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An employee–employer relationship gone bad? Examining the double-edged effects of psychological contract violation on employees’ helping behaviors

Abstract

An important concept that depicts the nature of employee–employer relationship is the psychological contract. Prior research has argued that all forms of extra-role behaviors suffer once employees’ psychological contracts are violated. Helping behaviors are a specific form of extra-role behaviors that may suffer due to psychological contract violation. We argue that this predominantly negative relationship between psychological contract violation and helping behaviors is because the literature has not adequately examined the different types of helping behaviors. Using the latent moderated structural equation approach with multi-wave and multisource data from a survey of 269 full-time employees and their coworkers from the hospitality industry in Ghana, we show that psychological contract violation is positively related to reactive helping behaviors and negatively associated with anticipatory helping behaviors through anticipatory anxiety.

Keywords.

Psychological contract violation, anticipatory anxiety, trait emotional resources, reactive helping, anticipatory helping.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between employees and their organization is considered to be very important (Bordia et al. 2010; Luchak & Pohler 2010). This employee-employer relationship can determine organizational effectiveness and subsequent profitability (Snape & Redman 2012). An important concept that depicts the nature of employee–employer relationship and has been found to be critical for employee and organizational outcomes is the psychological contract (Zagenczyk et al. 2009; Lu et al. 2016; Asante et al. 2023a). The psychological contract is employees’ perception of the terms and conditions of a mutually beneficial exchange agreement between them and their employer (Rousseau 1989). It is a bidirectional contract that sets the terms of the effort and loyalty employees must offer in return for promised financial and socioemotional benefits from the employer (Asante et al. 2023b). Employees may feel that their psychological contract is violated when the promised inducements are not delivered after they have contributed their effort and loyalty to the employer. Psychological contract violation involves the feeling of betrayal and anger which may trigger harmful behavioral reactions towards the organization (Zhao et al. 2007).

Psychological contract studies have been anchored mainly on the tenets of social exchange theory (SET) (Blau 1964). These studies have concluded that once employees’ psychological contracts are violated, they reciprocate with a negative attitude towards the employer (Zhao et al. 2007; Bal et al. 2008; O’Donohue et al. 2015; Jayaweera et al. 2021). Again, based on the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano 1996), other studies have conceptualized unfulfilled psychological contract as a negative work event that influences negative emotional reactions, and in turn leads to negative work attitudes and behaviors toward the employer (Restubog et al. 2013; Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2019). Findings from these theoretical perspectives suggest that psychological contract violation should only influence behaviors directed toward the party that caused the violation (i.e., the employer) and not third

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parties such as coworkers (Deng et al. 2018). Yet one important organizational behavior that usually suffers as a result of psychological contract violation is helping behaviors toward coworkers who are third parties to the employee-employer relationship (Suazo et al. 2005; Charness & Levine 2010; Deng et al. 2018). From a SET perspective, the reason is that employees will be motivated to reduce any helping behaviors that can enhance organizational effectiveness (Suazo et al. 2005) when psychological contracts are violated as a form of payback to the employer. However, any attempt to reduce helping behaviors would also harm innocent coworkers who are third parties to the employee-employer dyad and are not to blame for the violation (Conway et al. 2014). Thus, the tit-for-tat perspective of SET does not offer a convincing framework to explain how psychological contract violation can affect helping behaviors toward coworkers who are outside of the employee-employer dyad (Deng et al. 2018).

In order to address the issue above, we draw on the domain or target non-specific perspective of the conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989) to develop a model that explains how psychological contract violation uniquely influences different helping behaviors towards coworkers. According to COR theory, work stressors can deplete employees' limited psychological resources that enables them to regulate themselves (e.g., Halbesleben 2010). Research has shown that a depletion of one's limited psychological resources in one domain impairs their ability to function at their best in other domains (Halbesleben et al. 2009; Deng et al. 2018). The domain or target non-specific nature of employees' psychological resources offers help in explaining how psychological contract violation can affect coworker who are "innocent" parties to the employee-employer relationship. This is because employees' limited resources are depleted when they experience violation, and in an effort to conserve their remaining resources, they may not engage in activities/behaviors with low potential of resource generation (Deng et al. 2018).

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As one type of extra-role behaviors (Organ 2018), helping behaviors have received attention in psychological contract research. Most of these studies have found a negative association of psychological contract violation with helping behaviors (Suazo et al. 2005; Charness & Levine 2010; Deng et al. 2018). We argue that this predominantly negative association of psychological contract violation with helping behaviors is because the literature has not adequately examined the different types of helping behaviors. Recent research has distinguished reactive and anticipatory helping behaviors. According to Harari et al. (2021), reactive helping occurs when employees provide assistance in response to a request by a coworker. However, anticipatory helping occurs when employees provide assistance to coworkers in advance of being asked (Grant et al. 2009; Harari et al. 2021; Bolino & Grant 2016). Yet, the differential effect of psychological contract violation on these two helping behaviors has rarely been examined in the extant literature.

Psychological contract violation is a discrepancy between employees' investments and their expected returns from the organization (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016). According to the COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), when people invest resources and do not get anticipated returns from their investments, they can experience stress and poor emotional well-being (Halbesleben & Bowler 2007; Asante et al. 2023b). We contend that the failure to get anticipated returns on one's investments will lead to poor emotional well-being in the form of anticipatory anxiety. Anticipatory anxiety occurs when employees experience distress in anticipation of a negative future event (Cain et al. 2011; Huang & Haried 2020). Such employees experiencing anticipatory anxiety will likely refrain from engaging in helping behaviors with unknown outcomes from recipients. Unlike reactive helping, which is requested by a coworker, anticipatory helping is providing assistance in advance of being requested. One cannot be sure how help recipients will react to anticipatory help given that they have not requested it. As such, we argue that employees experiencing anticipatory

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anxiety will be willing to offer more help in response to being requested but less willing to anticipatorily help coworkers. These arguments regarding differences in helping behaviors are consistent with the selective investment perspective of COR theory, which suggests that depleted employees will carefully select the manner in which they invest their remaining psychological resources in order to avoid further losses (Siegall & McDonald 2004; Halbesleben & Bowler 2007).

The COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) further proposes that one way for people to avoid stressors and deal with resource losses is by tapping into personal strengths or characteristics that shape how they see themselves and their environment (Garcia et al. 2018). Trait emotional resources have been identified as resources that become particularly salient in situations needing emotional control (Ilies et al. 2020). Trait emotional resources are chronic emotional energies that can be invested or mobilized by people in goal achievement situations (Ilies et al. 2020). Given that psychological contract violation is an emotional reaction to an unfulfilled promise, employees' chronic ability to mobilize emotional resources to deal with the unfolding emotional consequence can be crucial (McMahon & Naragon-Gainey 2020). Therefore, we expect high trait emotional resources to attenuate the strength of psychological contract violation on employees' anticipatory anxiety.

By examining the above relationships, we contribute in three ways to previous research. First, there is a universal assumption in the literature that psychological contract violation harms any form of organizational behavior that can enhance organizational effectiveness including both in-role and extra-role behaviors (Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2019). We challenge this logic by arguing that in terms of helping behaviors (i.e., a specific type of extra-role behaviors), this universal assumption may not work. Second, in the psychological contract literature, most studies have followed the tenets of SET (Suazo et al. 2005; Deng et al. 2018). Based on the reciprocity perspective of SET, they have argued that once a violation

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occurs, employees will seek revenge by reducing their positive behaviors or engaging in more negative behaviors toward the employer (Zhao et al. 2007). However, we argue that this may not be the case for all positive behaviors toward the employer. Third, we shed light on the boundary conditions of PC violation by examining the effect of trait emotional resources on the relationship between PC violation and anticipatory anxiety. While employees whose psychological contract has been violated are more likely to experience anticipatory anxiety, we contend that this relationship is contingent upon varying levels of their trait emotional resources. We use the latent moderated structural equation approach with multi-wave and multisource data from a survey of 269 full-time employees and their coworkers from the hospitality industry in Ghana to test our model (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 About Here

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Psychological contract violation and anticipatory anxiety

Psychological contract characterizes the perceived obligations of reciprocity between employees and their organization. In this contract, promises such as job security and opportunities for career advancement are made by the organizations in exchange for employees' investment of efforts and other resources (Rousseau 1995). When employees have done their part of the bargain, but perceive that their organizations have not fulfilled their part they can conclude that their psychological contract has been violated (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016). Moreover, the violation experience is stronger when employees attribute the violation to the employer's deliberate disregard for the terms of the contract, than when they attribute the violation to circumstances beyond the employer's direct control (Lester et al. 2002). The intense emotional reaction that follows the non-fulfillment of employers' promises can negatively affect employees' health and well-being (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016; Garcia et al. 2018; Asante et al. 2023b).

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Anticipatory anxiety is an emotional well-being problem likely to be experienced by employees once their psychological contracts are violated. Anticipatory anxiety occurs when individuals face a situation with unpredictable outcomes and for that matter become distressed (Rodell & Judge 2009; Cain et al. 2011; Huang & Haried 2020). This is likely to occur when the outcomes include possible negative events (Chua et al. 1999). Employees may experience anticipatory anxiety after expected promises have not been fulfilled by employers because this type of anxiety reflects an anticipatory emotional reaction that echoes future uncertainty (Lazarus 1991; Cheng & McCarthy 2018). Although anticipatory anxiety has been studied as part of many anxiety-based disorders (Boshuisen et al. 2002), we follow previous research (Hinrichsen & Clark 2003) to focus on non-clinical occasions of anticipatory anxiety.

The COR theory (Hobfoll 1989) explains why employees may suffer from anticipatory anxiety after experiencing psychological contract violations. According to Hobfoll (1989), resources are “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual” (p. 516). The COR theory argues that when resources are threatened or lost, or when significant effort does not lead to resource gains, employees experience stress (Halbesleben et al. 2014). This situation can make employees experience emotional well-being issues such as burnout (Lapointe et al. 2013), anxiety (McCarthy et al. 2016) or depression (Byrne et al. 2014). Previous research has considered psychological contract violations as a stressful event because it represents a discrepancy between investment of effort and expected resource gains (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016; Deng et al. 2018; Asante et al. 2023*b*). In a psychological contract, employees must first invest their effort and expect resource gains from their employers in the future. A psychological contract violation is an indication that the expected future resource gains were not supplied by the employer (Deng et al. 2018). This, we argue, will make employees anxious and uncertain

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about the future consequences of their work behaviors leading to anticipatory anxiety. Such a situation can reduce employees' perceived predictability of future events and their level of control over the work environment (Hobfoll 1989; Shore & Tetrick 1994). When employers' promised obligations are unmet, this can foster a feeling of uncertainty among employees and make them anxious about the outcomes of their future contributions.

Hypothesis 1: Psychological contract violations positively relate to employees' anticipatory anxiety.

The moderating role of trait emotional resources

Once resources are lost, employees must cope with the resulting stress that follows by drawing on other resources. Intense emotions resulting from psychological contract violation can negatively affect employees' well-being. For them to be less anxious about future uncertainties, they must be able to manage their emotions (Grant 2013). Therefore, we believe that the relationship between psychological contract violation and anticipatory anxiety will vary in strength depending on the level of emotional resources possessed by employees. *Trait emotional resource* is an important variable that captures individuals' emotional resourcefulness (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker 2012; Ilies et al. 2020). Specifically, it is defined as the chronic "emotional energies that people can invest or mobilize for goal attainment" (Ilies et al. 2020, p.435). Trait emotional resources include such resources as chronic positive feelings and emotions (e.g., vigor) that help people to monitor their emotions and their consequences as well as consider options of how to act on emotions (Tong et al. 2019).

Psychological contract violation is an emotional stressor that depletes employees' emotional resources and makes them vulnerable to anticipatory anxiety. However, trait emotional resources are a stable pool of emotional resources that can help weaken the impact of psychological contract violation. As such, we expect employees who possess high trait

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emotional resources to have a higher capacity to mobilize emotional energies to attenuate the negative emotional impact of psychological contract violation. Our expectation is underpinned by the theoretical arguments of COR theory. Consistent with the COR theory, we argue that possessing high trait emotional resources implies the possession of more stable emotional energies that employees can use to regulate the emotions associated with psychological contract violation. In support of this, Tong et al. (2019) demonstrated that high trait emotional resources including trait emotional control attenuate the relationship between experienced incivility and self-blame. Hence, we expect employees with higher trait emotional resources to be less likely to experience anticipatory anxiety as a result of psychological contract violation because they can draw from a larger reservoir of stable emotional resources than employees with low trait emotional resources.

Hypothesis 2: Trait emotional resources moderate the positive relationship between psychological contract violation and anticipatory anxiety such that the relationship is weaker when trait emotional resources is higher.

Anticipatory anxiety and helping behaviors

Helping behaviors are voluntary actions taken to help coworkers with work-related problems and issues (Mossholder et al. 2011; Chou & Stauffer 2016). Helping behaviors are a strong predictor of organizational effectiveness (Chou & Stauffer 2016) and market competitiveness (Lin 2006). Helping behaviors are one of the subdimensions of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (i.e., discretionary behaviors that are not directly recognized by the formal reward system but promote organizational functioning; Organ et al. 2005). Given the positive impact of helping behaviors, several scholars have become interested in examining their antecedents (Yue et al. 2017; Lee et al. 2019). This line of research has broadly identified organizational leadership, team and task characteristics as

important antecedents of helping behavior (Ng & Van Dyne, 2005; ten Brummelhuis et al. 2010).

Emerging research has shown that the emotional states of employees can be critical in their helping behaviors (Yue et al. 2017; Jang et al. 2020). Anticipatory anxiety is an emotional state that reflects “a sense of uncontrollability focused on possible future threats, dangers, or other upcoming, potentially negative events” (Chua et al. 1999, p. 563). Given that it focuses on potentially negative future events, we argue that employees experiencing anticipatory anxiety will be concerned about the possible consequence of their helping behaviors. Generally, research has suggested based on the principles of social exchange that employees usually receive positive outcomes in return for their helping behaviors (Johnson et al. 2002; Whiting et al. 2008). However, recent research has shown that help recipients do not always respond to all forms of help equally (Harari et al. 2021). According to Harari et al. (2021), unlike reactive helping, which is provided after the recipient has requested for it, anticipatory helping is provided in advance of being requested. Given that reactive helping is requested before it is provided, it is likely to be well received by help recipients. For instance, reactive helping is usually accepted by recipients, and this makes them treat helpers more favorably such as by seeing helpers as more likable colleagues (e.g., Johnson et al. 2002)) and as higher performers (e.g., Whiting et al. 2008). It is also a way to strengthen social relationships with teammates (Spitzmuller & Van Dyne 2013). COR theory posits that these positive outcomes can enhance the depleted resources of the employee. Therefore, employees experiencing anticipatory anxiety will more likely offer reactive help due to its generally positive and resource-enhancing consequences.

However, because anticipatory helping is an unsolicited support, it may send a wrong signal and may be responded to negatively by recipients. For instance, unsolicited advice may be seen by recipients as being intrusive (Landis et al. 2022). Research also shows that

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anticipatory helping is mostly met with less appreciation from recipients, and this can affect helpers' well-being (Lee et al. 2019). As noted above, according to the COR theory, to avoid further resource losses, people may be selective and avoid situations that can lead to further resource depletion (Xia et al. 2019) such as being less appreciated or seen as intrusive in the affairs of others. In support of this view, prior research has found that depleted employees are selective in the activities they engage in and that they shift time spent on work activities to time spent on non-work activities to avoid further resource losses (Siegall & McDonald 2004). Similarly, we argue that when employees are already experiencing anticipatory anxiety because of psychological contract violation, coworkers may suffer a reduced anticipatory helping because such employees would not want to be in situations where another negative consequence may likely occur. Therefore, given the possible negative consequences of unsolicited help, employees experiencing anticipatory anxiety will be less likely to offer anticipatory help.

Hypothesis 3a: Anticipatory anxiety positively relates to employees' reactive helping.

Hypothesis 3b: Anticipatory anxiety negatively relates to employees' anticipatory helping.

Thus far, we have argued that psychological contract violation leads to anticipatory anxiety among employees because it is an emotional reaction to unfulfilled expectations. On the other hand, we have argued that anticipatory anxiety will have positive and negative effects on reactive and anticipatory helping behaviors respectively. As a result, we expect anticipatory anxiety to transmit the differential effect of psychological contract violation to the two helping behaviors by serving as a mediator. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4a: Anticipatory anxiety mediates the positive relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and reactive helping.

Hypothesis 4b: Anticipatory anxiety mediates the negative relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and anticipatory helping.

The moderated mediation effects

So far, we have argued that anticipatory anxiety mediates the positive relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and reactive helping as well as the negative relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and anticipatory helping. Further, based on the COR theory, we have reasoned that when trait emotional resources are high rather than low, the positive effect of psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety is weakened. According to Hayes (2015), this moderating effect can strengthen the indirect effect of psychological contract violation on both reactive and anticipatory helping. As such, by combining the moderating and mediating hypotheses, we propose first-stage moderated mediation effects, in which trait emotional resources moderate the indirect relationships of psychological contract violation with both reactive and anticipatory helping through anticipatory anxiety.

In effect, we argue that when employees realize that their trait emotional resources lead to a weakened effect of psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety, they are likely to reevaluate the violations and how they react towards their coworkers. Therefore, when trait emotional resources are high rather than low, the indirect effects of psychological contract violation on both reactive and anticipatory helping through anticipatory anxiety should be weakened. Taken together, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 5a: Trait emotional resources moderate the positive relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and reactive helping through anticipatory anxiety such that the relationship is weaker when trait emotional resources are higher.

Hypothesis 5b: Trait emotional resources moderate the negative relationship between employees' psychological contract violation and anticipatory helping through

anticipatory anxiety such that the relationship is weaker when trait emotional resources are higher.

METHOD

Sample and procedures

We collected data for this study from multiple firms in the hospitality industry in the capital city of Ghana. They include hotels, restaurants, and meetings and events companies. We recruited full-time employees and their coworkers who have at least a year's tenure at their current organization to make sure they have worked long enough to have developed a psychological contract with their employer. With the help of middle managers, we recruited 426 participants for the current study. To minimize the concern for common method variance (CMV), we collected data at multiple waves and from multiple sources (Podsakoff et al. 2012). Moreover, to encourage participation, we assured participants of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. We assured them that their responses will be used only for research purposes, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

At Time 1, the survey was distributed to 426 employees to respond to psychological contract violation, trait emotional resources and demographic questions, and we received 388 responses. At Time 2 (one month after Time 1), those who responded to the Time 1 survey answered questions on anticipatory anxiety and we received 349 responses. As part of the Time 2 survey, employees were asked to provide contact details of at least two coworkers who they have worked with for at least three months. We wrote each coworker's name supplied by focal participants on a separate paper, folded it and randomly selected one of them to answer the Time 3 survey. Out of the 349 coworkers that were randomly selected, we were able to contact and distribute Time 3 (one month after Time 2) survey to 326 coworkers. Employees who did not provide any coworkers were removed from the study. The 326 coworkers answered questions on reactive and anticipatory helping received from the focal

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employees and we received 294 responses. Given that we collected multi-wave and multi-source data, unique codes were created to help us match the data. At the end of the data collection, we received 269 completed and matched responses representing a 63.15% response rate. The average age of respondents was 26.95 years ($SD = 3.61$), and the average work experience was 6.08 years ($SD = 3.41$). Of the total sample, 68% were females, and 55.40% had a bachelor's degree or higher.

Measures

The survey was administered in English as it is the official language and medium of instruction at all levels of education in Ghana and all respondents have at least a high school diploma. Unless otherwise stated, all items were rated on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Psychological contract violation. Psychological contract violation was measured using a four-item measure (Robinson & Morrison 2000) ($\alpha = .86$). A sample item is "I feel that my organization has violated the contract between us."

Trait emotional resources. Trait emotional resources was measured using a five-item measure (Ilies et al. 2020) ($\alpha = .89$). A sample item is "I feel that the level of my emotional resources is high."

Anticipatory anxiety. Anticipatory anxiety was measured using a 12-item measure (Hinrichsen & Clark 2003) ($\alpha = .88$). A sample item is "I imagine the worst that could happen."

Reactive helping. Reactive helping was measured using a five-item measure adapted from Harari et al. (2022) ($\alpha = .85$). The original items were designed to be answered by the focal participant. However, to minimize CMV, the focal participant's coworkers were asked to answer the helping survey and therefore slight changes were made. For instance, "I" in the original item was replaced with "this coworker" in our survey. As an example, this original

item “I agree to do things for my coworker when I am asked” was adapted to “This coworker agreed to do things for me when I asked him/her” in our survey.

Anticipatory helping. Anticipatory helping was measured using a five-item measure adapted from Harari et al. (2022) ($\alpha = .81$). The same approach used in adapting reactive helping was used here. As an example, the original item “I assist my coworker with their work without them asking for help” was adapted to “This coworker assisted me with my work without me asking for help” in our survey.

Control variables. Following previous studies (Ng & Feldman 2008; Asante et al. 2023a), we controlled for respondents’ age, gender, education, and work experience. For instance, age has been found to be very important in employees’ attitudes in general (Ng & Feldman 2008) and how they respond to psychological contract violations in particular (Bal et al. 2008). Similarly, research shows that work experience is also important in how employees behave at work (Ng & Feldman 2011). As a result, we controlled these variables in the current study.

RESULTS

Insert Table 1 About Here

Analytical Strategy

The most popular analytical technique for testing moderated mediation is the regression approach. The regression approach, which is based on observed variables, makes no assumptions of measurement errors. However, it is generally accepted that measurement errors bias results. As a result, the resulting confidence intervals produced by these error-infested measures are also biased. In addition, in order to calculate the moderating effects, this method multiplies an independent variable by a moderator in the regression equations (Preacher et al. 2007). However, the LMS approach – which uses the latent variables in *Mplus*, corrects these measurement errors and requires no multiplication of an independent

variable by a moderator. Therefore, we used the latent moderated structural equation (LMS) approach (Cheung & Lau 2017) for our analyses.

Moreover, to reduce random errors of the individual items and obtain more reliable estimates, we adopted the item parceling approach due to the complex nature of the model (Little et al. 2002; Williams et al. 2009). Parceling is effective when models are complex. We created three-item parcels for all variables using the sequential averaging method (Landis et al. 2000). Specifically, we followed previous research (Chen et al. 2016; Zhu et al. 2019; Asante et al. 2023b, a) to sequentially average items having higher loadings with those having lower loadings. Using a measure with seven items as an example, we first run an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for all seven items. Then we average the highest and lowest, second highest and second lowest, and third highest and third lowest loaded items to form three parcels respectively. The three parcels plus the item that did not have a pair to be parceled (i.e., four items) will go through another EFA. Then the highest and lowest loaded items will be averaged to form one parceled item. The parceled item together with the two unparcelled items from the second EFA will form the three items. This procedure was done for all variables to reduce the number of items to a more parsimonious three parcels per latent factor.

Confirmatory factor analyses

Before estimating our hypotheses, we first conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to assess the measurement model. We used *Mplus* 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén 2017) in both the CFA and model analyses. Model fit was assessed using the comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker Lewis index (TLI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) (Hu & Bentler 1999). CFI and TLI values of .95 or above and RMSEA values of .06 and SRMR values of .08 or below indicate satisfactory fit. The default five-factor model of psychological contract violation, trait

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emotional resources, anticipatory anxiety, reactive helping and anticipatory helping had an acceptable fit [χ^2 ($df = 80$, $N = 269$) = 181.13, $\chi^2/df = 2.26$, RMSEA = .07, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, SRMR = .05]. The five-factor model is better than (1) a four-factor model that has psychological contract violation and anticipatory anxiety items combined as one [χ^2 ($df = 84$, $N = 269$) = 521.98, $\chi^2/df = 6.21$, RMSEA = .14, CFI = .83, TLI = .78, SRMR = .10], (2) a four-factor model that has reactive and anticipatory helping behaviors items combined as one [χ^2 ($df = 84$, $N = 269$) = 466.06, $\chi^2/df = 5.55$, RMSEA = .13, CFI = .85, TLI = .81, SRMR = .10], (3) a three-factor model that has psychological contract violation, trait emotional resources and anticipatory anxiety items combined [χ^2 ($df = 87$, $N = 269$) = 916.21, $\chi^2/df = 10.53$, RMSEA = .19, CFI = .67, TLI = .60, SRMR = .12] and (4) a single factor model [χ^2 ($df = 90$, $N = 269$) = 1346.11, $\chi^2/df = 14.96$, RMSEA = .23, CFI = .50, TLI = .42, SRMR = .14]. These results support the discriminant validity of the measurement variables.

Descriptive statistics and correlations of the variables are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Hypotheses testing

Test of direct and mediation effect models

We tested our hypotheses with two separate models – mediation only and moderated mediation models. We first estimated our mediation model, which had an acceptable fit [χ^2 ($df = 84$, $N = 269$) = 141.12, $\chi^2/df = 1.68$, RMSEA = .05, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, SRMR = .04]

As can be seen from Table 2, psychological contract violation was positively related to anticipatory anxiety ($b = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) which lends support to Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, anticipatory anxiety was positively related to (a) reactive helping ($b = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$) and negatively related to (b) anticipatory helping ($b = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$) which supports Hypotheses 3a and 3b. We further estimated our mediation hypotheses using the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals with 1000 bootstrap samples and found support for hypotheses 4a and

4b. As shown in Table 4, anticipatory anxiety mediated the positive effect of psychological contract violation on (a) reactive helping (indirect effect = 0.17, 95% CI = [0.10, 0.27]) and the negative effect on (b) anticipatory helping (indirect effect = -0.16, 95% CI = [-0.25, -0.08]).

Insert Table 3 About Here

Test of conditional indirect effect model

After testing the indirect effect hypotheses, we then proceeded to examine our interaction effect and the conditional indirect effect hypotheses. In this analysis, we added an interaction term between psychological contract violation and trait emotional resources to predict anticipatory anxiety. As shown in Table 3 and Figure 2, we found a significant interaction effect between psychological contract violation and trait emotional resources on anticipatory anxiety ($b = -0.13, p < 0.05$). The simple slope analysis shows that the effect of psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety was positive and significant (simple slope = .46, $p < .01$) when trait emotional resources was low and was again significant when trait emotional resources was high but with a significantly reduced magnitude (simple slope = .17, $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 2. We probe the interaction effect by plotting the effect of psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety.

Insert Figure 2 About Here

Finally, we examined the conditional indirect effects. The moderated mediation indices were significant and negative for (a) reactive helping (index = -0.05, 95% CI = [-0.12, -0.01]) but positive for (b) anticipatory helping (index = 0.05, 95% CI = [0.01, 0.10]). As seen in Table 4, the conditional indirect effect was positive and significant when trait emotional resources were lower for (a) reactive helping (indirect effect = 0.19, 95% CI = [0.09, 0.32]). The conditional indirect effect was positive and significant but with a reduced

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magnitude when trait emotional resources were higher for (a) reactive helping [indirect effect = 0.07; 95% CI = [0.01, 0.15]] supporting Hypothesis 5a. In support of Hypothesis 5b, the conditional indirect effect was negative and significant when trait emotional resources were lower for (b) anticipatory helping (indirect effect = -0.17, 95% CI = [-0.29, -0.08]). However, the conditional indirect effect became non-significant for anticipatory helping (indirect effect = 0.06; 95% CI = [-0.15, 0.01]) when trait emotional resources were higher.

Insert Table 4 About Here

DISCUSSION

Drawing on the COR theory, we considered how employees' experiences of psychological contract violation activate their anticipatory anxiety, which in turn, promotes reactive helping and prevents anticipatory helping behaviors. First, psychological contract violation was positively associated with anticipatory anxiety. Second, anticipatory anxiety was found to exert positive effect on reactive helping and negative effect on anticipatory helping. Finally, trait emotional resources buffered the deleterious consequence of psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety. Accordingly, all our hypotheses are supported. In the next section, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings and highlight the limitations and future research direction.

Implications for theory

Our study makes three important theoretical contributions. First, unlike prior psychological contract research that does not distinguish between helping behaviors (Suazo et al. 2005; Arshad & Sparrow 2010; Deng et al. 2018), theoretical insights and empirical evidence from our study demonstrate that differentiating helping behaviors into its reactive (solicited) and anticipatory (unsolicited) components is imperative (Harari et al. 2022). Findings from this study reveal that psychological contract violation has a distinct impact on reactive (solicited) helping and anticipatory (unsolicited) helping behaviors via anticipatory anxiety. Thus,

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violated employees are more open to offer solicited helping, but less likely to engage in unsolicited helping behavior. By this, we offer an explanation that goes beyond the uniform assumption that psychological contract violation is certainly detrimental to helping behaviors (Suazo et al. 2005; Deng et al. 2018). In other words, these prior assumptions may apply more to psychological contract violation - anticipatory helping but not psychological contract violation - reactive helping relationship.

Second, by drawing on the COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), we show why and when a violation is more likely to be met with reactive or anticipatory helping behaviors. Prior psychological contract research has been anchored on the tenets of SET (Suazo et al. 2005; Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2019) to account for its deleterious consequences. The main tenet of SET application is that because psychological contract violation is a negative action from the employer, it will be met with a correspondingly negative response from employees such as disengaging from citizenship behaviors (Suazo et al. 2005). However, we draw from the COR theory (Hobfoll 1989) to argue that in terms of helping behaviors (i.e., a subtype of citizenship behaviors), psychological contract violation can generate a double-edged effect such that it feeds into the promotion of reactive (solicited) helping behaviors and the prevention of anticipatory (unsolicited) helping behaviors via anticipatory anxiety. The tit-for-tat perspective of SET encourages target-specific reaction from employees (Deng et al. 2018). Thus, when a violation occurs, employees may direct their actions toward the focal party that caused the violation, which is the employer (Rupp & Cropanzano 2002; Lavelle et al. 2007). This is because the exchange relationship between the employee and the employer is target specific (Deng et al. 2018; Rupp & Cropanzano 2002). This leaves little room for explaining why coworkers who are not responsible for the psychological contract violation may suffer the consequences of the violation. Nonetheless, we believe that some social exchange mechanisms such as reciprocity beliefs (Umphress et al. 2010) and revenge

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cognition (Liu et al. 2010) may at least play an indirect role in how psychological contract violation affects third parties such as coworkers. This is because by helping coworkers, one is indirectly helping the employer. Therefore, if one has their psychological contract violated, it may affect their helping behaviors toward coworkers as an indirect revenge or a reciprocal action. As a result, we encourage future research to examine the role of social exchange mechanisms in how employees' reactions to psychological contract violation may affect coworkers and other third parties.

According to extant research, because reactive (solicited) helping behaviors are explicitly requested by recipients, they are better valued and appreciated (Harari, et al. 2022). As a result, they facilitate heedful relationships, enhance social exchange norms and positive reciprocal behaviors toward the helper (Spitzmuller & Van Dyne 2013). From a COR theory (Hobfoll 1989) perspective, these potential positive consequences are resource enhancing, suggesting that employees who are depleted by the violations of their employers are more likely to engage in them. On the contrary, although anticipatory (unsolicited) helping can offer benefits to the helper in terms of reputational benefits, self-development, and favorable self-evaluations, they are however not requested (Spitzmuller & Van Dyne 2013). Therefore, help recipients may respond with less gratitude and appreciation to helpers and may see anticipatory helping as self-serving and intrusive (Harari, et al. 2022), which may negatively impact recipients' wellbeing (Lee et al. 2019). Underpinned by the COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), these potential negative consequences are resource depleting. As such, employees who are already suffering from anticipatory anxiety because of violations by their employers may be less likely to engage in them. This argument is in line with research that suggests the effect of resource depletion resulting from psychological contract violation is not target or domain specific. Thus, one domain can cause a person to lose resources, but the effect of this resource loss is not limited to only the domain that caused the loss. Indeed, prior research has

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found that employees negatively react to coworkers and customers (Deng et al. 2018) and even their next employer (Asante et al. 2023b) when they experience psychological contract violations.

Third, by examining trait emotional resources as a moderator in this study, we answer calls from previous research to examine when the negative effects of psychological contract violation are more likely to happen (Conway et al. 2014; Deng et al. 2018). Psychological contract violation is an emotional reaction to unfulfilled promises from an employer. Indeed, research shows that employees can experience depressive mood states (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016) and psychological distress (Garcia et al. 2018) when employers' promised obligations are not fulfilled. However, by examining trait emotional resources as a moderator, we demonstrate that such negative effects may be less likely for employees who possess higher trait emotional resources. Trait emotional resources – the emotional energies that people can invest or mobilize for action (Ilies et al. 2020, p. 435), captures an important dispositional resource that employees can draw from to deal with the emotional consequence of psychological contract violation. The finding that trait emotional resources weaken the negative effect of psychological contract violation extends prior violation research that investigated several mitigating variables, including psychological entitlement (Priesemuth & Taylor 2016) and generativity (Garcia et al. 2018).

Implications for practice

First, we draw specific attention to the potential costs of organizational actions, in that not fulfilling their part of the psychological contract can elicit anticipatory anxiety in employees about future occurrences. We found that this, in turn, lowers employees' engagement in anticipatory helping behaviors. However, given the positive benefits of anticipatory helping behaviors to colleagues at work (Harari et al. 2021; Lin et al. 2020), organizations should recognize the important impact of their actions and endeavor to fulfill their promises as much

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as possible. This is particularly important because according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM 5) (APA 2013), anticipatory anxiety is used for diagnosing mental disorders such as worrying about what your colleagues will say behind your back after providing unsolicited help. This heightened worry can also affect the social well-being of employees in terms of their sense of belongingness and social connection at work (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Shore et al. 2011; Chung et al. 2020).

Second, our findings suggest that trait emotional resource possession is an important dispositional remedy for psychological contract violation. Human resource managers would benefit tremendously from developing their employees' emotional resources as this could mitigate the negative consequence of PC violation (Baker 2019; Ilies et al. 2020).

Fortunately, recent studies have shown that emotional resource possession (ERP) enhances the positive vibe and ability to function effectively at work (Frone & Tidwell 2015) and recover quickly from negative emotional adversities (Watson 2000; Ilies et al. 2020) which comes from the psychological contract violation (Robinson & Morrison 2000; Coyle-Shapiro et al. 2019). Therefore, we reason that developing employees' emotional resources, which is emotional energy for action (Ilies et al. 2020) will help employees to deal with the negative emotions of fear and worry that may result from psychological contract violation (Asante et al. 2023c). Although trait emotional resource is a dispositional attribute, psychological studies have shown that individuals can be deliberately trained to use certain behavioral attributes irrespective of their dispositional orientation (Brendl et al. 1995; Friedman & Förster 2001). For example, emotion coaching interventions aimed at enhancing people's emotional energy to help them cope with emotional experiences have been successfully applied in the past (Greenberg 2004). In emotion coaching interventions, people become aware of, receptive to, and rationalize their emotional experiences. This intervention entails deepening employees' experiential awareness, emotional processing, and the formulation of

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alternate emotional reactions. Other interventions such as empathy training (Gilbert et al. 2006), emotion-regulation skills training (Berking et al. 2008) and mindfulness-based interventions (Kabat-Zinn 2003) have all been found useful in enhancing people's emotional energy.

Limitations and future research direction

Despite its novelty, our study should be considered in light of a number of limitations. First, although our analyses are robust and well-informed by the COR theory, we concede that psychological contract violation could be examined beyond anticipatory and reactive helping behaviors. For instance, we reason that psychological contract violation can affect other helping behaviors like altruism, substituting, coaching, and caring (Williams & Anderson 1991; Van Dyne et al. 1994; Settoon & Mossholder 2002; McDonald et al. 2018; Lin et al. 2020) through anticipatory anxiety. Moreover, other related extra-role behaviors may also be affected by psychological contract violations (Organ 2018). For example, Podsakoff et al. (2000) have categorized extra-role behaviors into (1) helping behavior, (2) organizational compliance, (3) individual initiative, (4) self-development (5) civic virtue, (6) sportsmanship, and (7) organizational loyalty. Thus, in addition to helping behaviors, we suggest that the other categories of extra-role behaviors are potential outcomes of psychological contract violation. However, the scope of our study did not capture these other types of helping and extra-role behaviors. Hence, we recognize this as a potential limitation. Nonetheless, we have firm confidence in our findings because the use of COR theory (Hobfoll 1989; Halbesleben et al. 2014) and data from multiple waves and sources provide strong theoretical and practical implications. Despite this, we ask future research to examine other workplace helping and extra-role behaviors as stated earlier to augment our findings and extend its generalization.

Second, although research shows that help recipients usually respond toward helpers depending on the type of help received (Harari et al. 2022), our study did not capture

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recipients' responses. For instance, some questions will arise if a supervisor (higher status) anticipatorily offers help to subordinates (lower status). Is it because the subordinates are doing poorly at their tasks? Will they be rated poorly during performance appraisal? Research shows that help recipients may feel threatened when receiving anticipatory help from helpers with higher status than the recipients themselves (Harari et al. 2022). While some studies have started looking into these issues among individuals of different status levels, we know little about individuals of similar status levels. Future research can examine how coworkers react to receiving anticipatory help from their colleagues. Another issue is that anticipatory helping behaviors were measured from the perspective of the receiver. However, not all anticipatory helping behaviors initiated by the helper may be considered as helping (e.g., some helping behaviors may be considered as intrusive) by recipients. Thus, from the helper's perspective, a number of unsolicited helping behaviors could be elicited but may not be recognized as helping by the receiver. Although this is not the case for the reactive behaviors, which are offered after explicit requests have been made, we encourage future research to examine the extent to which both helpers and help receivers may see the same anticipatory behaviors as help.

Another limitation is that we collected data from only Ghana, a developing nation in sub-Saharan Africa, to test our hypotheses. According to Hofstede's (1991) individualism-collectivism index, Ghana is a collectivist country (Takyi-Asiedu 1993). In collectivist countries, the interests of the group override that of individuals, and as a result, people there are more inclined to help those in need (Perlow & Weeks 2002). Thus, Ghana is a useful case example to show how employees who perceive a violation would offer help to colleagues. However, future research would benefit greatly if our model could be tested in other individualistic cultural contexts.

Furthermore, while covariance-based SEM has been heralded as a great analytical framework (e.g., Zhang et al. 2021), some methodologists (e.g., Aguinis et al. 2020; Dul 2016) have questioned the sufficiency logic and its SEM analytical technique as not being able to address causality. As such, the necessity logic with its necessary condition analysis has been recommended as having the ability to rule out omitted variable and endogeneity bias in survey-based data (Dul 2016). Therefore, we recommend that future research tests our model using the NCA logic and methodology to enhance the robustness of our mediation analyses.

Conclusion

Our study reveals how psychological contract violation can have a double-edged effect on helping behaviors via anticipatory anxiety, the severity of which depends on employees' trait emotional resources. This was underpinned by the COR theory. Precisely, we demonstrate that psychological contract violation and anticipatory anxiety exert negative effect on anticipatory helping behavior and positive effect on reactive helping behavior. We also found the important accompanying effect that dispositional emotional resources have on the negative emotional reactions from psychological contract violation on anticipatory anxiety. We expect that our findings will encourage additional research in this emerging body of literature by shedding light on the bright and dark side of psychological contract violation on anticipatory and reactive helping behaviors.

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Psychological contract and helping behaviors

TABLE 1: Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations

	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	26.95	3.61									
2. Gender	1.32	0.47	-.17**								
3. Educational level	0.55	0.50	.01	-.12*							
4. Tenure	6.08	3.41	.57**	-.13*	.06						
5. Psychological contract violation	3.67	1.07	-.09	-.09	.00	-.09	.86				
6. Trait emotional resources	2.86	1.17	.01	.01	-.08	.03	-.40**	.89			
7. Anticipatory anxiety	3.29	0.83	.01	-.05	-.07	-.02	.41**	-.48**	.88		
8. Reactive helping	3.51	1.05	.03	-.14*	-.03	.04	.33**	-.19**	.45**	.85	
9. Anticipatory helping	2.54	0.92	-.03	.04	.10	.02	-.38**	.24**	-.46**	-.28**	.81

Note: $N = 269$. Cronbach's alpha coefficients are shown in boldface on the diagonal.

^a Gender: 1 = male; 2 = female.

^b Education: 1 = bachelor's degree and above; 0 = otherwise.

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

TABLE 2: Mediation Model

	Anticipatory anxiety	Reactive helping	Anticipatory helping
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age	-.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Gender	.02 (.10)	-.17 (.11)	-.01 (.10)
Education	.12 (.10)	.01 (.10)	.13 (.10)
Tenure	-.002 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)
<i>Independent variable</i>			
Psychological contract violation	.41** (.06)	.18* (.07)	-.26** (.08)
<i>Mediator variable</i>			
Anticipatory anxiety		.42** (.08)	-.38** (.09)
<i>R</i> ²	0.21	0.31	0.34

Note: $N = 269$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses.

For coding of dummy variables, see Table 1.

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

TABLE 3: Moderated Mediation Model

	Anticipatory anxiety	Reactive helping	Anticipatory helping
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Age	.003 (.01)	-.01 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Gender	-.04 (.09)	-.18 (.11)	-.01 (.10)
Education	-.18* (.09)	.01 (.10)	.13 (.10)
Tenure	.003 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.01 (.02)
<i>Independent variable</i>			
Psychological contract violation	.32** (.07)	.18* (.07)	-.26** (.08)
<i>Mediator variables</i>			
Anticipatory anxiety		.41** (.08)	-.37** (.09)
<i>Moderating effects</i>			
Trait emotional resources	-.29** (.05)		
Trait emotional resources x psychological contract violation	-.13* (.06)		
<i>R</i> ²	0.41	0.32	0.35

Note: $N = 269$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses.

For coding of dummy variables, see Table 1.

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

TABLE 4: Mediation and Moderated Mediation Effects

	Indirect Effects (S.E)	95% BC CI
<i>Mediation Effects</i>		
PC Violation→ Anticipatory anxiety → Reactive helping	.17 (.04)	.10, .27
PC Violation→ Anticipatory anxiety → Anticipatory helping	-.16 (.04)	-.25, -.08
<i>Moderated Mediation Effects</i>		
PC Violation→ Anticipatory anxiety → Reactive helping		
Moderated mediation index	-.05 (.03)	-.12, -.01
High trait emotional resources	.07 (.04)	.01, .15
Low trait emotional resources	.19 (.06)	.09, .32
PC Violation→ Anticipatory anxiety → Anticipatory helping		
Moderated mediation index	.05 (.02)	.01, .10
High trait emotional resources	.06 (.04)	-.15, .01
Low trait emotional resources	-.17 (.06)	-.29, -.08

Note: $N = 269$. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported, with standard errors in parentheses. PC violation = psychological contract violation. Bootstrap sample size = 1,000.

FIGURE 1: Theoretical model

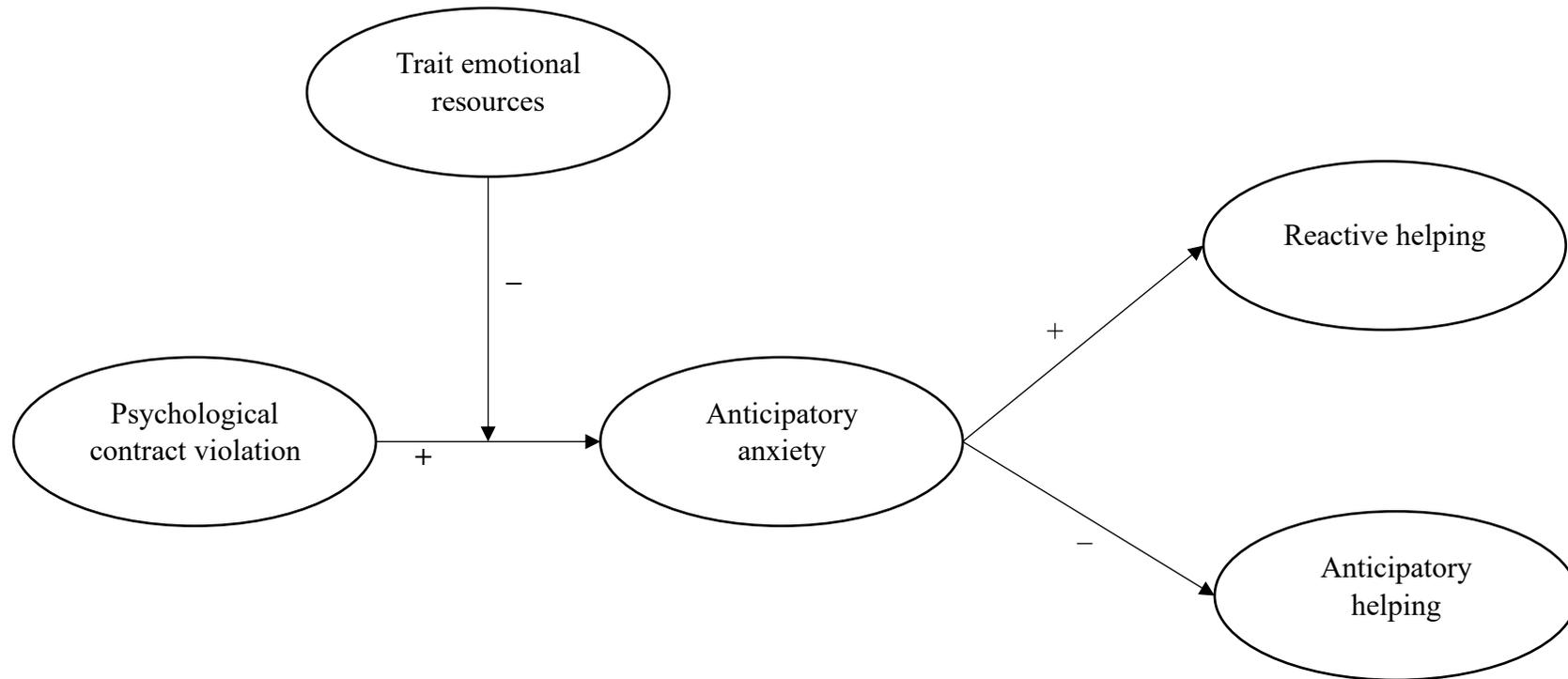


FIGURE 2: The interaction effect between psychological contract violation and trait emotional control on anticipatory anxiety

