical basis for

examining how distributive justice mediates the relationship between PCF and employee performance in public tertiary institutions.

Equity Theory

Developed by J. Stacy Adams (1969), Equity Theory explains how employees evaluate fairness in the workplace by comparing the ratio of their *inputs* (e.g., time, effort, skills, loyalty) to *outcomes* (e.g., pay, recognition, benefits) against those of relevant others. When this ratio is perceived as fair, employees experience satisfaction and are motivated to maintain commitment; perceived inequity, however, leads to distress, which they attempt to reduce by adjusting effort, altering perceptions, or even leaving the organization. These fairness judgments are shaped by comparisons with their own past roles, experiences in other organizations, and the circumstances of colleagues inside or outside the organization.

This theory is apt and relevant in explaining perception of distributive justice as a crucial mediator between psychological contract fulfilment (PCF) and employee commitment. When PCF is high, meaning that the institution meets promised obligations, academic staff are more likely to commit strongly if they also perceive that rewards, promotions, workload allocations, and other benefits are fairly distributed (Dabos & Rousseau, 2004; Zhao et al., 2007). However, if distributive justice is perceived as lacking, even fulfilled psychological contracts may not translate into higher commitment, highlighting the pivotal role of fairness perceptions in sustaining employee loyalty and performance.

2.7 Empirical Review

Eberendu & Okere (2015) studied 246 Nigerian bank employees measuring PC contract dimensions (relational, transactional, and balanced) and employee commitment dimensions (affective, normative, and continuance) PC (especially relational dimension) significantly influenced affective and normative commitment; transactional contracts linked to continuance commitment. The result of the Pearson correlation and regression revealed a significant positive relationship between psychological contract and employee commitment, with relational contracts showing the strongest effect on affective and normative commitment. Transactional contracts were also found to be more associated with continuance commitment.

In same vein, Jacob et al. (2019) examined 140 manufacturing employees in Nigeria. The study found that both relational and transactional contracts significantly predicted loyalty and intention to stay, with relational having stronger effects. Nawaz et al. (2020) investigated 90 faculty in Pakistan. Psychological contract significantly influenced all three commitment types, explaining 55.8% variance in continuance commitment. Bulawit et al. (2023) surveyed 125 local government employees in the Philippines and Found a significant positive link ($r = 0.658$) between psychological contract and commitment, unaffected by demographic factors. Koç, Koç, and Avcı (2013) investigated the relationship between psychological contracts and organizational justice in six 4- and 5-star hotels in Turkey, surveying 307 employees. The study found significant positive correlations between psychological contracts and distributive and other justice dimensions, with differences by education and department. Estreder et al.

(2020) used multinational data revealing that PC fulfillment had a positive cross-level effect on organizational justice, while violation strongly reduced justice perceptions; shared positive contracts amplified negative effects for those feeling disadvantaged.

Several studies have consistently established a significant positive relationship between distributive justice and organizational commitment across different contexts. Akanbi and Ofoegbu (2013) and Durrani et al. (2015) found that distributive justice, alongside procedural justice, strongly enhances employees' affective, continuance, and normative commitment in both the Nigerian manufacturing sector and Pakistan's banking industry. Similarly, Mendryk (2017) confirmed that distributive justice positively influences all three forms of commitment among age-diversified employees in the U.S., while Abdi, Butali, and Ayora (2020) reported an exceptionally strong relationship between fair allocation of rewards and commitment among staff at Garissa University in Kenya. More recently, Lahlou-Kassi and Eddakir (2025) reinforced these findings, demonstrating that perceptions of fair reward distribution significantly promote organizational commitment among Moroccan bank branch managers. Collectively, these studies suggest that equitable distribution of outcomes is a consistent driver of employee commitment across sectors, cultures, and demographic groups.

Gulilat (2019) examined transactional and relational psychological contracts in Ethiopia (186 employees, regression). Both significantly predicted job performance, with relational contracts stronger, implying that contract fulfilment fosters trust and fairness perceptions that can influence commitment.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for examining relationships among variables as they exist in a natural setting without manipulation. The target population comprises 724 academic staff of Federal Polytechnic, Mubi. A sample of 251 respondents was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table and selected through proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation across academic ranks and departments.

The study variables were measured using well-established instruments adapted to fit the Nigerian academic context. Psychological Contract Fulfilment was measured using the scale developed by Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler (2000), Distributive Justice was assessed using Colquitt's (2001) Organizational Justice Scale, while Employee Commitment was measured with the scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), which captures affective, continuance, and normative commitment dimensions. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The instruments were subjected to expert review to ensure content validity and were pilot-tested among 30 academic staff from Adamawa state polytechnic not included in the main study. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the constructs exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory reliability.

Data were analyzed using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) in IBM SPSS version 27.0 to test the mediating effect of distributive justice in the relationship between PCF and employee

commitment. Ethical approval was taken into consideration, and respondents participated voluntarily after giving informed consent.

4. Result and Discussion

Table 1.1: Result

Relationship	Effect	Confidence Interval		t-statistics	pvalue
		LLCI	ULCI		
Total Effect (PCF → EC)	0.3438	0.2930	0.3946	13.33	.000
Direct Effect (PCF → EC)	0.2389	0.1753	0.3025	7.40	.000
Indirect Effect (PCF → DJ → EC)	0.1049	0.0522	0.1814	—	—
PCF → DJ	0.7115	0.6051	0.8179	13.17	.000
DJ → EC	0.1474	0.0894	0.2054	5.01	.000

Source: Hayes Process in SPSS, 2025

The results reveal that psychological contract fulfilment significantly predicts distributive justice ($b = 0.71$, 95% CI [0.61, 0.82], $t = 13.17$, $p < .001$), implying that employees who perceive their psychological contracts as fulfilled also perceive greater fairness in outcome distribution within the organization. Similarly, the total effect of PCF on employee commitment was significant ($b = 0.34$, 95% CI [0.29, 0.39], $t = 13.33$, $p < .001$), indicating that fulfilment of psychological obligations enhances employees' affective attachment and sense of obligation to the organization.

When distributive justice was introduced into the model, both PCF ($b = 0.24$, $p < .001$) and DJ ($b = 0.15$, $p < .001$) remained significant predictors of EC. This suggests that while fulfilment of psychological contracts directly fosters employee commitment, fairness in the allocation of rewards and resources also independently strengthens this commitment.

Furthermore, the indirect effect of PCF on EC through DJ was statistically significant ($b = 0.10$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.18]), as the confidence interval did not include zero. This confirms a partial mediation effect, meaning that distributive justice partly explains how psychological contract fulfilment translates into higher employee commitment. In other words, when employees perceive that their organization not only meets implicit and explicit obligations but also treats them equitably, they are more likely to exhibit stronger commitment.

These findings align with prior studies (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005; Colquitt, 2001; Allen & Meyer, 1990) that underscore fairness perceptions as a critical pathway through which organizational practices influence employee attitudes. The result validates social

exchange theory's assumption that employees reciprocate fair and trustworthy treatment with greater commitment.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that psychological contract fulfilment significantly enhances employee commitment, both directly and indirectly through distributive justice. When academic staff perceive that promises are kept and rewards are fairly distributed, their trust and commitment to the institution increase. Thus, fairness in outcome distribution serves as a key mechanism linking fulfilled obligations to stronger employee loyalty and performance.

Based on these findings, the study recommends that management should honor both explicit and implicit employment promises, promote transparent and merit-based reward systems, and integrate fairness principles into all human resource policies and practices. Continuous leadership training on justice and effective feedback mechanisms should also be institutionalized to monitor and address employees' perceptions of fairness. Cultivating a culture of reciprocity, trust, and equity will not only strengthen commitment but also enhance organizational stability and performance.

References:

- Aquino, K. (1995). Relationships among pay inequity, perceptions of procedural justice, and organizational citizenship. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, 8(1), 21–33.
- Akanbi, A., Ofoegbu, P., & Eugene, O. (2013). Impact of perceived organizational justice on organizational commitment of a food and beverage firm in Nigeria. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(14), 207–218.
- Abdi, H. M., Butali, P., & Ayora, J. (2020). Effect of distributive justice on organizational commitment of employees of Garissa University. *Journal of International Business, Innovation and Strategic Management*, 4(1), 98–117.
- Ali, H., & Mohsen, N. (2008). Organizational justice. *Journal of Prudence*, 190(9).
- Blakely, G., Andrews, M., & Moorman, R. (2005). The moderating effects of equity sensitivity on the relationship between organizational justice and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 20, 259–273.
- Brewster, C., Carey, L., Dowling, P., Grobler, P., Holland, P., & Wörnich, S. (2003). *Contemporary issues in human resource management* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Bulawit, J. R., Barlis, M. A. D., & Bulawat, A. C. (2023). Psychological contract and organizational commitment: A study on non-tenure local government unit employees in General Tinio, Philippines. *World Academic Journal of Management*, 11(2), 16–24. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.10939.80169>
- Cassar, V., & Briner, R. B. (2011). The relationship between psychological contract breach and organisational commitment: Exchange imbalance as a moderator of the mediating role of violation. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 78, 283–289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.09.007>
- Casal, P. (2007). Why sufficiency is not enough. *Ethics*, 117(2), 296–326. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/510692>

- Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R. W., & Nakagawa, S. (2013). Social exchange theory. In J. DeLamater & A. Ward (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research). Springer.
- Cohen, G. A. (2008). *Rescuing justice and equality*. Harvard University Press.
- Cohen, R. (1987). Distributive justice: Theory and research. *Social Justice Research*, 1, 19–40.
- Cohen-Charash, Y., & Spector, P. E. (2001). The role of justice in organizations: A meta-analysis. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 86(2), 278–321.
- Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R. W., & Nakagawa, S. (2013). Social exchange theory. In J. DeLamater & A. Ward (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology*. Springer.
- Cullinane, N., & Dundon, T. (2006). The psychological contract: A critical review. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 8(2), 113–129.
- De Vos, A., Buyens, D., & Schalk, R. (2003). Psychological contract development during organizational socialization: Adaptation to reality and the role of reciprocity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 24, 537–559. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.205>
- Durrani, A. B., Cheema, S., Khokhar, M. F., & Pasha, A. T. (2015). Exploring the relationship of organizational justice with employee satisfaction and employee commitment. *International Journal of Science, Basic and Applied Research*, 24(6), 156–167.
- Elsouk, S. M. S., Elsubbagh, S., Ayoun, B., & Radwan, A. (2021). The mediating role of psychological contract fulfillment in the relationship between organizational support and employee performance. *Psychology and Behavioral Sciences*, 10(1), 25–38. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.pbs.20211001.14>
- Estreder, Y., Rigotti, T., Tomás, I., & Ramos, J. (2020). Psychological contract and organizational justice: The role of normative contract. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 42(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-02-2018-0039>
- Farrukh, M., Kalimuthu, R., & Farrukh, S. (2019). Impact of job satisfaction and mutual trust on employee loyalty in Saudi hospitality industry: A mediating analysis of leader support. *International Journal of Business and Psychology*, 1(2), 30–52.
- Feldman, F. (1995). Adjusting utility for justice: A consequentialist reply to the objection from justice. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55, 567–585.
- Folger, R., & Cropanzano, R. (1998). *Organizational justice and human resource management*. Sage.
- Frankena, W. K. (1962). The concept of social justice. In R. B. Brandt (Ed.), *Social justice* (pp. 1–29). Prentice-Hall.
- Frankfurt, H. (1987). Equality as a moral ideal. *Ethics*, 98, 21–43.
- Gibson, J., Ivancevich, J., & Konopaske, R. (2011). *Organizations: Behavior, structure, processes*. McGraw-Hill.
- Gordon, C. (2010). The relationships among social exchange, organizational citizenship, and employee behavior (Master's thesis). [Institution not provided].
- Greenberg, J. (1990a). Employee theft as a reaction to underpayment inequity: The hidden costs of pay cuts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75, 561–568.
- Greenberg, J. (1990b). Organizational justice: Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. *Journal of Management Review*, 16, 399–432.

- Guest, D. (2007). HRM: Towards a new psychological contract. In P. Boxall, J. Purcell, & P. Wright (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of human resource management*. Oxford University Press.
- Hamonangan, I. D., Asmawi, M., & Widodo, S. E. (2020). The effect of organizational culture, leadership style, and trust to organizational commitments of LP3I Polytechnic Jakarta lectures. *International Journal of Human Capital Management*, 4(1), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.21009/IJHCM.04.01.02>
- Janssens, M. (2004). Evaluating international managers' performance: Parent company standards as control mechanisms. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 5, 853–873.
- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2023). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 108(1), 12–29.
- Konovsky, M. A., & Cropanzano, R. S. (1993). Perceived justice of employee drug testing as a predictor of employee attitude and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 5, 698–708.
- Koç, H., Koç, B., & Avcı, C. (2013). The relationship between psychological contracts and organizational justice: A case study in accommodation establishments. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 3(8), 1–10.
- Kreitner, R., & Kinicki, A. (2012). *Organizational behavior*. McGraw-Hill Education.
- Lahlou-Kassi, H., & Eddakir, A. (2025). Exploring the impact of perceived distributive justice on organizational commitment. *Scientific African*, 29, e02782. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sciaf.2025.e02782>
- Lapointe, E., Vandenberghe, C., & Boudrias, J. S. (2013). Psychological contract breach, affective commitment to organisation and supervisors, a newcomer adjustment: A three-wave moderated mediation model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 83, 528–538. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2013.07.008>
- 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. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(7), 2208. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072208>
- Maia, L. G., & Bastos, A. V. B. (2015). Organizational commitment, psychological contract fulfillment and job performance: A longitudinal quanti-qualitative study. *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review*, 12(3), 250–267. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1807-7692bar2015140061>
- Maia, L. G., & Bastos, A. V. B. (2014). Validação de instrumento de contrato psicológico. *Avaliação Psicológica*, 13(3), 409–417.
- Masterson, S. S., Lewis, K., Goldman, B. M., & Taylor, M. S. (2000). Integrating justice and social exchange: The differing effects of fair procedures and treatment on work relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(4), 738–748.
- Mentari, R. R., & Ratmawati, D. (2020, February). Linking distributive justice and procedural justice to employee engagement through psychological contract fulfillment (a field study in Karmand Mitra Company Andalan, Surabaya). In *3rd Global Conference on Business, Management, and Entrepreneurship (GCBME 2018)* (pp. 199–203). Atlantis Press. <https://doi.org/10.2991/aebmr.k.200131.044>

- Middlemiss, S. (2011). The psychological contract and implied contractual terms: Synchronous or asynchronous models? *International Journal of Law and Management*, 58(1), 32–50.
- Nagel, T. (1997). Justice and nature. *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 17, 303–321.
- Nawaz, K., Usman, M., Qamar, H. G. M., Nadeem, M., & Usman, U. (2020). Investigating the perception of public sector higher education institution faculty members about the influences of psychological contract on organizational commitment. *American Journal of Industrial and Business Management*, 10(01), 144–159. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2020.101010>
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice* (Reprint). Clarendon Press.
- Rodwell, J., Ellershaw, J., & Flower, R. (2015). Fulfill psychological contract promises to manage in-demand employees. *Personnel Review*, 44, 689–701.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Sage.
- Rousseau, D. M. (2000). *Psychological contract inventory technical report* (Version 3). Pittsburgh, PA: Carnegie Mellon University.
- Savarimuthu, D. A., & Rachael, A. J. (2017). Psychological contract – A conceptual framework. *International Journal of Management*, 8(5), 101–110.
- Shahnawaz, M. G., & Goswami, K. (2011). Effect of psychological contract violation on organizational commitment, trust and turnover intention in private and public sector Indian organizations. *Vision: The Journal of Business Perspective*, 15(3), 209–217. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097226291101500301>
- Shen, Y., Schaubroeck, J. M., & Zhao, L. (2019). Work group climate and behavioral responses to psychological contract breach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 67.
- Simoni, M. (2013). Trajectories of organizational commitment: A qualitative study in a Greek public sector organization. *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 13(1), 111–130. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470595812452637>
- Stup, R. E. (2006). *Human resource management and dairy employee organizational commitment*. Pennsylvania State University.
- Sweeney, P. D., & McFarlin, D. B. (1993). Workers' evaluations of the ends and the means: An examination of four models of distributive and procedural justice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 55(1), 3–20.
- Tan, K. (2004). *Justice without borders: Cosmopolitanism, nationalism and patriotism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Turnley, W. H., & Feldman, D. C. (1999). The impact of psychological contract violation on exit, voice, loyalty and neglect. *Human Relations*, 52, 895–922.
- Yao, T., Qiu, Q., & Wei, Y. (2019). Retaining hotel employees as internal customers: Effect of organizational commitment on attitudinal and behavioral loyalty of employees. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 76, 1–8.
- Zayas-Ortiz, M., Rosario, E., Marquez, E., & Gruneiro, P. C. (2015). Relationship between organizational commitment and organizational citizenship behavior in a sample of private banking employees. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 35(2), 91–106.
- 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, 647–680.

