Available on: https://jefrr.ep-journals.org/ E-: 3051-3650 P-ISSN: 3051-3642

Journal of Economic Finance Research and Review

Volume: 02 Issue: 04 April 2026

Psychological Contract and Organisational Citizen Behaviour in the Nigerian Context

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Published Date: April 24, 2026 **Article DOI: 10.65150/EP-jefrr/V2E4/2026-05**

ABSTRACT: In the Nigerian context, limited empirical research exists on voluntary work behaviours as influenced by the psychological contract, which is essential for a nuanced understanding of the employment relationship. This study, therefore, examined the effect of psychological contract on organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). A cross-sectional research design was adopted, and primary data were obtained through the administration of structured questionnaires. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. The findings revealed that psychological contract significantly predicts OCB in the Nigerian context (R^2 = .420, F = 29.845, p < .001). Specifically, transactional contract (β = .388, t = 4.120, p < .001) and balanced contract (β = .761, t = 3.651, p < .001) had significant positive effects on OCB. However, relational and transitional contracts did not show any statistically significant influence on OCB. The study concludes that psychological contract is a key determinant of organisational citizenship behaviour in Nigeria. The findings have important implications for stakeholders in the employment sector, particularly in addressing brain drain and enhancing employee retention strategies for improved individual and organisational performance.

KEYWORDS: Psychological contract, transactional contract, relational contract, transitional contract, balanced contract, organisational citizenship behaviour

1. INTRODUCTION

The scholarly literature on exchange relationships, particularly through the lens of social exchange theory, posits that human interactions are governed by a norm of reciprocity (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). In the context of the employment relationship, this theoretical premise suggests that an organization's efforts to enhance employee well-being are perceived as gestures that will be reciprocated with positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, such as work engagement, organizational commitment, and OCB (Mehmood et al., 2022; Kelloway et al., 2013).OCB is defined as a voluntary, non-transactional helping behavior that goes beyond formal job duties to benefit the organization as a whole (Organ, 1988). The value of such behavior to an organization is significant, as it can foster trust, enhance work engagement, and ultimately drive performance (Srivastava & Madam, 2016).

In an employment relationship, both formal contracts and the psychological contract govern the terms of engagement. The psychological contract is a subjective, unwritten agreement based on an employee's beliefs about the promises and obligations exchanged with their employer (Rousseau, 1989). Drawing from Affective Events Theory (AET), a positive perception of organizational events, such as the fulfillment of the psychological contract, can trigger positive affective reactions that lead to desirable behaviors. While extant literature has largely focused on the negative consequences of psychological contract breach, there remains a scholarly gap concerning the empirical evidence of how psychological contract fulfillment can lead to positive attitudinal outcomes like extra-role behavior.

This inquiry is particularly relevant within the Nigerian context. Despite the existence of labor laws, there is a pervasive issue of non-compliance by employers, leading to violations such as wage disparities and the casualization of labor (Akinselure, 2021). This environment of formal contractual violations presents a paradox, as Nigeria is also a collectivist society where a culture of voluntary assistance is common. The juxtaposition of legal non-compliance and a cultural inclination towards prosocial behavior makes it imperative to investigate whether the fulfillment of the psychological contract can still engender organisational citizen behavior among workers. The dearth of psychological contract literature in the Nigerian context underscores the need for empirical evidence to provide a grounded understanding of contemporary employment relationships in the region.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Psychological Contract

The psychological contract is a central concept in organizational behavior, though it lacks a single, universally accepted definition. This is largely because it has been conceptualized from two distinct perspectives. The first, and most prominent, view is employee-centric, originating with Schein (1965) and gaining wide acceptance through Rousseau (1989). This perspective defines the psychological contract as an individual's subjective understanding of what their employer owes them in exchange for their efforts, loyalty, and skills. This viewpoint has been echoed in various studies, all of which focus on the employee's unique perceptions and expectations within the work relationship (Deas, 2021; Dhanpat, 2021; Low et al., 2016). In a broader and more balanced conceptualization, other scholars view the psychological contract as a mutually inclusive agreement

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that encompasses both parties. Guest (1998) and Armstrong (2009) define it as the shared promises, obligations, and expectations that govern the relationship from both the employee's and the employer's viewpoint. Du and Liu (2020) describe it as the sum of implicit expectations that each party holds for the other, highlighting the reciprocal nature of the agreement. This two-way perspective recognizes that the contract is largely unwritten, non-verbal, and inherently imprecise.

The concept has also been studied within the Nigerian context, with scholars demonstrating a clear awareness of its relevance. Researchers like Adebayo et al. (2007) have defined it as an individual's belief in reciprocal duties encompassing both employers and employees, while others have focused on the employee's understanding of the promises that govern the work relationship (Aluko et al., 2022; Nnaji-Ihedinmah et al., 2020). These definitions underscore the academic cognizance of the need to study the psychological contract in the nation, paving the way for a deeper understanding through an examination of its various typologies.

There are four primary psychological contract typologies-transactional, relational, transitional and balance, as conceptualized by Rousseau (1989), highlighting how they shape the employment relationship. The transactional psychological contract is defined by a limited, short-term, and economic exchange. It emphasizes explicit, task-oriented agreements and provides minimal room for emotional investment or long-term career development. In contrast, the relational psychological contract is predicated on a long-term, holistic, and socio-emotional commitment, involving implicit expectations of loyalty, job security, and mutual support. This type of contract fosters higher employee engagement and lower turnover but can lead to significant negative consequences if breached. The transitional psychological contract is not a formal agreement but a cognitive state that arises during periods of organizational upheaval, such as mergers or restructuring. It is temporary and characterized by a lack of clear promises, representing a state of uncertainty for employees. Finally, the balanced psychological contract represents an ideal blend of the transactional and relational types. It establishes clear, long-term performance standards while also prioritizing non-financial aspects like work-life balance and professional growth, aiming to create a mutually beneficial and equitable relationship. These typologies collectively provide a powerful framework for understanding the diverse beliefs and expectations that govern employment relationships and their varying impacts on employee behavior.

Extensive academic literature confirms a significant link between the psychological contract and various employee outcomes, with studies consistently demonstrating that a psychological contract breach negatively impacts performance, engagement, and retention (Joel et al., 2022; Ogbeide & Etafo, 2022; Kanu et al., 2022). Conversely, a fulfilled contract is positively associated with enhanced job performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Aluko et al., 2022; Ahmad & Zarfar, 2018). While some research has begun to explore how different psychological contract types (e.g., transactional, relational) moderate these relationships, a clear empirical consensus on their specific effects on outcomes like OCB remains elusive (Santos et al., 2024; Chahar, 2019).

Despite these contributions, the scholarly inquiry, particularly in the Nigerian context, is characterized by several critical empirical and methodological gaps. A major deficiency is the lack of empirical validation for the causal link between psychological contract types and specific employee outcomes. The majority of Nigerian studies have heavily focused on the negative consequences of contract breach, largely neglecting the positive effects of fulfillment, thereby presenting an incomplete picture of the psychological contract's influence (Ogbeide & Etafo, 2022; Balogun, 2022). Furthermore, some research remains conceptual in nature without providing the necessary empirical support to generalize findings (Joel et al., 2022). Consequently, a substantial opportunity exists for future research to empirically investigate the effects of all four psychological contract typologies-including the balanced and transitional types-on both individual and organizational outcomes. Such an inquiry is essential for advancing the understanding of employment relationships and providing robust, context-specific evidence to inform organizational practices.

2.2 Organisational Citizen Behaviour

Organisational citizen behavior (OCB), often synonymous with helping behavior, refers to actions that go beyond an employee's formal job duties to benefit the organization. It's a voluntary, constructive, and helping behavior that is not explicitly required or compensated for in an employment contract. This includes a wide range of actions, from helping a colleague with a heavy workload to enthusiastically participating in company events. Scholars describe it as a kind of selfless, pro-social behavior that is driven by an employee's own desire to support their peers and the organization as a whole (Mousa et al., 2020; Hennicks et al., 2022).

Studies indicate that organisational citizen behavior is not random; it's often triggered by a positive work environment and an employee's perceptions of being valued. When employees feel that their organizations appreciate them and consider them integral members of the team, they are more likely to engage in these behaviors (Aderibigbe, 2021). This is directly linked to the fulfillment of the psychological contract, which represents the unwritten set of promises and obligations between the employee and the employer. A positive perception of this contract's fulfillment can lead to positive behaviors, including OCB (Koroglu & Ozmen, 2022).

OCB is also considered a critical component of the "black box" that mediates the relationship between Human Resource Management (HRM) practices and organizational performance. It's a key outcome that helps explain how effective HR practices, such as fair compensation or opportunities for development, indirectly translate into better overall organizational performance (Tahir et al., 2020; Sobaih et al., 2019). The insights from behavioral and motivational theories can therefore provide a solid theoretical foundation for understanding how the fulfillment of promises in the employment relationship leads to this valuable and voluntary behavior.

2.3 Hypotheses Development and Conceptual Framework

An analysis of the extant literature on psychological contracts reveals a significant scholarly inquiry into their impact on employee outcomes. Empirical investigations in the Nigerian context and beyond have consistently demonstrated that a breach of the psychological contract is inversely related to positive outcomes such as employee engagement, retention, and job satisfaction (Joel et al., 2022; Ogbeide & Etafo, 2022; Kanu et al., 2022). Conversely, the fulfillment of the psychological contract is positively associated with enhanced job performance and extra-role helping behavior (Santos et al., 2024; Chahar, 2019). This body of research, however, remains skewed towards the binary of fulfillment versus breach, with a nascent but incomplete focus on the nuanced effects of the four psychological contract typologies-transactional, relational, transitional, and balanced-on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). Despite recent attempts to explore these typologies, a clear empirical consensus is lacking, particularly regarding their specific effects on behavioral outcomes (Santos et al., 2024; Chahar, 2019). This void is especially pronounced in the

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Nigerian context, where scholarly work is characterized by significant empirical and methodological gaps. Most notably, a major deficiency is the lack of empirical validation for the causal link between contract types and specific employee outcomes. The majority of local studies have disproportionately focused on the negative consequences of contract breach, thereby presenting an incomplete picture of the psychological contract's full influence (Ogbeide & Etafo, 2022; Balogun, 2023). Furthermore, a portion of the existing research remains conceptual in nature without providing the necessary empirical support to generalize its findings (Joel et al., 2022). Drawing from the theoretical lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), this study argues that the performance of a psychological contract in an organizational context can be viewed as a gesture to be reciprocated by employees with positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. Consequently, this study hypothesises as follows:

1. H_{01}: There is no significant effect of transactional contract on organisational citizen behaviour in the Nigerian context
2. H_{02}: There is no significant effect of relational contract on organisational citizen behaviour in the Nigerian context
3. H_{03}: There is no significant effect of transitional contract on organisational citizen behaviour in the Nigerian context
4. H_{04}: There is no significant effect of balance contract on organisational citizen behaviour in the Nigerian context

Based on the foregoing explanation and hypotheses development, the conceptual framework of this study is presented as follows:

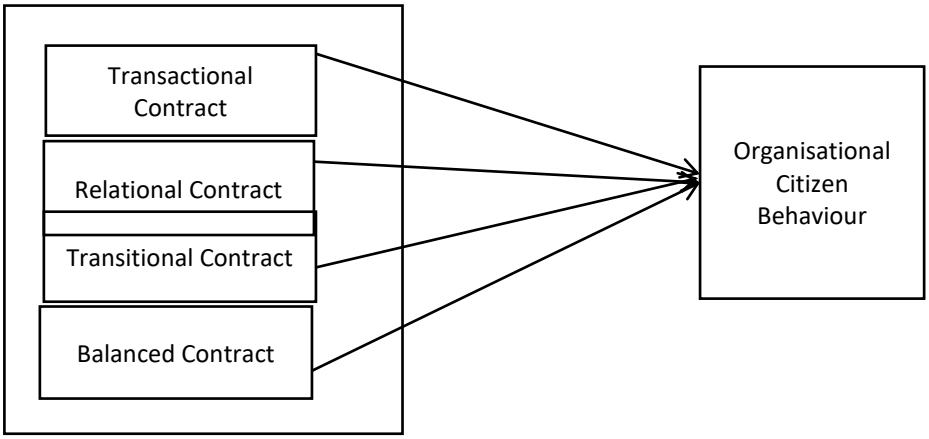


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to investigate the relationships among its key variables. This design is justified by its ability to collect data from a large number of participants at a single point in time, thereby allowing for the identification of relationships between the constructs under inquiry. The study's population comprises 479 staff of the Internal Revenue Services in Ondo State, Nigeria. To ensure a representative sample, the Taro Yamane formula was used to calculate a sample size of 170 respondents, based on a population of 296 and a 95% level of precision. The respondents were selected using a convenience sampling technique. Primary data were collected through a survey, and the resulting quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of SPSS, version 20.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The data collection process for this study, which utilized a sample size of 170 respondents drawn from a population of 296, yielded a remarkable 100% response rate. All questionnaires distributed to the selected participants were returned, completed, and deemed usable for analysis. This exceptional response rate is a strong indicator of the respondents' comprehensive understanding of the survey instruments and their willingness to participate fully in the research. The implication of this outcome is twofold: it not only validates the integrity and reliability of the collected data but also significantly strengthens the basis for generalizing the study's findings to the broader population from which the sample was drawn. This high level of cooperation from the participants provides a robust foundation for the subsequent statistical analyses and reinforces the scholarly credibility of the research conclusions.

4.1.2 Descriptive Analysis of Variables

The study examined the relationship between four types of psychological contracts (transactional, relational, transitional, and balanced) and OCB in a Nigerian organizational setting. As indicated in Tables 1, 2, and 4 The descriptive findings reveal several key insights. The mean scores for transactional contract (4.1728), relational contract (4.1471), and balanced contract (4.1691) all fell within the "agreement" range on a 5-point Likert scale. This suggests that a significant majority of employees perceive their relationship with the organization as a mix of these three types of psychological contracts. The low standard deviation for these constructs (1.0449, 1.00227, and 0.9820, respectively) indicates a high degree of consensus among the respondents. This implies that employees view their relationship as a combination of explicit economic exchanges, long-term relational commitments, and a balanced mix of both. Conversely, the descriptive analysis for the transitional contract yielded a mean score of 3.7824 (see Table 3), which corresponds to a "neither agree nor disagree" opinion on the Likert scale. The higher standard deviation (1.1645) suggests a greater variability in responses, indicating that opinions on this type of contract are varied and lack consensus. Finally, the descriptive findings for extra-role behavior showed an average mean score of 4.2836, which is in the "agreement" range. This finding, coupled with a low standard deviation (0.9557), indicates that the majority of employees engage in voluntary, helping behaviors that are not part of their formal job descriptions. This suggests that OCB is a common phenomenon in the organizations studied. Overall, the descriptive results point to the coexistence

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of transactional, relational, and balanced psychological contracts within the organizations, and a high incidence of extra-role behavior among employees.

Table 1: Descriptive Findings on Transactional Contract

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
transactional contract 1	4.5647	.84191
transactional contract 2	3.7706	1.2066
transactional contract 3	4.3824	.99152
transactional contract 4	3.6765	1.2192
transactional contract 5	4.4588	.88449
transactional contract 6	4.0059	1.1331
transactional contract 7	4.3412	.93014
transactional contract 8	4.1824	1.19007
Average Mean Score	**4.1728**	**1.0496**

Table 2: Descriptive Findings on Relational Contract

Items	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Relational contract1	4.2647	.95796
Relational contract2	4.3824	.89094
Relational contract3	3.7235	1.23078
Relational contrac4	4.5000	.77115
Relational contract5	4.2235	.99557
Relational contract6	4.0353	1.04849
Relational contract7	4.0235	1.15617
Relational contract8	4.0235	1.13029
Average Mean Score	**4.1471**	**1.0227**

Table 3: Descriptive Findings on Transitional Contract

Items	Means Score	Standard Deviation
Transitional contract1	4.5059	0.77113
Transitional2	4.0824	1.13275
Transitiona contract3	3.8706	1.15935
Transitional contract4	3.0118	1.46755
Transitional contract5	3.4412	1.29156
Average Score	**3.7824**	**1.1645**

Table 4: Descriptive Findings on Balanced Contract

Items	**Mean Score**	**Standard Deviation Score**
Balance contract1	4.0647	1.06668
Balance contract2	4.2471	0.94093
Balance contract3	4.3941	0.85171
Balance contract4	3.9706	1.06824
Average Score	**4.1691**	**0.9820**

Table 5: Descriptive Findings OCB

Items	**Mean Score**	**Standard Deviation Score**
OCB1	4.3882	0.8917
OCB2	4.5059	0.80123
OCB3	4.4412	0.84234
OCB4	4.4471	0.77697
OCB5	4.3059	0.98538
OCB6	4.4765	0.76307
OCB7	4.1824	1.00103
OCB8	3.8235	1.27029

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OCB9	4.0824	1.10632
OCB10	4.1824	1.11829
Average Score	**4.2836**	**0.9557**

4.2 Inferential Analysis

4.2.1 Test of Hypothesised Relationships

The provided multiple regression analysis confirms a significant relationship between psychological contract and organisational citizen behaviour behavior, while also revealing nuanced and in some cases, unexpected findings regarding the specific effects of each psychological contract typology.The overall model demonstrates a robust predictive capability, with the psychological contract accounting for 42% of the variance in OCB (R^2=0.420,p<0.001). This finding is substantiated by a strong overall correlation (R=0.648) and a significant F-statistic (F=29.845), confirming the model's excellent fit to the data. This provides a strong empirical foundation for the overall relationship between psychological contract and extra-role behavior.

Upon examining the specific effects of each contract type, the results present a mix of findings, some of which are a departure from established literature. The transactional contract was found to have a significant positive effect on OCB (β=0.388,p<0.001), a finding that contradicts some studies (e.g. Anyaoku, 2022) that associate this contract type solely with economic, non-OCB outcomes. This suggests that in the specific context of this study, employees may reciprocate the fulfillment of clear, economic agreements with voluntary behaviors that exceed their formal duties. Conversely, the relational contract showed no significant effect on OCB (β=−0.003,p=0.993), a result that is inconsistent with a substantial body of literature that positions relational contracts as a primary driver of positive, attitudinal outcomes (Aliyu, et. al., 2020: Santos, et al. 2024). The negative, albeit non-significant, coefficient warrants further investigation. The transitional contract also demonstrated no significant effect (β=0.209,p=0.132), which aligns with prior research (Aluko et al., 2022; Nanki-Ihedinma et al. 2020) that views it as a period of uncertainty rather than a stable basis for employee behavior.

Most notably, the balanced contract emerged as the strongest predictor, with a significant positive effect on OCB (β=0.761,p<0.001). This finding indicates that a one-unit increase in a balanced contract is associated with a 76.1% increase in OCB. This result is consistent with scholarly consensus, which posits that a balanced contract-integrating both transactional and relational elements-is the most effective in stimulating trust, commitment, and, consequently, positive outcomes that extend beyond basic job requirements (Akinwale et al., 2022).

Table 6: Results of Mulrtiple Regression Analysis

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.648[a]	.420	.406	5.55246

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3680.475	4	920.119	29.845	.000[b]
	Residual	5086.913	165	30.830		
	Total	8767.388	169			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	13.422	2.967		4.523	.000
	Transactionalcontract	.388	.094	.302	4.120	.000
	Relationalcontract	-.003	.121	-.002	-.022	.983
	Transitionalcontract	.205	.135	.122	1.514	.132
	Balancedcontract	.761	.208	.345	3.651	.000

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The empirical investigation into the effects of psychological contract on OCB in the Ondo State Inland Revenue Services yielded complex and in some cases, counter-intuitive findings, which are significant for both theory and practice. The descriptive analyses revealed a strong perceived presence of transactional, relational, and balanced psychological contracts among employees, all of which received high mean scores and low standard deviations, indicating a consensus that these typologies are active in the organizational context. This is complemented by the finding of a high incidence of helping behavior within the workforce.

However, the inferential analysis provided a more nuanced picture. The composite construct of psychological contract was found to have a significant and positive effect on OCB, with the model explaining 42% of the variance (R^2=0.420,p<0.001). This overall finding is consistent with prior studies that establish psychological contracts as a predictor of positive behavioral outcomes. When examined individually, the specific effects of the psychological contract typologies presented a mix of expected and unexpected results. The balanced contract emerged as a powerful and significant positive predictor of OCB (β=0.761,p<0.001), which aligns with established literature that views this contract as a robust driver of positive outcomes due to its integration of both economic and socio-emotional elements.

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Conversely, the transactional contract was also found to have a significant positive effect on extra-role behavior ($\beta=0.388, p<0.001$), a finding that is a notable departure from some scholarly submissions that associate transactional relationships with limited, non-extra-role outcomes. This result suggests a context-specific dynamic where employees may be willing to reciprocate the fulfillment of explicit economic agreements with voluntary pro-social behaviors. In a striking contradiction to the literature, the relational contract showed no significant effect on extra-role behavior ($\beta=-0.003, p=0.993$). This unexpected finding suggests a potential disconnect where, despite a perceived presence of relational expectations, employees do not feel compelled to reciprocate with OCB. This warrants further inquiry as it may indicate a strained or indifferent employee-employer relationship. Finally, the transitional contract showed no significant effect ($\beta=0.209, p=0.132$), a finding consistent with its conceptualization as an unstable and temporary state that does not foster consistent behavioral outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The conclusions of this study, which examined the effect of the psychological contract on OCB in the Ondo State Inland Revenue Services, are drawn from the findings of both descriptive and inferential analyses. The research concludes that, beyond the formal employment contract, an unwritten psychological contract exists. This is evidenced by the descriptive analysis, which showed employee awareness of transactional, relational, transitional, and balanced psychological contract typologies. The study also concludes that OCB as extra-role behavior, or voluntary helping behavior, is present within the organization and can contribute to positive corporate outcomes.

The inferential analysis further concludes that the overall psychological contract is a significant predictor of OCB. However, the influence of the specific contract types varies. The study concludes that both transactional and balanced contracts have a significant positive effect on extra-role behavior, whereas relational and transitional contracts have no significant effect. This indicates that in this specific context, the extent of the psychological contract's effect on extra-role behavior is not uniform across all typologies. The final conclusion is that transactional and balanced contracts are significant predictors of positive behavioral outcomes.

The findings have critical implications for managing employment relationships. The significant positive effect of the transactional contract, combined with the lack of a significant effect from the relational contract, suggests that the employee-employer relationship may be perceived as transactional and short-term. This could lead to a lack of long-term commitment and potentially negative behaviors in the future. To address this, the study recommends several strategic actions. Management should invest in employees beyond a transactional basis by focusing on socio-emotional reciprocity and instituting non-financial rewards. The study also recommends implementing a balanced contract, which combines both transactional and relational elements to foster a more sustainable employment relationship. Furthermore, the study suggests that elements of the psychological contract be codified into formal contracts to prevent violations. Finally, it recommends that management avoid making employees the first victims of restructuring and that they create an anonymous platform for employees to express their perceptions of unfulfilled promises.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH STUDIES IMPLICATION

This study, while valuable, has certain limitations that should be addressed in future research. The primary limitations relate to common method bias, generalizability, and the scope of variables investigated. Firstly, the study is susceptible to common method bias because it exclusively captured the perspective of employees regarding the psychological contract, without incorporating the views of employers or management. This one-sided approach means that the findings might not fully reflect the reality of the employment relationship from a bidirectional perspective. Future studies should therefore adopt a multi-source data collection method, gathering insights from both employees and management to provide a more holistic and balanced view. Secondly, the study's focus on a single institution limits the generalizability of its findings. While the research offers valuable insights into the specific context of the Ondo State Inland Revenue Services, it may be difficult to confidently apply these conclusions to other organizations or sectors. Future research should expand its scope to include a broader range of institutions to enhance the external validity and generalizability of the findings. Finally, the study found that psychological contract explains less than 50% of the variation in organisational behavior. This indicates that other significant factors were not included in the research model. To provide a more complete understanding of what drives helping behavior, future studies should investigate additional variables that may predict this outcome, such as organizational climate, leadership style, or individual personality traits.

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