

You are kindly invited to the public defense to obtain the degree of

DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

of Mrs. Safâa Achnak

Which will take place on Thursday February 11th at 1 p.m.

This public defense can be attended (only online) by clicking on the following link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)

UNFOLDING STRESS REACTIONS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL BREACH PERCEPTIONS: EXAMINING STRESS REPAIR MECHANISMS

JURY

INTERN:

Prof. dr. Joeri Hofmans (Chair) (VUB)

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SUMMARY

The psychological contract consists of individuals' beliefs on what they owe their employer and what their employer owes them in return. When individuals perceive that their employer fails to fulfill certain obligations towards them, they will experience a psychological contract breach. Perceptions of psychological contract breach (PCB) are known to lead to a wide range of negative organizational and individual outcomes.

This dissertation takes a temporal approach to investigate how stress reactions to perceptions of PCB unfold over time and what organizational and individual factors play a key role in this dynamic relationship. For this, one theoretical work, two experiments and three quantitative studies using daily and monthly timeframes were conducted. Results showed that perceptions of PCB cause increased physiological reactivity. Moreover, our findings showed that these perceptions were associated with increased psychological stress reactions, both in the short and long run. The experience of negative emotions plays a mediating role in this relationship. Further, we found that the longer individuals had to wait to receive an explanation for the breach, the more feelings of anxiety and depression they experienced. Finally, results indicate that individuals combine different coping strategies to deal with stress in the aftermath of PCB. Using a combination of both approach-oriented and avoidance-oriented coping strategies buffers the negative consequences of PCB, leading to less escalating negative emotions and stress over time.

Overall this dissertation highlights the importance of addressing PCB in organizations to alleviate employees' stress. Moreover, this research suggests that training employees to combine and apply adequate coping strategies may serve as an important buffer against high stress. Finally, early interventions following a breach are crucial to protect employees' well-being.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Safâa Achnak, born in 1991, Belgium, obtained the degree of Master in Work and Organizational Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit in 2014. Safâa began her PhD journey under the guidance of Prof. dr. Tim Vantilborgh in October 2014 in the Department of Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). In 2016, Safâa was granted a PhD fellowship of the Research Foundation of Flanders (FWO). Her research interests lie in the field of temporal dynamics, stress and psychological contracts. Her work has been presented at international conferences and published in international peer-reviewed scientific journals.