

## The Mediating Role of Psychological Contract Violation in Relationship between Psychological Entitlement and Counterproductive Behavior

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### Extensive Summary

Although entitlement, as a sub-dimension of narcissism, is a matter that has been studied for a long time within the scope of psychological science, psychological entitlement or entitlement at work are expressions that have started to be used rather recently in the organizational behavior and management literature (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline and Brad, 2004; Raskin and Terry, 1988; Jordan, Ramsay and Westerlaken, 2017).

Psychological entitlement is defined as the individual's high level of positive sense of self and the unrealistic and optimistic expectations the individual may have due to such perception. In other words, it is possible to state that the sense of self of anyone perceiving psychological entitlement does not reflect the truth and is positive at a too high level (Harvey and Harris, 2010; Naumann, Minsky and Sturman, 2002; Brouer, Wallace and Harvey, 2011). Psychological entitlement at work, on the other hand, is explained as the employee's expectancy of unrealistically high levels of reward and preferential treatment, regardless of the performance, skills or potential of the employee (Campbell et al., 2004; Harvey and Martinko 2009; Harvey and Harris 2010). While the employee considers that he or she is entitled to rather high salary, reward, flexibility or participation in managerial decision making, the employee is reluctant to work for the benefit of the organization (Fisk, 2009; Twenge, 2006).

It is determined that employees perceiving high levels of psychological entitlement act unethically, have problems with their managers, have low levels of job satisfaction, display fewer behaviors that may be associated with organizational citizenship and have high levels of tendency to leave their job (Cambell et al., 2004, Harvey and Martinko, 2009; Hochwarter, Meurs, Perrewe, Royle and Matherly, 2007; Levine, 2005; Harvey and Haris. 2010). In the present study the effect of psychological

entitlement on counterproductive behaviors that harm or intended to harm either the organization or its members is examined.

Another purpose of the study is to examine the mediating role of psychological contract violation in relationship between psychological entitlement and counterproductive behavior. Psychological contract is considered to be a subtle and unwritten type of contract that defines the mutual expectations of the employee and the organization from each other (Martin, Staines and Pate, 1998, p.21).. In order to explain the mediating role of psychological contract violation in relationship between psychological entitlement and counterproductive behavior, social change and reciprocity norm theories have been taken as basis within the scope of the study.

The study is considered to be important due to the fact that psychological entitlement is a concept that has recently started to be examined within the scope of the literature on organizational behavior. Also the very limited number of studies conducted on the effects of psychological entitlement on work-oriented attitudes and behaviors enhance the importance of the present study (Harvey and Harris, 2010; Jordan, Ramsay and Westerlaken, 2017). Furthermore, determining the psychological entitlement perceptions of employees of varying backgrounds, working in varying industries, plays a significant role in psychological contracts taking shape (Gresse, Linde, Schalk, 2013; Westerlaken, Jordan and Ramsay, 2017). It is considered that the present study, which was conducted on white-collar employees working in the private sector in Istanbul, will make a significant contribution to the related literature by examining psychological entitlement and its effects of the relation between the violation of psychological contract and counterproductive behaviors. Naumann, Minsky and Sturman (2002) explain psychological entitlement at work as the high level of reward expectancy of the employee due to the employment relation he or she is in. Psychological entitlement at work is defined as the employee's expectancy of high levels of reward or preferential treatment and the employee's perception that he or she deserves such reward or preferential treatment, regardless of his or her actual performance, skills or potential (Campbell et al., 2004; Harvey and Martinko 2009; Harvey and Harris 2010)..

Employee's perception of psychological entitlement at work affects employee's attitudes and behaviors, and thus plays a role in the formation of the psychological contract (Gresse, Linde and Schalk, 2013; Naumann et al., 2002). Since the employee that perceives high levels of psychological entitlement believes that he or she deserves higher level of reward from the organization and more preferential treatment than the other employees, the employee may generally find the outputs he or she gains from the organization lacking. The employee usually believes that he or she is offering too much to the organization and no one else makes such effort for the benefit of the organization (Kickul ve Lester, 2001). In consequence, the employee perceives that the psychological contract being frequently violated by the organization. In line with all these, the employee perceiving high levels of psychological entitlement is expected to also perceive that the psychological contract is violated by the organization.

H<sub>1</sub>: Psychological entitlement is positively related to psychological contract violation.

According to the theory of social change and equality, the employee seeks a balance between what he or she offers to the organization and what he or she gains from

the organization in return. The party the employee associates with the violation of the contract and the reason of the perceived violation also shape the reaction that will be exhibited by the employee in order to compensate (Jensen et al., 2010, p.557). If the employee perceives that the organization fails to give the rewards it promised, the employee will try to decrease the effort it makes for the organization (Kickul and Lester, 2001). On the other hand, since an employee that perceives that the psychological contract has been honored believes that the organization keeps its promises, also the employee will try to recompense. In this sense, the employee exhibits higher work performance and organizational citizenship behavior. Similarly, the employee wishes to make more effort for the benefit of the organization and does not act in a counter-productive way that would harm the organization (Turnley et al., 2003, p.190).

The employee that perceives the psychological contract to be violated, on the other hand, believes that the organization fails to keep its promises, decreases work-related role behaviors and positive extra-role behaviors and rather adopts counterproductive behaviors. In line with all these, it is expected from the employee that perceives the psychological contract to be violated, to exhibit counterproductive behaviors.

H<sub>2</sub>. Psychological contract violation is positively related to counterproductive behaviour.

Employees that perceive that they have high levels of psychological entitlement expect a lot from their organization, solely based on the employment relation they are in, rather than their actual performance or potential. Such employees expect high levels of rewards and preferential treatment from their organizations. These expectations are based on their perception of themselves being more entitled than their fellow workers, and their belief that the fulfillment of their expectations is their right. When they perceive that these expectations are not fulfilled, or in other words when the psychological contract is perceived by the employees as violated, the relation between the employees and their organization may deteriorate (Harvey and Martinko, 2009; Werner Gresse, Bennie Linde, René and Schalk, 2013). Greenberger, Lessard, Chen and Farrugia (2008) reported that there is a relation between psychological entitlement and antisocial, machiavelist personality traits such as ambition, aggression, mercilessness and dissonance. It was determined that when employees that have perceive high levels of psychological entitlement perceive that their expectations are not fulfilled they decrease the performance they exhibit at work and act incongruously at work (Tomlinson, 2013, p.80). Particularly, since the employee perceiving high levels of psychological entitlement have a rather more egoistic and narcissistic character than the other employees (Miller and Konapaske, 2014), her or she may exhibit behaviors that are harmful for the organization at a higher level, because of the employee's perception that the organization has failed to meet the employee's rightful expectations. In line with all these, the employee perceiving psychological entitlement may exhibit counterproductive behaviors due to its belief that the psychological contract has been violated by the organization.

H<sub>3</sub>. Psychological entitlement is positively related to counterproductive behaviour Psikolojik (H3a) ve psychological contract violation mediates the relationship between psychological entitlement and counterproductive behaviour (H3b).

The data of the study was collected from 148 white collar employees in private organizations in İstanbul. The data was examined with Pearson correlation, regression and mediated regression analysis. According to the results of all analysis it is found that psychological entitlement is positively related with counterproductive behavior. It is also found that there is a partial mediation effect of psychological contract violation between psychological entitlement and counterproductive behavior.