



The effects of host country language proficiency on the relationship between psychological contract breach, violation, and work behaviors: A moderated mediation model

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ABSTRACT

As self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) often struggle to communicate in the common corporate language and/or host country language, the aim of this study is to determine if host country language proficiency (HCLP) facilitates communication. As a corollary HCLP might reduce the negative impact of psychological contract (PC) breach on PC violation, and ultimately the positive impact on counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) and the negative impact on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). This study uses a repeated-measurement design with three measurement points from 300 SIEs. Using a moderated mediation path model, we found that PC breach at T1 is positively associated with CWB and negatively associated with OCB at T3 through PC violation at T2. Furthermore, HCLP at T1 moderates the positive PC breach–PC violation relationship. Specifically, HCLP amplifies the indirect relationships between PC breach, CWB, and OCB for participants with poor levels of HCLP. This study demonstrates the need of improving HCLP of SIEs. We discuss additional implications for theory, practice and future research.

1. Introduction

Research on self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) has grown in recent years (Baruch et al., 2016; see also the Special Issue editorial by O'Donohue et al., 2018 for some articles on SIEs). This particular group of people “decide on their own initiative to expatriate to search for a job abroad, self-fund their expatriation without organizational support, for a temporary but undefined time, likely from over a year up to a decade, for career, professional, lifestyle, cultural and personal reasons, and usually employed on a host country-contract once there” (Tharenou, 2015, p. 162). The international management literature has established that the ability to communicate in the common corporate language and/or host country language helps to exchange information and prevent misunderstandings, as well as build relationships (e.g., Heizmann et al., 2018; Swift & Wallace, 2011). For SIEs working on local contracts in local companies (Doherty, 2013), the common corporate language will typically be the host country language. As the employment

relationship is a continuous activity of (re)negotiation between the employee and their employer (Rousseau, 1995), it is likely that host country language proficiency (HCLP) plays an important role in developing and maintaining the SIE's employment relationship.

In this paper we study the employment relationship through the lens of the psychological contract (PC), which is anchored in Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). The PC refers to “an individual's beliefs regarding the terms and conditions of a reciprocal exchange agreement between that focal person and another party” (Rousseau, 1989, p. 123). This cognitive framework allows us to better understand exchanges between employees and employers, as well as the attitudes and behaviors that follow said exchanges (Conway & Briner, 2009). According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) and the norm of reciprocity (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960), the exchange relationship should be balanced (i.e., fulfillment of exchange agreement). When said balance is achieved, employees will respond through the *positive norm of reciprocity* (i.e.,

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favorable treatment will generate more favorable treatment to return the favor; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). In contrast, when there is imbalance in the exchange relationship the other party will respond through the *negative norm of reciprocity* (unfavorable treatment will trigger a desire to get back at the other party; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960, p. 172). Consequently, when an employer does not deliver on the agreed upon exchange agreement, the employee is likely to perceive PC breach (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), which in turn can trigger negative employee reactions (Zhao et al., 2007) in an attempt to restore the imbalance in the relationship (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Shore & Barksdale, 1998). When PC breach results in strong negative emotions (i.e., PC violation; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), employees are more likely to engage in strong negative behavior such as counterproductive workplace behavior or CWB (e.g., Bordia et al., 2008; Chiu & Peng, 2008) while at the same time being less likely to engage in positive behavior such as organizational citizenship behavior or OCB (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a). There is currently no empirical work providing insights as to whether SIEs react in the same way as other populations. This gap is important because the temporary nature of the SIE experience and the fact that this is typically a ‘stand-alone’ experience from the rest of one’s life and career in the parent country (Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2011) might have an influence on the way that SIEs react to PC breach perceptions.

Turning to HCLP, although language proficiency has been studied in expatriate samples working in English speaking multi-national companies (e.g., Selmer, 2006; Selmer & Luring, 2015; Zhang & Harzing, 2016; Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015), the absence of research on HCLP in the aftermath of PC breach among SIEs working in local companies is problematic in our understanding of SIE employment circumstances. The PC literature assumes that good communication between parties (i.e., higher levels of HCLP) would provide clarity on contract terms (Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1995; Zhang & Rienties, 2017). Moreover, the PC literature also argues that higher levels of HCLP would help repair a PC breach event to reduce PC violation or antisocial behavior (Chang et al., 2020; Giese & Thiel, 2015). We therefore argue that HCLP facilitates the sensemaking process following PC breach and enables SIEs to engage in direct attempts to address the PC breach event, both of which are important elements for repairing the PC (Bankins, 2015). In case of low HCLP, SIEs are more likely to perceive stronger PC violation because they have little understanding of the PC breach event and will not engage in actions aimed at repairing the situation.

This paper makes two main contributions to the SIE and PC literatures. First, we look at how PC breach and PC violation are positively related to CWB and negatively related to OCB towards organizations (CWB-O & OCB-O) and individuals in the workplace (CWB-I & OCB-I) through PC violation. Second, we examine the moderating role of HCLP on the relationship between PC breach and PC violation; demonstrating that the extent to which SIEs speak the local language moderates the relationship between PC breach and PC violation, thereby amplifying the impact of PC breach on negative (i.e., CWB) and positive (i.e., OCB) behavioral outcomes.

The rest of our paper is organized as follows. The next section discusses the theoretical framework on (SIE) PCs, behavioral outcomes, and the role of HCLP. Next, we will present our longitudinal study. We will conclude with a discussion section that includes implications for theory and practice as well as the studies’ limitations and avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

2.1. Psychological contracts, CWB & OCB

The PC is comprised of a set of expectations that an employee and their employer have of each other in an ongoing exchange relationship (Rousseau, 1995). These expectations are often anchored in employer

promises (Robinson, 1996) which stem from the recruitment process (Rousseau, 1995) and prior life and/or work experiences (Conway & Briner, 2009). Because the employment relationship is a never-ending process of employee and employer explicitly or implicitly renegotiating their terms of engagement (Rousseau, 1995), expectations can be added, changed, or deleted. Over time these PC exchange terms will form a collection of perceived mutual obligations (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), resulting in an established PC. Such an established PC is characterized by sustained ongoing exchanges that necessitate minimal cognitive effort (Rousseau, 1995; Rousseau et al., 2018) until an anomalous situation activates an individual’s mental model of their PC (Rousseau et al., 2018). Indeed, it is one thing to hold a highly valued PC in which both parties have high mutual obligations toward one another; it is an entirely different issue whether one’s employer fulfills those obligations.

Perhaps the most studied PC states are those of PC fulfillment and PC breach. In line with homeomorphic reciprocity, the terms of the exchange agreement should be similar (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Therefore, when promised and delivered obligations are balanced, the PC is fulfilled and positive outcomes in the work environment can be expected (Shore & Barksdale, 1998). However, if obligations are unmet, the PC is breached (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), creating a negative imbalance in the eyes of the receiver, potentially triggering a negative reciprocal reaction (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). PC breach results in a strong negative emotional state, labelled PC violation (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). PC violation in turn impacts a range of detrimental affective, attitudinal, and behavioral outcomes such as lowered levels of job satisfaction, trust, OCB, in-role performance, and organizational commitment and increased turnover intentions (for a meta-analysis see Zhao et al., 2007; for a recent review see Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2019). In addition to these meta-analytical findings, PC violation has also been found to (partially) mediate the relationship between PC breach and increased CWB (Griep et al., 2016; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a; Suazo et al., 2005), decreased service-oriented OCB (Suazo, 2009), and decreased OCB (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a).

These affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes following PC breach or fulfillment are traditionally understood by drawing upon Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). This theory states that the quality of an exchange relationship develops through the exchange of resources as per the norm of reciprocity (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). These reciprocity norms come in two forms: positive and negative. The positive norm of reciprocity promotes stability in relationships through considerate, valued, and balanced exchanges. Favorable treatment (e.g., PC fulfillment) generates favorable employee treatment, for example OCB, in return (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). In line with homeomorphic reciprocity, this represents the withholding of desirable behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2017). In contrast, the negative norm of reciprocity states that when employees believe that they are on the receiving end of unfavorable treatment (e.g., PC breach), they will feel the desire to repay the other party by engaging in unfavorable behaviors, such as CWB (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). In line with homeomorphic reciprocity, this represents the active exhibit of undesirable behavior (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

To date, only a handful of studies have empirically examined the PC of SIEs. (There is a somewhat larger body of literature focusing on the PC of expats who are company-sent to their host country which we also discuss in this section.) This literature mainly focused on SIE PC features (Koveshnikov & Wechtler, 2016), the organizational context of the SIE PC (Kraak et al., 2018), or the relationship between PC fulfillment and perceptions of underemployment (Lee, 2005). Other studies have compared the SIE PC with other employee groups. Lapointe et al. (2022) compared a sample of SIEs with host country nationals and found that SIEs reported more organizational cynicism and less commitment following PC breach. With regards to company-sent expatriates, Guzzo

et al. (1994) found that PC fulfilment (assessed as the perceived sufficiency of organizational inducements) mediates the relationship between organizational delivered inducements, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Relatedly, De Ruiter et al. (2018) found that PC fulfilment positively affected two dimensions of expatriate intrinsic career success, namely job and career satisfaction. Moreover, Chen (2010) found that expatriate perceptions of interactional justice, perceived organisational support and leader–member exchange are positively related to perceived PC fulfilment. Pate and Scullion (2009) used case-based research to demonstrate that many employers can be perceived as not adequately meeting their obligations (i.e., PC breach) to expatriates—especially when it comes to demonstrating care or concern about expatriates' emotional needs—particularly regarding how the assignments are managed and how the employment relationship is maintained. Relatedly, Aldossari and Robertson (2018) examined repatriates' perceptions of their PC pre- and post-international assignment and found that human resource policies and practices associated with the expatriation and repatriation process can have a profound impact on repatriates' perceptions of whether their PC had been fulfilled or breached upon their return. Next, Ramirez et al. (2015) explore expatriate and employer perceptions of reciprocal obligations in relation to personal safety when demonstrating the pivotal role of PC fulfillment to the maintenance of a healthy functional employment relationship. In another example, Perera et al. (2017) demonstrated that expatriate employees, akin to regular employees, can have a PC with both the host and home country organisation and that PC breach can thus occur simultaneously or separately with either organisation. Finally, at a more conceptual level, Haslberger and Brewster (2009) argued that the likelihood for PC breach to occur is particularly high when accepting the expatriation assignment, adjusting abroad, and adjusting to the return home. Similarly, Yan et al. (2002) proposed a predictive model of expatriation and repatriation success based on expatriates' relational and/or transactional PC type and the level of congruence between employee and employer perceptions of said relational and/or transactional obligations, with less congruence leading to less success.

A comparison of SIE and company-sent expatriate PCs in China revealed that SIEs reported higher levels of PC breach and PC violation (Zhang & Rienties, 2017), suggesting that PC breach represents an important phenomenon among SIEs. The presence of PC breach and PC violation imply that SIEs are likely to engage in negative reciprocity (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Indeed, the PC literature has shown that PC breach and PC violation are positively related to CWB (e.g., Bordia et al., 2008; Chiu & Peng, 2008; Restubog et al., 2015). Robinson and Bennett (1995, p. 556) define CWB as: “voluntary behavior that violates significant organizational norms and in so doing threatens the well-being of an organization, its members, or both.” Robinson and Bennett (1995) and Bennett and Robinson (2000) distinguished deviance behavior aimed at organizational members (CWB-I) or at the organization (CWB-O). Because the cognitive assessment of PC breach potentially triggers PC violation, which in turn triggers employee behavioral outcomes (e.g., Dulac et al., 2008; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018b) we hypothesize that PC violation will mediate the positive relationship between PC breach and CWB-I and CWB-O over time.

Hypothesis 1. PC violation at time 2 mediate the positive relationship between PC breach at time 1 and (H1a) CWB-I and (H1b) CWB-O at time 3.

Whereas CWB is aimed at harming the organization, OCB is aimed at helping the organization (Dalal et al., 2009). Organ (1988, p. 4) defines OCB as: “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization.” As with CWB, OCB can be directed at the organization (i.e., OCB-O) or at the people who work there (i.e., OCB-I). OCB is thus positive behavior that employees decide to engage in. Following the positive reciprocity

principal (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Gouldner, 1960), employees are likely to engage in OCB when they perceived their PC fulfilled. On the flipside, perceptions of PC breach negate perceived obligations for positive reciprocal behavior towards the organization and employees are therefore likely to reduce OCB following PC breach (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a). Furthermore, PC breach can trigger PC violation, which will in turn have a negative relationship with OCB over time (e.g., Dulac et al., 2008), leading us to hypothesize the following.

Hypothesis 2. PC violation at time 2 mediate the negative relationship between PC breach at time 1 and (H2a) OCB-I and (H2b) OCB-O at time 3.

2.2. Psychological contracts, communication & host country language proficiency

In this research we study the effects of HCLP on the SIE PC. The importance of communication between parties for developing and maintaining a PC seems straightforward but as early publications stated that (at least some of) the PC terms are implicit (e.g., Rousseau, 1995), the role of communication has not been prominent in the literature. This dearth of research is remarkable because the same literature acknowledges that (1) PC contents are based on promises communicated by both parties (Robinson, 1996; Rousseau, 1995), (2) the PC takes shape following the interpretation of this information (Rousseau, 2001), (3) that communication improves the PC relationships (Bi, 2019; Zhang & Rienties, 2017), (4) that bad communication results in unclear exchange terms that in turn lead to increased perceptions of PC breach (Atkinson et al., 2014; Dries & De Gieter, 2014; Morrison & Robinson, 1997), and (5) that improved communication helps reduce PC breach (Haris, 2020). The literature thus suggests that we need to be able to communicate so that the ongoing exchange relationship will be clearer for both parties because they will know what is expected of them. However, if one of the parties does not fully understand the exchange terms due to (in this study) low levels of HCLP, it is more likely that that party will perceive PC breach events as they are not able to accurately compare promised and delivered inducements. Communication is also likely to influence reactions to PC breach. Bankins (2015) explained that the sensemaking process following PC breach—which includes assessments of the breach event and the general work environment—will influence the strength of an individuals' reaction to that breach. But for sensemaking to work, the employee must have a good understanding of what the PC and the work environment entail. In other words, an SIE who does not have sufficient understanding of the PC breach and work environment due to low levels of HCLP is less likely to engage in a cognitive process of sensemaking as they are not able to analyze the PC breach situation within the legal and organizational context. For example, SIEs might not understand specific employer actions and write them off as the employer not living up to their promises whereas this might be common practice within the company or even a legal requirement. Furthermore, repairing PC breach is contingent on direct attempts by both parties to address the event, as was evidenced by Chang et al. (2020) who found that increased communication between doctors and their patients reduced the extent to which patients engaged in antisocial behavior following PC violation. If the SIE does not master the host country language it will be very difficult to repair the PC in the aftermath of breach. It is therefore likely that low HCLP will lead to more frustration and negative emotions, and thus to PC violation.

There is evidence from the PC literature on (self-initiated) expatriates that communication between parties influences perceptions and outcomes. Sherman and Morley (2020) studied the formation of expatriate PCs and stated that individual inputs and characteristics determine how PCs develop and how expatriates interpreted them. Giese and Thiel (2015) focused on intercultural communication between Chinese employers and their Ghanaian employees and reported that unclear communications due to misunderstandings led to increased perceptions

of PC violation. Focusing on language, [Zhang and Rienties \(2017\)](#) stated that low HCLP can result in misunderstandings regarding PC contents for expatriated people. Although a few studies briefly looked into the influence of HCLP, there seem to be important contradictions in the findings. For instance, [Froese and Peltokorpi \(2013\)](#) reported—in their comparative study including 124 SIEs and 57 organizational expatriates in Japan—that SIEs had higher levels of HCLP. Following the aforementioned findings from the literature, this would mean that SIEs would perceive lower levels of PC breach. However, another comparative study by [Zhang and Rienties \(2017\)](#)—including 119 SIEs and 52 organizational expatriates in China—reported that SIEs perceived significantly higher levels of PC breach and PC violation. They did include HCLP as a control variable but, with many participants working for English-speaking multinationals, did not find any significant effects. We believe that the role of HCLP on the SIE PC might have been obscured because previous research compared contexts that correspond with organizational expatriates. As company-sent expatriates are sent by their employer and remain with that employer throughout their international assignment they receive support packages which often include language training and HR support. They are thus more likely to receive contracts and assignments that are written in their own language or the company language that they likely master when they are selected for the expatriate assignment. They are therefore able to discuss any changes to the exchange relationship with their manager or someone from the HR department. However, SIEs move to another country and then look for work. This means that they will be confronted with a host country employer and staff as well as contracts and information about for instance social security schemes and insurance written in the host country language. Studying mixed samples that include company-sent expatriates and SIEs might therefore prevent to accurately show the influence of HCLP for SIEs. This study follows recent calls to contextualize PC research (e.g., [Griep et al., 2019](#)) and focusses exclusively on SIEs working for a wide range of companies, speaking an even wider range of different languages. We suggest that the effect of HCLP is likely to be significant for SIEs working in local companies, since speaking the local language is important in determining perceptions regarding PC breach, and more specifically how SIEs will react in its aftermath.

Hypothesis 3. The relationship between PC breach and PC violation is moderated by HCLP such that the relationship is weaker at high (vs. low) levels of HCLP.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

We employed a repeated-measurement design with three measurement points, separated by a monthly time lag so as to reduce potential risks of common-method bias ([Podsakoff et al., 2012](#)) because it allows us to estimate the effect of, for example, PC breach at T1 on PC violation at T2 and the effect of PC violation at T2 on CWB and OCB enactment at T3 rather than focusing on the synchronous relationships at the same point in time. Another advantage of this research design pertains to the inclusion of auto-regressive effects (i.e., effect of variable X at T1 on itself at T2). In doing so, we can model actual change in a variable over time, ultimately boosting our confidence that a significant association is due to the independent variable predicting a significant proportion of the variance in the dependent variable rather than to the self-sustaining nature of the dependent variable over time.

3.2. Procedure

We recruited 537 SIEs through an on-line panel provider (Prolific) for this 3-wave study. Each wave took around 6-min to complete. Participants received approximately \$1 USD per completed survey. On the landing page of the study, participants received information about the

(solely scientific) purposes of the study, the team of researchers responsible for this study (with contact information so that they could contact the team in case of any questions), and the confidential and anonymous treatment of their individual responses. With regards to the use of online panels, it should be noted that online panels have been described as reliable sources to access diverse samples (e.g., [Landers & Behrend, 2015](#)), with quality of the data that is not substantially different compared to non-paid random samples (e.g., [Behrend et al., 2011](#)), especially when researchers embed attention checks (e.g., for the following item please indicate “fully disagree”) in the survey. Out of these 537 respondents, 505 respondents completed the first survey (longitudinal response rate = 94.04%), 380 respondents completed the second survey (longitudinal response rate = 70.76%), and 300 respondents completed the third survey (longitudinal response rate = 55.87%). Following best practice recommendations by [Huang et al. \(2015\)](#) we removed 15 respondents from the first, three respondents from the second, and zero respondents from the third survey because they (1) failed one or more attention checks (e.g., this is an attention check item, please select “agree”) embedded in the regular survey items, (2) completed the surveys 2.5 SDs faster or slower compared to the average respondent, and/or (3) demonstrated careless responding as indicated by answering most (if not all) items with the same response (e.g., “agree” to all statements). Our effective sample therefore contained 490 respondents for the first, 377 respondents for the second, and 300 respondents for the third survey. At this point it should be noted that a major benefit of the analytical approach we used (see section “Analyses”) pertains to its ability to handle missing data between our three waves ([Hox, 2010](#); [Ployhart et al., 2002](#)). Following a recent similar approach by [Hülshager and colleagues \(2021\)](#) and [Griep et al. \(2021\)](#)—who argued that missing data patterns rarely happen at random—we did not remove any of the respondents (who passed the best practice recommendations by [Huang et al., 2015](#)) due to missing data on one or more of the surveys but rather kept all respondents who completed at least one survey and used the maximum likelihood estimator (e.g., [Hox, 2010](#); [Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002](#); [Singer & Willett, 2003](#); [Wang et al., 2017](#)).

3.3. Sample

Respondents were, on average, 34.82 years old ($SD = 9.10$), 33.80% were male, 46.80% were female and 19.40% were non-binary or did not disclose their gender. This is in line with findings from [Suutari and Brewster \(2000\)](#) who found SIEs to be younger and more likely to be female compared to company-sent expatriates. 0.20% had completed elementary school education, 9.10% had completed high school education, 8.10% had completed intermediate vocational education, 77.40% had completed university education, and 5.10% had completed a doctoral degree. Of all respondents, 37.50% was married, 33.60% was in a relationship, and 28.90% was single. Respondents spoke 66 different native languages (top five listed here): English (16.20%), Spanish (8.10%), Polish (5.10%), Portuguese (4.20%), and Italian (3.60%). In terms of the language spoken at work, 62.00% of the SIEs spoke their host country's language, 24.30% spoke their home country language, and 13.70% spoke another language. Respondents worked on average 34.04 h per week ($SD = 12.18$) and have been employed for on average 5.07 years for their current employer ($SD = 4.79$). They have been in their host country for an average of 9.91 years ($SD = 7.53$). Our respondents came from a wide range of sectors (top five listed here): information technology (14.50%), health care (12.50%), education (12.50%), engineering and manufacturing (8.60%), and business, consulting & management (6.60%).

3.4. Materials

We adopted a full panel design, in which we measured all variables at all three measurements ([Taris & Kompier, 2014](#)), except for host country

language proficiency because this variable is not expected to fluctuate within the duration of the study. We were therefore able to control for auto-regressive effects.

Perceptions of PC breach were measured with the 5-items by Robinson and Morrison (2000) rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. An example item is “I have not received everything promised to me in exchange for my contributions” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.87$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.89$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.89$).

PC violation was measured with the 4-items by Robinson and Morrison (2000) rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. An example item is “I feel a great deal of anger toward my organization” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.90$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.90$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.91$).

CWB was measured with 6-items to capture deviance towards the organization (CWB–O) and with 6-items to capture deviance towards individuals (CWB–I) within the organization (Dalal et al., 2009). Respondents rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “very unlikely” to (7) “very likely”. An example item for CWB–O is “Spoke poorly about my organization to others.” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.84$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.87$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.89$). An example item for CWB–I is “Behaved in an unpleasant manner toward my supervisor/a coworker.” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.80$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.82$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.83$).

OCB was measured with 6-items to capture citizenship behavior towards the organization (OCB–O) and with 6-items to capture citizenship behavior towards individuals (OCB–I) within the organization (Dalal et al., 2009). Respondents rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “very unlikely” to (7) “very likely”. An example item for OCB–O is “Went above and beyond what was required for the work task.” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.84$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.86$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.90$). An example item for OCB–I is “Defend (my supervisor’s/a coworker’s) opinion or suggestion.” ($\alpha_{t1} = 0.87$; $\alpha_{t2} = 0.88$; $\alpha_{t3} = 0.91$).

Host country language proficiency was measured with 5-items by Yamao and Sekiguchi (2015) rated on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “very low” to (7) “very high”. This scale was originally developed to rate English proficiency. We therefore changed the wording of the items and replaced “English” with “host country language.” The five aspects of their host country language proficiency that respondents were required to rate were (1) reading, (2) listening, (3) writing, (4) speaking and (5) overall ability ($\alpha = 0.97$).

3.5. Analytic strategy

We conducted a moderated mediation path model in Mplus version 8.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2013). The moderation effects were tested by including an interaction effect between perceptions of PC breach at T1 and HCLP at T1 when determining the moderating role of HCLP at T1 on the relationship between perceptions of PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2. To further unpack and aid the interpretation of potentially significant interaction effects, we used the regions of significance approach or the Johnson-Neyman technique (Preacher et al., 2006) instead of the traditional simple slope method. The mediation effects were tested using the product-of-coefficients approach and their significance was scrutinized by means of 10,000 bootstrap samples 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs); hereafter simply referred to as 95% CI. Specifically, we multiplied the regression coefficients linking perceptions of PC breach at T1 to PC violation at T2 with the regression coefficients linking PC violation at T2 to enactment of CWB–I, CWB–O, OCB–I, and OCB–O at T3.

Finally, previous research (Zhang & Rienties, 2017) did not find a significant effect of HCLP in a majorly English-speaking environment, suggesting that the language spoken at work could influence the role of HCLP. We therefore wanted to make sure that there would not be any effects from the language spoken at work in our analysis on HCLP. Hence, we measured *language spoken at work* at T1 with the following question: “Which language do you speak at work?”. Respondents could select (1) host country language, (2) home country language, and (3) another language. Moreover, because low HCLP might lead to SIEs to identify as members of a lower status group, potentially leading to more

negative reactions to PC breach (Kraak et al., 2017), we also measured *social status* at T1 with the 3-items by Rhee and Choi (2017) rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree”. An example item is “I am well respected in this group” ($\alpha = 0.80$). In line with best practice recommendations by, among others, Becker et al. (2016) we compared and contrasted a model in which we included language spoken at work and social status as control variables with a model in which we did not include language spoken at work and social status as control variables.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables under study.

4.2. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

We started with a series of CFAs, using the conventional standards by Dyer et al. (2005) to assess model fit and compared competing models using loglikelihood ratio test. We started by estimating a model that matched the theoretical factor structure and included a latent factor for each concept under study. This theoretical model fit the data well at each of the three measurement points in time (see Table 2), with each item loading significantly and in the expected direction onto its respective latent factor. Next, we estimated five alternative models. HCLP was only measured at T1 due to its stable nature and was thus only included in the CFA models at T1. Alternative model A (T1: $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 46.81$, $p < .001$; T2: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 66.67$, $p < .001$; T3: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 75.73$, $p < .001$), alternative model B (T1: $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 106.41$, $p < .001$; T2: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 136.67$, $p < .001$; T3: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 85.19$, $p < .001$), alternative model C (T1: $\Delta\chi^2(6) = 107.22$, $p < .001$; T2: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 119.67$, $p < .001$; T3: $\Delta\chi^2(5) = 52.47$, $p < .001$), alternative model D (T1: $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 494.70$, $p < .001$; T2: $\Delta\chi^2(12) = 496.12$, $p < .001$; T3: $\Delta\chi^2(12) = 422.64$, $p < .001$) and alternative model E (T1: $\Delta\chi^2(21) = 3786.98$, $p < .001$; T2: $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 1192.67$, $p < .001$; T3: $\Delta\chi^2(15) = 1033.29$, $p < .001$) fit significantly worse to the data than the theoretical model at each point in time. Hence, our theoretical model guided hypotheses testing.

4.3. Preliminary analysis

We first estimated and compared—considering the principle of parsimoniousness—a partial mediation path model¹ with a partial moderated mediation path model to determine (1) whether inclusion of our moderator (HCLP) provided a better fit to the data, and (2) to ascertain whether the same direct and indirect paths were significant in both models. We compared both models using a chi-square difference test, their sample-size adjusted BIC and AIC values. The partial moderated mediation path model was not statistically significantly different ($\Delta\chi^2(6) = 6.23$, $p = .40$) from the partial mediation path model. However, we found the partial moderated mediation path model (sample-size adjusted BIC = 2293.41; AIC = 2287.52) to fit the data better than a partial mediation path model (sample-size adjusted BIC = 3052.55; AIC

¹ Although found that the partial mediation path model is not statistically significantly different ($\Delta\chi^2(4) = 6.86$, $p = .14$) from the full mediation path model, we did find that partial mediation path model (sample-size adjusted BIC = 3052.55; AIC = 3039.08) does seem to fit the data better than a full mediation path model (sample-size adjusted BIC = 3118.42; AIC = 3041.35). When comparing both models, it is advised that a difference in BIC value of 10 points corresponds to the odds being 150 to 1 that the model with the smaller sample-size adjusted BIC value is the better fitting model and it is hence considered very strong evidence in favor of the model with the lowest sample-size adjusted BIC value; in this case the full mediation path model (Raftery, 1995).

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and correlations.

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
1. PC breach T1	2.33	.94	–																		
2. PC breach T2	2.52	.98	.61***	–																	
3. PC breach T3	2.47	.98	.59***	.76***	–																
4. Violation feelings T1	1.98	1.02	.77***	.55***	–																
5. Violation feelings T2	2.18	1.06	.53***	.79***	.60***	–															
6. Violation feelings T3	2.13	1.06	.54***	.71***	.60***	.60***	–														
7. CWB-O T1	2.93	1.31	.34***	.28***	.31***	.41***	.33***	.39***	–												
8. CWB-O T2	3.11	1.34	.26***	.31***	.36***	.27***	.43***	.43***	.66***	–											
9. CWB-O T3	3.07	1.41	.26***	.34***	.40***	.23***	.41***	.48***	.69***	.84***	–										
10. CWB-I T1	2.19	1.01	.39***	.34***	.37***	.47***	.39***	.41***	.66***	.49***	.47***	–									
11. CWB-I T2	2.26	1.03	.32***	.45***	.43***	.34***	.52***	.49***	.47***	.67***	.59***	.55***	–								
12. CWB-I T3	2.29	1.07	.29***	.36***	.43***	.28***	.46***	.56***	.48***	.59***	.73***	.53***	.75***	–							
13. OCB-O T1	4.76	1.11	–.43***	–.33***	–.41***	–.46***	–.36***	–.40***	–.61***	–.42***	–.50***	–.45***	–.31***	–.39***	–						
14. OCB-O T2	4.61	1.22	–.35***	–.48***	–.48***	–.37***	–.55***	–.54***	–.49***	–.62***	–.63***	–.38***	–.50***	–.49***	.68***	–					
15. OCB-O T3	4.62	1.28	–.32***	–.38***	–.48***	–.30***	–.48***	–.51***	–.54***	–.62***	–.66***	–.41***	–.50***	–.52***	.68***	.84***	–				
16. OCB-I T1	5.11	1.06	–.41***	–.35***	–.42***	–.44***	–.36***	–.41***	–.45***	–.33***	–.39***	–.48***	–.38***	–.40***	.74***	.60***	.58***	–			
17. OCB-I T2	4.98	1.09	–.33***	–.49***	–.32***	–.49***	–.53***	–.48***	–.34***	–.45***	–.46***	–.40***	–.57***	–.49***	.53***	.77***	.67***	.68***	–		
18. OCB-I T3	5.00	1.16	–.29***	–.44***	–.56***	–.33***	–.55***	–.55***	–.41***	–.49***	–.53***	–.43***	–.56***	–.55***	.58***	.74***	.82***	.67***	.81***	–	
19. Language Proficiency	5.79	1.45	–.08	–.05	–.10	.02	–.02	–.11	–.01	–.05	–.03	–.03	–.01	–.07	–.55***	–.01	.01	.08	.01	.03	–

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p \leq .001$.

Table 2
Confirmatory factor analyses results.

Model	$\chi^2 (df)$	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR
T1					
Theoretical model	1229.16 (622)	.05	.93	.92	.06
Alternative Model A	1275.97 (628)	.05	.92	.92	.06
B	1335.57 (628)	.05	.92	.91	.06
C	1336.38 (628)	.05	.92	.91	.06
D	1723.86 (637)	.06	.87	.86	.07
E	5016.14 (643)	.13	.49	.44	.28
T2					
Theoretical model	1015.72 (461)	.06	.91	.90	.07
Alternative Model A	1082.39 (466)	.06	.90	.89	.07
B	1152.39 (466)	.07	.89	.88	.07
C	1135.40 (466)	.06	.89	.88	.07
D	1511.84 (473)	.08	.84	.82	.08
E	2208.39 (476)	.10	.73	.70	.10
T3					
Theoretical model	940.33 (461)	.06	.91	.90	.06
Alternative Model A	1016.06 (466)	.07	.90	.89	.07
B	1025.52 (466)	.07	.90	.89	.06
C	992.28 (466)	.06	.91	.89	.07
D	1362.97 (473)	.08	.84	.82	.08
E	1973.62 (476)	.11	.73	.70	.10

Note: Theoretical model: PC breach, PC violation, CWB-O, CWB-I, OCB-O, OCB-I, and HCLP each load onto a separate latent factor. Alternative Model A: PC breach and PC violation load onto one latent factor; CWB-O, CWB-I, OCB-O, OCB-I, and HCLP each load onto a separate latent factor. Alternative Model B: CWB-O and CWB-I load onto one latent factor; PC breach, PC violation, OCB-O, OCB-I, and HCLP each load onto a separate latent factor. Alternative Model C: OCB-O and OCB-I load onto one latent factor; PC breach, PC violation, CWB-O, CWB-I, and HCLP each load onto a separate latent factor. Alternative Model D: CWB-O, CWB-I, OCB-O, and OCB-I load onto one latent factor; PC breach, PC violation, and HCLP each load onto a separate latent factor. Alternative Model D: PC breach, PC violation, CWB-O, CWB-I, OCB-O, OCB-I, and HCLP load onto a single latent factor.

= 3039.08) when comparing the sample-size adjusted BIC and AIC values. We moreover found that all direct and indirect relationships in both models were significant; indicating that the same structure of relationships exists in both models but that the inclusion of the moderation effects offered a better fit to the data. As such, all (including the mediation effects) of the below presented results are from the partial moderated mediation path model.

Finally, keeping with best practice recommendations (e.g., Becker et al., 2016), we also compared and contrasted a partial moderated mediation model in which we included language spoken at work and social status at T1 as control variables with a model in which we did not include these variables as control variables. We found that the inclusion of language spoken at work did not significantly improve model fit ($\Delta\chi^2(2) = 2.72, p = .26$). However, using the same rationale as presented above, we did find that the model including language spoken at work and social status at T1 as control variables (sample-size adjusted BIC = 2292.61; AIC = 2286.36) seemed to fit the data better than a model not including these control variables (sample-size adjusted BIC = 2293.41; AIC = 2287.52) when comparing the sample-size adjusted BIC and AIC values; albeit it being very minimal. In line with best practice recommendations (e.g., Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016) we kept language spoken at work and social status at T1 as control variables in our model. Therefore, all the below presented results are from the partial moderated mediation path model with the inclusion of language spoken at work and social status at T1 as control variables.

4.4. Hypothesis testing

Unstandardized results (see Fig. 1 for a graphical representation; see Table 3 for an overview of the unstandardized effects) showed that perceptions of PC breach at T1 were positively associated with PC violation at T2 (estimate = 0.621; SE = 0.071; $p < .001, R^2 = 0.32, p <$

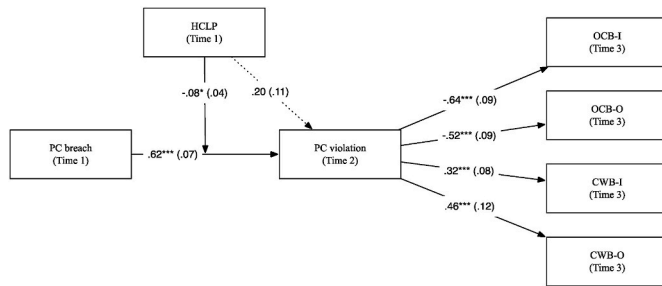


Fig. 1. Unstandardized estimated paths in the moderated mediation path model.
 Note: *, $p < .05$. **, $p < .01$. ***, $p < .001$. Dotted lines indicate non-significant relationships. Standard errors are presented between parentheses. $R^2_{PC\ violation} = .32, p < .001$; $R^2_{OCB-I} = 0.35, p < .001$; $R^2_{OCB-O} = 0.29, p < .001$; $R^2_{CWB-I} = 0.22, p < .001$; $R^2_{CWB-O} = 0.22, p < .001$.

Table 3

Overview of the unstandardized estimated paths in the moderated mediation path model.

Path	Estimate	SE	p-value
<i>Direct estimates</i>			
PC breach T1 -> PC violation T2	.62	.07	<.001
PC violation T2 -> OCB-I T3	-.66	.09	<.001
-> OCB-O T3	-.52	.09	<.001
-> CBW-I T3	.31	.08	<.001
-> CBW-O T3	.46	.12	<.001
PC breach T1 -> OCB-I T3	.16	.11	.166
-> OCB-O T3	.09	.11	.379
-> CBW-I T3	.03	.09	.781
-> CBW-O T3	-.002	.13	.986
HCLP T1 -> PC violation T2	.20	.11	.065
PC breach T1 * HCLP T1 -> PC violation T2	-.08	.04	.027
<i>Indirect estimates</i>			
PC breach T1 -> PC violation T2 -> OCB-I T3	-.41	.07	<.001
-> OCB-O T3	-.32	.07	<.001
-> CBW-I T3	.20	.05	<.001
-> CBW-O T3	.29	.08	<.001
<i>Controls</i>			
Social status T1 -> OCB-I T3	.32	.11	.005
-> OCB-O T3	.44	.14	.002
-> CBW-I T3	-.26	.11	.018
-> CBW-O T3	-.40	.18	.022
Language spoken at work T1 -> OCB-I T3	-.03	.13	.795
-> OCB-O T3	-.17	.13	.200
-> CBW-I T3	-.10	.11	.364
-> CBW-O T3	-.18	.17	.289

Note: estimate = unstandardized effect; SE = standard error.

.001). Next, we found that PC violation at T2 were positively associated with the enactment of CWB-I at T3 (estimate = 0.314; SE = 0.079; $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $p < .001$) and CWB-O at T3 (estimate = 0.464; SE = 0.118; $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $p < .001$), whereas PC violation at T2 were negatively associated with the enactment of OCB-I at T3 (estimate = -.664; SE = 0.086; $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.35$, $p < .001$) and OCB-O at T3 (estimate = -.517; SE = 0.089; $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.29$, $p < .001$). We found no significant associations between PC breach at T1 and the enactment of CWB-I at T3 (estimate = 0.025; SE = 0.089; $p = .781$), the enactment of CWB-O at T3 (estimate = -.002; SE = 0.129; $p = .986$), the enactment of OCB-I at T3 (estimate = -.158; SE = 0.114; $p = .166$) and the enactment of OCB-O at T3 (estimate = 0.093; SE = 0.106; $p = .379$).

When interpreting the indirect effects, we found a significant positive indirect effect of PC breach at T1 on enactment of CWB-I at T3 (estimate = 0.195; 95%CI = [0.089; 0.300]) and CWB-O at T3 (estimate = 0.288; 95%CI = [0.135; 0.441]) via PC violation at T2, confirming hypotheses H1a and H1b. Moreover, we also found a significant negative indirect effect of PC breach at T1 on enactment of OCB-I at T3 (estimate = -.321; 95%CI = [-0.456; -.186]) and OCB-O at T3 (estimate = -.412; 95%CI = [-0.551; -.273]) via PC violation at T2, thus confirming Hypotheses

H2a and H2b. Host country language proficiency at T1 was not significantly associated with PC violation at T2 (estimate = 0.199; SE = 0.108; $p = .065$), whereas the interaction effect was statistically significant (estimate = -.083; SE = 0.038; $p = .027$). H3 was therefore confirmed.

In addition, we also found that the conditional indirect effects² were significant and in line with the hypotheses. That is, we found that the conditional indirect effect of PC breach at T1 on enactment of CWB-I and CWB-O at T3 via violation feelings at T2 was significant and positive under low (estimate = 0.187; 95%CI = [0.086; 0.288]; estimate = 0.226; 95%CI = [0.091; 0.360], respectively), medium (estimate = 0.235; 95%CI = [0.132; 0.337; estimate = 0.283; 95%CI = [0.146; 0.420], respectively), and high (estimate = 0.282; 95%CI = [0.164; 0.400]; estimate = 0.340; 95%CI = [0.185; 0.496], respectively). Next, we found that the conditional indirect effect of PC breach at T1 on enactment of OCB-I and OCB-O at T3 via violation feelings at T2 was significant and negative under low (estimate = -.309; 95%CI = [-.436; -.182]; estimate = -.247; 95%CI = [-.373; -.121], respectively), medium (estimate = -.388; 95%CI = [-.503; -.272]; estimate = -.310; 95%CI = [-.431; -.189], respectively), and high (estimate = -.466; 95%CI = [-.604; -.328]; estimate = -.373; 95%CI = [-.509; -.236], respectively). Moreover, we also found that the total effect³ were significant and in line with the hypotheses. That is, we found that the total effect for CWB-I and CWB-O at T3 was significant and positive under low (estimate = 0.260; 95%CI = [0.120; 0.401]; estimate = 0.312; 95%CI = [0.120; 0.505], respectively), medium (estimate = 0.308; 95%CI = [0.169; 0.446]; estimate = 0.312; 95%CI = [0.120; 0.505], respectively), and high (estimate = 0.355; 95%CI = [0.208; 0.502]; estimate = 0.427; 95%CI = [0.226; 0.628], respectively). Furthermore, we found that the total effect for OCB-I and OCB-O at T3 was significant and negative under low (estimate = -.275; 95%CI = [-.453; -.096]; estimate = -.360; 95%CI = [-.521; -.200], respectively), medium (estimate = -.353; 95%CI = [-.514; -.192]; estimate = -.423; 95%CI = [-.579; -.267], respectively), and high (estimate = -.432; 95%CI = [-.600; -.263]; estimate = -.486; 95%CI = [-.655; -.317], respectively).

Finally, in terms of the control variables, it is noteworthy that social status at T1 was negatively associated with the enactment of CWB-I at T3 (estimate = -.262; SE = 0.111; $p = .018$) and CWB-O at T3 (estimate = -.402; SE = 0.176; $p = .022$), whereas it was positively associated with the enactment of OCB-I at T3 (estimate = 0.316; SE = 0.114; $p = .005$) and OCB-O at T3 (estimate = 0.438; SE = 0.138; $p = .002$). Language spoken at work at T1 was not significantly associated with the enactment of CWB-I at T3 (estimate = -.102; SE = 0.113; $p = .364$), CWB-O at T3 (estimate = -.183; SE = 0.172; $p = .289$), OCB-I at T3 (estimate = -.033; SE = 0.126; $p = .795$), and OCB-O at T3 (estimate = -.168; SE = 0.131; $p = .200$).

Fig. 2 shows the plotted confidence bands for the moderating role of HCLP at T1 on the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2. The simple slopes for the moderating role of HCLP at T1 were significant inside the 4.31 and 414.14 region; implying that the effect of PC breach at T1 on PC violation at T2 was significant for HCLP as of a value of 4.32 (the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2 decreases in strength as values of HCLP at T1 move further away from a value of 4.32). In simple slope terms, this means that for medium ($t = 4.70$, $p < .001$) and high levels ($t = 4.98$, $p < .001$) of HCLP at T1, a negative relationship exists between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2, whereas this was not the case for low levels ($t = 0.93$, $p = .375$) of HCLP at T1. It is noteworthy that the simple slopes are significantly different between (1) low and medium levels of HCLP and (2) low and

² The indirect effect under low (i.e., -1SD), medium, and high (i.e., +1 SD) levels of host country language proficiency.

³ The conditional indirect effect under low (i.e., -1SD), medium, and high (i.e., +1 SD) levels of host country language proficiency plus the direct effect of PC breach at T1 on the outcomes at T3.

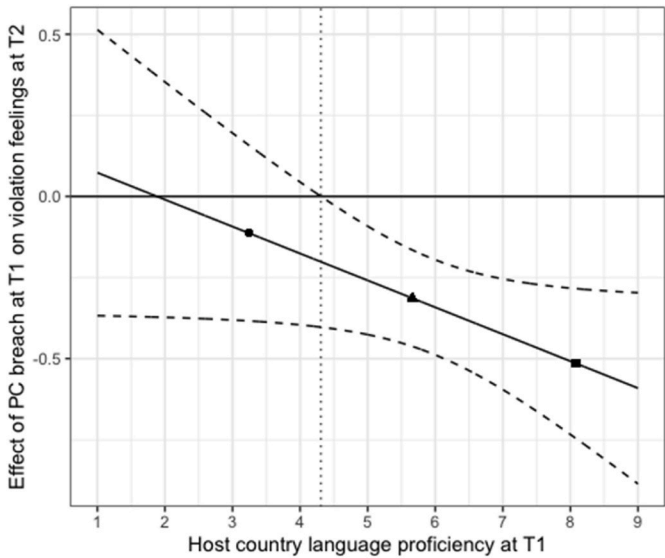


Fig. 2. Johnson-Neyman plot for the moderating role of HCLP at T1 on the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2. Note that the first symbol (circle) corresponds to low levels of HCLP (-1SD), the second symbol (triangle) corresponds to mean levels of HCLP (mean), and the third symbol (square) corresponds to high levels of HCLP (+1SD). In the Johnson-Neyman plot, the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2 is significant for any value on the right-hand side of the vertical dotted line (value = 4.3085; approximately corresponding to medium levels of HCLP).

high levels of HCLP, but not between medium and high levels of HCLP. This suggest that a negative relationship exists between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2 for medium and high levels of HCLP at T1.

4.5. Post-hoc testing

Given that from our total sample as described above, 62.00% of the SIEs spoke their host country’s language, 24.30% spoke their home country language, and 13.70% spoke another language, we aimed to replicate the above-presented results by only focusing on the sub-set of SIEs who spoke their host country’s language at work, as this group may experience different effects of HCLP compared to the groups which spoke their home country language or another language at work. We found no meaningful differences in our above presented results in the sense that the obtained conclusions are identical: identical relationships are significant at the same levels of significance (see Figs. 3 and 4). The absence of any differences might be because even if SIEs speak their home country language or another language than the host country’s

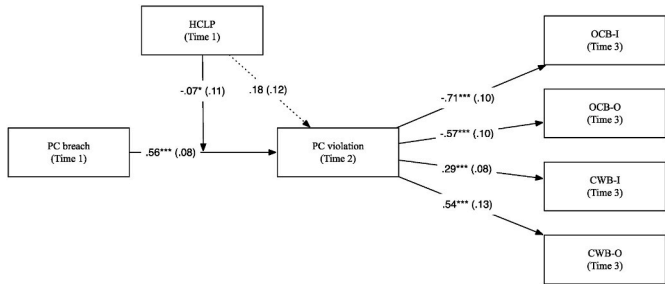


Fig. 3. Unstandardized estimated paths in the post-hoc moderated mediation path model - sub-set of SIEs who spoke their host country’s language at work. Note: *: $p < .05$. **: $p < .01$. ***: $p < .001$. Dotted lines indicate non-significant relationships. Standard errors are presented between parentheses. $R^2_{PC\ violation} = .27, p < .001$; $R^2_{OCB-I} = 0.37, p < .001$; $R^2_{OCB-O} = 0.30, p < .001$; $R^2_{CWB-I} = 0.20, p < .001$; $R^2_{CWB-O} = 0.27, p < .001$.

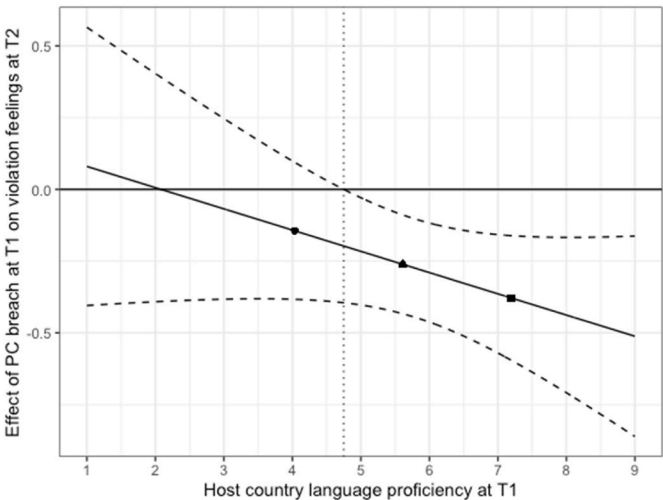


Fig. 4. Johnson-Neyman plot for the moderating role of HCLP at T1 on the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2 in the post-hoc model - sub-set of SIEs who spoke their host country’s language at work. Note that the first symbol (circle) corresponds to low levels of HCLP (-1SD), the second symbol (triangle) corresponds to mean levels of HCLP (mean), and the third symbol (square) corresponds to high levels of HCLP (+1SD). In the Johnson-Neyman plot, the relationship between PC breach at T1 and PC violation at T2 is significant for any value on the right-hand side of the vertical dotted line (value = 4.7499; approximately corresponding to medium levels of HCLP).

language at work, their correspondence with management, any paper-work, procedures, practices, contracts, etc., are likely to be written in the host-country’s language.

5. Discussion

5.1. Theoretical implications

This longitudinal research makes two main contributes to the growing body of research on the PC of SIEs. First, and in line with previous research (e.g., Bordia et al., 2008; Chiu & Peng, 2008; Dulac et al., 2008; Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a), SIEs perceiving PC breach at T1 reported increased violation feelings at T2, which in turn triggered increased enactment of CWB and reduced enactment of OCB towards their organizations and individuals within those organizations at T3. These results are in line with the reciprocity principal (Gouldner, 1960) and more specific homeomorphic reciprocity (Cropanzano et al., 2017); SIEs display negative reciprocity (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) while at the same time withholding positive reciprocity (Cropanzano et al., 2017) to restore balance (Shore & Barksdale, 1998) in the exchange relationship with their employer. This is an important contribution to the literature which often focuses on the wider SIE experience as a temporary and extraordinary step away from the SIEs ‘real’ life and career back home and does not necessarily include the SIE PC as part of the daily grind that these individuals experience in their workplace during their SIE experience (e.g., Doherty, 2013; Doherty et al., 2011; Inkson et al., 1997). Our results suggest that the reactions to negative events such as PC breach in the SIE employment relationship follow the same processes as one would expect in a sample that is not considered to be going through a unique experience abroad. In terms of contextualization of the PC (e.g., Griep et al., 2019) this finding seems to indicate that if there are differences between SIE PCs and those of other samples, that these differences are likely to be found in other areas such as the actual exchange agreement (i.e., the contents negotiated with the employer). However, when using global scales to measure PC breach and PC violation (Robinson & Morrison, 2000) we found that SIEs opt

for behavior that is in line with the negative reciprocity norm, following PC breach and PC violation.

Second, we show that HCLP moderated the relationship between PC breach and PC violation in such a way that SIEs who had a poor understanding of the local language had stronger negative emotions following perceptions of PC breach. Our results show that this was only the case for SIEs with low levels of HCLP and not for those who had intermediate or high levels of HCLP, indicating that the effect of HCLP is an important element when SIEs are not able to communicate about PC breach events in the local country. The negative relationship between PC breach and PC violation has long been established in the literature (e.g., Robinson & Morrison, 2000; Zhao et al., 2007) and previous research has discussed the importance of communication in the aftermath of PC breach (Bankins, 2015; Chang et al., 2020; Giese & Thiel, 2015; Tomprou et al., 2015). Nonetheless, the literature to date remains rather silent on the exact role of language and communication in this process. Specifically, research has not focused on the role of HCLP in the relationship between PC breach and PC violation for SIEs. A possible reason for this is that many assume that English is now the lingua franca of the world (Selmer & Luring, 2015). Another possible reason for this could be that previous findings indicated that HCLP did not have any effect in a comparative study between company sent- and self-initiated expatriates (Zhang and Rienties (2017)). However, comparing two distinct expatriate populations in a majorly English-speaking multinational environment might have omitted the unique local context in which SIE PCs typically exist. Following recent calls for more contextualization of the PC (Griep et al., 2019; Kraak & Linde, 2019), this research focused exclusively on a diverse population of SIEs, thereby studying the role of HCLP on the relationship between PC breach perceptions and PC violation in the appropriate context in which SIEs operate. Unlike previous results from Zhang and Rienties (2017), our study shows that HCLP plays a significant role for those SIEs who have low HCLP. Although we are not able to identify the exact nature of the communication issues for SIEs, as this falls outside of the scope of our study, we now know that those who have low levels of HCLP react differently to breach than their counterparts who are fluent in the host country language. These findings can also contribute to the wider PC literature by showing that the ability to communicate in the aftermath of PC breach has important emotional (i.e., less intense PC violation) and behavioral (i.e., less severe increases in CWB and less severe decreases in OCB enactment) consequences. These findings may apply to many other groups and individuals who potentially have difficulties communicating with their employer. For instance, people who have disabilities (e.g., deaf people or those who are hard of hearing, dyslexic people) or individuals who do not have direct access to their employer (e.g., platform workers who deliver meals or drive clients) could also have stronger PC violation following PC breach because they are not able to discuss, understand, and repair the PC breach event.

At this point it is also important to note that this specific study focused on the importance of communication and HCLP with regards to how SIEs interact with their PC and exchange relationship, whereas the special issue collection by O'Donohue et al. (2018) also highlighted two main additional issues SIEs encounter with regards to the social exchange relationship with their employer. First there is a need for HRM in organizations to pay greater attention to, and provide support for, a range of individual differences among SIEs; the satisfactory management of which can be crucial to the success of international assignments and the extent to which SIEs interpret their PC as either fulfilled or breached. One such example pertains to the rising numbers of accompanying families choosing to relocate. In this regard, McNulty and Hutchings (2016) suggested the potential contribution that families and the possible presence of (special needs and/or gifted) children can make to the success or failure of international assignments, and the extent to which these frictions might impact the PC and social exchange relationship of SIEs with their employer. Second, given the uncertainty involved in living and working in a foreign country, Bonache (2005),

Chen (2010), Kraimer and Wayne (2004), O'Donohue et al. (2018) list a series of factors that could influence an SIE's PC for the better or the worse. These factors include, but are not limited to, conflict between commitment to the parent vs. host organisation, perceptions of interactional justice and the level of social support available from both the parent and host organization, individual differences such as the rate of adjustment to the host country and host organization or the level of interest in and affinity with a host culture, feelings of isolation at the host organization, and situational stressors such as economic recession or pandemics.

5.2. Limitations and suggestions for future research

As in all studies, our study yields some limitations and avenues for further research that deserve attention. First, we use self-report data which might be more susceptible to common method variance within each wave of data collection, akin to social desirability biases (Podsakoff et al., 2012). However, because we wanted to study employee perceptions of organizational values, self-reported measures are appropriate (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Furthermore, there is support from meta-analyses that self- and other-rated CWB and OCB data converges (Berry et al., 2012; Carpenter et al., 2014). The order of the scales was randomized to further reduce common method variance. Moreover, participation in this research was anonymous to limit any potential social desirability biases.

Second, although our study focused exclusively on SIEs, our sample was particularly well-educated with 82.50% having completed a university or doctoral degree. We currently do not know if this high level of education would have had any influence because there is no extensive body of research on HCLP for SIEs. However, compared to the study by Froese and Peltokorpi (2013)⁴ in which 96% had a university degree, our sample seems equally highly educated. Overall, there does seem to be a strong focus on high skilled labor in the SIE literature. In an overview of 49 studies on SIEs between 1996 and 2011 (Doherty, 2013), not a single study mentioned menial jobs. Future research could however focus more on the role of education when studying language proficiency because this would allow for a more exhaustive understanding of the impact of education and language proficiency on the PC of SIEs.

Third, our results demonstrated that low levels of HCLP amplify the relationship between perceptions of PC breach and PC violation. However, we do not know exactly why and how this happens. We have mentioned several possible reasons in the theoretical contributions that are related to hindered communication, but these are educated guesses at the moment. Future research could include a variety of communication aspects to further lift the curtain on the role that HCLP plays and how it is related to breach, violation, and outcomes. Qualitative research would allow participants to describe how they interpret their PC, elicit stories of coping responses to breach and chart outcomes (Bankins, 2015). Furthermore, this would allow researchers to explore how communication problems feed into other potential elements at play such as the integration of SIEs with low levels of HCLP in the company and the extent to which they have social interactions at work with their colleagues.

Finally, another interesting question arises with regards to this moderating effect, namely if and how this moderating effect is different depending on someone's time perspective. Future research on the PC of SIEs could follow recommendations by Griep et al. (2019) and include perceptions of time to examine if SIEs will have different reactions to PC breach depending on their time perspective. This can be particularly interesting because SIEs will return home at one point, and their perception of where they are in their time abroad and how that stay abroad relates to their future working lives back home, might have

⁴ Zhang and Rienties (2017) did not provide any information on education for their participants.

consequences on how important the ability to communicate, and hence the need to become proficient in the host country language.

5.3. Practical implications

This research makes several recommendations for practice. First, the role of low HCLP in amplifying PC violation following perceptions of PC breach among SIEs suggests that organizations would benefit from offering language training: something that is typically part of support packages reserved for company-sent expatriates (Shaffer et al., 2012). SIEs apply for local jobs in their host country and are often attributed with being proactive, insinuating that they are already prepared when it comes to the local language and culture (Andresen et al., 2020). Providing SIEs with language courses might therefore be viewed as something that falls outside of the organization's responsibilities and maybe even as an unnecessary cost, especially for smaller organizations with little or no previous experience with hiring SIEs; however, organizational support in the form of language courses for SIEs might be beneficial for both the company and the SIE. Language proficiency, in addition to the beneficial effects found in our study, has been shown to improve adjustment and create stronger relationships in international contexts (e.g., Heizmann et al., 2018; Peltokorpi, 2008; Swift and Wallace, 2011). Our data suggests that improved HCLP—especially in case of low proficiency—could significantly reduce PC violation following PC breach events, which in turn reduces CWB and increases OCB. In line with this, we advise organizations to put in place an HR policy for SIEs which includes an HCLP assessment and language classes for those with low scores on the language test.

Second, this research also shows that organizations should attribute the same importance to SIEs as they would attribute to locals when it comes to anticipating potential negative outcomes of PC breach. SIEs are often seen as individuals who are on an adventure, who do not necessarily focus on their career, and who will return to their home country at one point (e.g., Inkson et al., 1997; Doherty et al., 2011; Doherty et al., 2013). It is therefore easy to assume that PC breach would have less of a severe impact. However, as the average organizational tenure of 5-years in this study shows, these individuals are likely to spend quite some time with their host-country employer and—even if the career is not the most important motivation for all SIEs—they react similarly to other employees during that time. This means that managers must understand the effects of PC breach for SIEs and that these effects can increase if PC breach and PC violation accumulate over time, potentially leading to a negative employee-employer spiral (Griep & Vantilborgh, 2018a). Consequently, these SIEs can enact increasing levels of CWB as well as decreasing levels of OCB for years, leading to a range of missed opportunities and losses for the organization. Managers should therefore be made aware of how PC breach can lead to strong negative emotions and behavioral outcomes for all employees, including SIEs, so that they can better accommodate the individuals working for them.

Data availability statement

The data used in this manuscript can be found on The Open Science Framework using the following DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/8976Q.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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