Do as I say, not as I do: The effects of organizational response type on employee commitment during the COVID-19 pandemic

by

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for organizations to show that they value their employees. During the pandemic, organizations could have responded substantively by mandating masks, enforcing social distancing, or offering frequent testing. Conversely, they could have responded symbolically by claiming that they imposed these substantive actions without enforcing them. These two approaches may influence employee commitment, especially if those employees experience feelings of psychological contract violation because of the lack of reciprocity from the organization and have a high fear of COVID-19. Previous research has demonstrated that organizational responses do impact employee commitment, but this is one of the first studies in the industrial and organizational psychology literature that examines organizational response types within the workplace in the context of the pandemic. Results indicate that, in employees with medium and high, but not low, levels of fear of COVID-19, a substantive response will lead to statistically significant decreases in feelings of psychological contract violation and increases in affective commitment. Alternatively, fear of COVID-19 did not play a significant role in employees whose organizations' responded symbolically. Symbolic responses lead to increases in psychological contract violations and psychological contract violations lead to decreases in affective commitment. Symbolic responses did not have a significant direct relationship with affective commitment.

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People working throughout the pandemic have labeled office reopening plans and organizational COVID-19 protocols 'a patchwork of precautions,' and for good reason (Whoriskey et al., 2020). In fact, in a survey conducted by Operations Incorporated (2020), which polled more than 400 businesses across 37 different states, 55% of the respondents were only somewhat confident in their businesses' reopening plans and almost half of the respondents were somewhat concerned about their organization's ability to prepare and equip their workers with the proper resources to keep them safe. Clearly, workers across the nation experienced apprehension when it came to their businesses' reopening plans (Creswell & Eavis, 2021). Understanding this concern, many organizations took action to provide responses to best support their employees throughout the pandemic, and especially during the reopening phase.

However, before the reopening phase, remote work ensued for many workers for months after the official declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). It was during this time that organizations first began assessing and creating office reopening plans with hopeful attempts of a September 2020 transition back to lower-capacity offices (Chesto, 2021). However, many organizations' reopening plans continued to get pushed back as far as the fall of 2021 as the number of positive cases continued to rise, the Delta variant began to spread, and other public health related safety precautions began to subside. These delays resulted in what some have called the Great Wait (Liu, 2021a).

To avoid the Great Wait, some organizations saw no option but to hastily reopen, with management implementing a patchwork of safety precautions and protocols (Liu, 2021b). Many felt that the benefits of having employees in the office, such as increased productivity and

creativity, outweighed the risks (Vasel, 2021). It was clear that many organizations wanted people back in the office, and that employees would have to comply with these demands if they wanted to keep their jobs.

Assessing organizational responses to the pandemic is an important area of study for the future. These are novel circumstances that we have been facing for the past three years throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this thesis is to analyze organizations' substantive and symbolic responses to the pandemic, and how those responses impacted employees' feelings of psychological contract violation, which ultimately influenced their affective commitment. Additionally, this thesis examines the impact that fear of COVID-19 had on the relationship between organizational response type and psychological contract violation. In doing so, we can help organizations gain insight into how their responses may have impacted employee commitment, for better or for worse, and we can prepare organizations for future pandemics.

Previous research and theoretical background

According to psychological contract and social exchange theories, employees need to feel protected and have trust in their organizations to perform their best and stay committed (Rousseau, 1989; Blau, 1986). Without these feelings that play a large role in affective commitment, employees face a number of options, including leaving the organization altogether (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Some types of organizational responses that increase or decrease feelings of protection are described in this section.

Corporate social responsibility: substantive and symbolic responses

Traditionally, discussion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) occurs in an economic sustainability context. CSR intends to keep businesses' practices aligned with ethical

guidelines (Mahajan, 2011). Corporations were created to help achieve goals set by society, many of which happen to be economic (Mintzberg, 1983). Along these lines, corporations have looked for means, such as workers or resources, to their economic-related ends (Mintzberg, 1983). The means and ends structure that upholds corporations must make room for social responsibility, which, as Mintzberg (1983) acknowledges, is challenging.

Mintzberg (1983) makes an interesting point regarding who should be the ones upholding social responsibility. Lower-rung managers may view social responsibility as what is ultimately important whereas higher-level leaders may have conflicting views, creating a dilemma for the lower-rung managers to act in a socially responsible way. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, if lower-rung managers lacked support from upper management regarding the distribution of PPE, flexibility during everchanging work situations, and emotional support, decreased employee commitment at multiple levels may have occurred.

Mahajan (2011) writes that CSR's main goals are to "embrace responsibility for the company's actions and encourage a positive impact through its activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere" (p. 1). Mintzberg (1983) provides a list of situations where social responsibility may best lend itself to use in corporations. One of these examples is when corporations act in such a way that puts the greater good at risk, or as Mintzberg (1983) puts it, "employees need the freedom to blow the whistle on unethical superiors or colleagues for the sake of the common good" (p. 12). According to Mintzberg (1983), employees, as citizens, have the right to hold their corporations accountable and uphold the expectation of social responsibility.

The economic and social systems of corporations interact across time and changing environmental conditions. The global pandemic affected how these systems interact. The

pandemic and organizational responses are within the sustainability context, and employee commitment is necessary to sustain our economy and maintain our businesses. We discuss CSR in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and most importantly, how company CSR impacted employee commitment.

Organizations continue to face intense pressure from multiple competing parties during the pandemic. Organizational leaders (i.e., CEOs) must constantly weigh the wants and needs of external and internal stakeholders to keep their businesses alive, as mentioned previously, but that became especially salient throughout this pandemic (Agle et al., 1999). To try and appease both internal stakeholders (i.e., employees and shareholders) and external stakeholders (i.e., customers), organizations can respond symbolically or substantively.

Symbolic responses occur when organizations say they commit to keeping their employees safe while working during the pandemic but do not actually take action on their commitment (Shepard et al., 2021). Symbolic responses include organizations saying they promote safe pandemic practices to their employees or the general public, but not actually enforcing these practices. As Truong et al. (2021) discuss in their paper that focused on symbolic and substantive responses and environmental practices, symbolic responses are generally only effective when there is a lack of public scrutiny. Organizations engage in symbolic responses to stay in line with social expectations. However, expectations that require action or implementation are met with the absence of those two very things (Truong et al., 2021).

Substantive responses, on the other hand, take place when organizations genuinely act on their commitment to keeping their employees safe in the context of the pandemic (Shepard et al., 2021). Substantive responses may be actions like enforcing mask wearing, abiding by social distancing guidelines in office spaces, and granting sick days if an employee needs to quarantine

following exposure (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 2014). Substantive responses require resources and effort. However, the return on investment may be higher. Organizations who respond substantively may experience increased employee performance (Truong et al., 2021)

Throughout the pandemic, workers exposed organizations who failed to respond substantively to COVID-19 by sharing unsafe working conditions that led to employee illness and even death (Perez, 2020). In many instances, these situations made national news. For example, in South Dakota in April of 2020, workers of Smithfield Foods protested that they were working in unsafe conditions (Perez, 2020). During this time, employees of Smithfield Foods protested that their organization was not ensuring clean working conditions, was not providing any personal protective equipment (PPE), and was failing to give workers resources when they tested positive or came into contact with someone who tested positive (Perez, 2020). The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) paradoxically failed to step in on numerous occasions at the beginning of the pandemic (Perez, 2020). When employees contacted OSHA about the working conditions at Smithfield Foods, many felt that OSHA's lack of response and action was dangerous and unacceptable due to the nature of their purpose as an organization. When employees wanted substantive responses from their organizations and OSHA alike, they were met with, in their perspective, symbolic statements.

These responses impact employees' commitment to organizations (Brammer et al., 2007). If organizations respond substantively to stress-inducing situations, workers may experience increased trust toward the organization, increased commitment to the organization, and a generally more positive environment (Dirks et al., 2011; Hyatt & Berente, 2017). If organizations respond symbolically to stress-inducing situations, such as Smithfield Foods in

April of 2020, workers may experience decreased trust toward the organization, decreased commitment to the organization, and a generally more negative environment (Dirks et al., 2011; Hyatt & Berente, 2017).

Due to the lack of available data on these response types and the pandemic specifically, previous research used to form the background of this thesis has centered around other stress-inducing situations, such as transgressions at work (Dirks et al., 2011). Previous research conducted by Brammer et al. (2007) demonstrated that there is a significant relationship between employee commitment and organizational responses in the framing of internal corporate social responsibility. However, data are lacking regarding substantive or symbolic organizational responses and employee commitment in the pandemic context, which further supports the relevance and pertinence of this research.

Employee commitment

Highly committed employees are less likely to quit (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Mowday et al. (1982) explain the two different kinds of commitment, which are attitudinal commitment and behavioral commitment. Attitudinal commitment focuses on employees' mindset and how that impacts the extent to which they view themselves and their values as aligned with the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). In contrast, behavioral commitment focuses on how employees' past behavior in the organization and their role influences the extent of their commitment to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982).

Allen and Meyer (1990) identify three themes that remain present throughout attitudinal commitment research, which are affective attachment, perceived costs, and obligation. These themes map onto the three components of attitudinal commitment that Allen and Meyer (1990) term affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment. This thesis

focuses on affective commitment, as the pandemic mustered a myriad of negative emotions and attitudes in workers. Because a link exists between turnover and commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990), it is important that we consider the affective component of attitudinal commitment and how organizational responses to the pandemic affected this.

Affective commitment. Allen and Meyer (1990) describe affective commitment as an employee's desire to stay with an organization. Formally defined, affective commitment is an employee's "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in, the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). Affective commitment deals most heavily with emotions and feelings of attachment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Employees who are high in affective commitment to their organization may feel attached to it despite poor responses, especially if they have tenure in the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Employees often experience different levels of affective commitment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Social exchange theory

One can apply social exchange theory to commitment. Blau (1986) wrote about exchange and power in social settings. Social exchange theory describes interactions anywhere there are at least two individuals or classes of people who have interests in what they can provide one another (Blau, 1986). Social exchange theory is especially relevant when the two parties involved are part of the same institution, such as employees and management. Blau's (1986) social exchange theory involves one individual or group engaging in rewarding services or behaviors for another individual or group, and vice versa. The individuals involved in the social exchange hope to gain returns, and at the core of this theory are trust in and obligation to the other person (Blau, 1986).

Organizations need employees to keep their businesses running, and management reciprocates employees' work by providing valuable resources, such as salary, time off, and support (Cole et al., 2002). In fact, Cole et al.'s (2002) piece refers to the workplace as a social exchange network. In a pandemic context, an individual continuing to work while management provides them with safe working conditions portrays the real-world application of social exchange theory. Workers are trusting that their organizations will provide them with safe working conditions in exchange for their work. In contrast, organizations are placing trust in their employees that, in exchange for safe and flexible working conditions, employees will continue to work. In the case of only symbolic organizational responses, however, this trust that employees garner in their organizations may be broken, which, according to Blau (1986), creates an unstable relationship and therefore negatively impacts the exchange relationship moving forward until balance is restored (i.e., organizations begin providing safe working conditions or the employee quits). When employees experience broken social exchange, they will experience a conflict that needs resolve (Blau, 1986).

Based on the previous literature and theory above, the following hypotheses were developed. Substantive organizational responses will have a positive relationship with affective commitment due to the social exchange of safe working conditions in exchange for employee work.

***Hypothesis 1*:** Substantive organizational responses will have a positive relationship with affective commitment.

Symbolic organizational responses will have a negative relationship with affective commitment. It is predicted that the negative relationship between symbolic responses and affective commitment will occur because of employees' feelings of obligation to their

organization and the potential feelings of emotional attachment or need to stay despite poor organizational responses (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

***Hypothesis 2*:** Symbolic organizational responses will have a negative relationship with affective commitment.

Psychological contract violation

Rosseau's psychological contract theory provides theoretical support for the relationship between organizational response type (i.e., substantive or symbolic) and employee commitment. According to Rousseau (1989), a psychological contract occurs when "an individual perceives that contributions he or she makes obligate the organization to reciprocity" (p. 125). The longer an employee works for an organization and upholds their end of the psychological contract, the stronger the contract will be and the more committed an employee will be not only to keeping up their end, but also to the organization (Rousseau, 1989). Additionally, the agreement preceding, rather than proceeding, the employee's work elevates trust in the psychological contract (Rousseau, 1989). Thus, employees have higher trust or deeper psychological contracts with their employers when employers respond to the employees' concerns and upholds their side of the contract without the employees needing to intervene, as in the example of Smithfield Foods and OSHA.

In Rousseau's (1989) piece, she describes that when one party involved in the psychological contract fails to respond in a way that the other party views as acceptable, there may be a breach of the psychological contract. Morrison and Robinson (1997) identified reneging, incongruence, and vigilance as causes of breaches of psychological contracts. Reneging is particularly relevant to the context of the pandemic, as employees who perceive their organizational agents to renege may recognize that the organization is knowingly breaking

their end of the contract. Reneging may not be as malicious as some may assume; reasons organizations renege may include a lack of resources or failure of a good faith effort (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). However, the reasons for reneging may not be relevant when considering employees' emotional commitment to an organization.

Morrison and Robinson (1997) first made the distinction between breaches of psychological contracts, which are perceptions, and violations of psychological contracts, which entail emotions. Robinson and Morrison (2000) shifted the focus toward violations of psychological contracts and confirmed the discriminant validity between breach and violation. Violations of psychological contracts are associated with "intense emotional reaction[s]" (Robinson & Morrison, 2000, p. 528).

Organizations responding symbolically to the pandemic (i.e., saying they will have safe working conditions when they really do not) may represent a violation of the psychological contract between the organization and the employees as negative emotions of unsafe working conditions may arise due to contract violation and organizational reneging. Organizations' substantive, not symbolic, responses may enhance psychological contracts in the context of the pandemic because employees will feel safe and protected going to work. This will likely lead to employees upholding their end of the psychological contract since their organizations facilitate and promote safe working conditions. The discussion of psychological contracts is crucial in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is in this context that we must remember how employees create psychological contracts and may experience negative consequences should violations of contracts occur (i.e., should their corporations fail to uphold their social responsibility.)

Based on the previous literature and theory above, the following hypotheses were developed. Substantive organizational responses will result in positive employee feelings related

to the psychological contract because perceptions of a breach are absent and therefore, feelings of violation are not present.

Hypothesis 3: Employees whose organizations responded substantively to the pandemic will not experience feelings of psychological contract violation.

Alternatively, symbolic organizational responses will result in negative employee feelings due to the presence of psychological contract violation. In other words, unsafe working conditions may lead to negative feelings of violation.

Hypothesis 4: Employees whose organizations responded symbolically to the pandemic will experience feelings of psychological contract violation.

In consideration of the relationship between organizational response types and corporate social responsibility, Vlachos et al. (2014) found that employees who perceive their organizations to act in socially responsible ways experienced increased affective commitment. With psychological contract violation and affective commitment both being emotional processes, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 5: Employees who experience feelings of psychological contract violation will experience decreased affective commitment

Fear of COVID-19

Fear of COVID-19, as determined by Ahorsu et al. (2020), is an individual's intense worry or fear about coming into contact with people who have tested positive for the virus or contracting the virus themselves. COVID-19 is characterized by high mortality rates and even higher transmission rates, and as such, poses a significant threat to everyone (Ahorsu et al., 2020). Individuals with a fear of COVID-19 may experience an even higher level of stress throughout the pandemic, which may lead to irrational thinking and over-reactivity (Ahorsu et

al., 2020). It's important to note that fear of COVID-19 may have been worse at the beginning of the pandemic due to a lack of treatment options (i.e., vaccines, available hospital beds, etc.) and general uncertainty. However, it is nonetheless a necessary part of this thesis since fear is a human emotion that may impact people's attitudes, such as their commitment to work (Ahorsu et al., 2020; Giorgi et al., 2015)

The final hypothesis for this research proposal is regarding the role that fear of COVID-19 plays in the overarching relationship between organizational response type and employee commitment. Fear of COVID-19 will moderate the relationship between organizational response type and feelings of psychological contract violation. As individuals' fear of COVID-19 increases, feelings of psychological contract violation may intensify.

Hypothesis 6: Fear of COVID-19 will moderate the relationship between organizational response type and psychological contract violation, such that when fear of COVID-19 is high, a substantive response will lead to less intense feelings related to contract violation and a symbolic response will lead to more intense feelings of contract violation.

Finally, the following research questions are proposed due to the limited existing literature on the variables in question.

Research Question 1: Fear of COVID-19 will have a conditional indirect effect on the relationship between substantive responses and affective commitment via psychological contract violation.

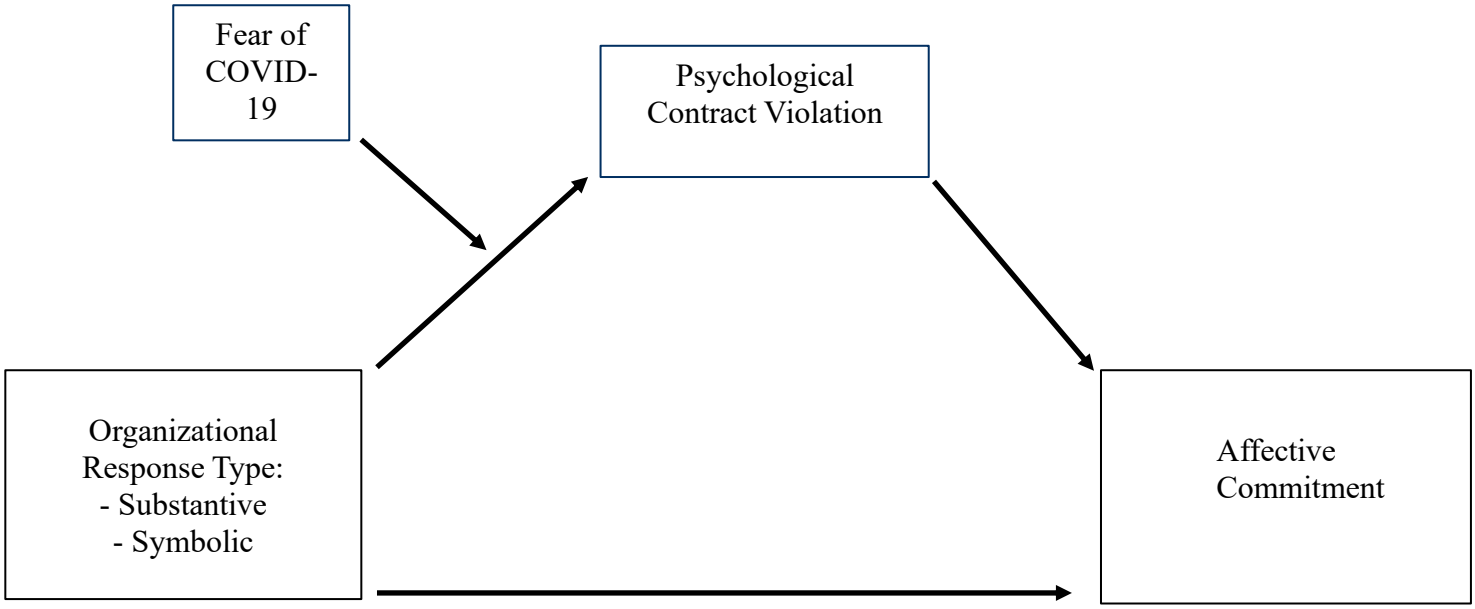
Research Question 2: Fear of COVID-19 will have a conditional indirect effect on the relationship between symbolic responses and affective commitment via psychological contract violation.

Model

Figure 1 below shows the proposed model.

Figure 1

Proposed Model



Method

Participants and procedure

Data was collected through an online questionnaire via the crowdsourced platform of CloudResearch (Litman et al., 2017). Using crowdsourced software to collect data on real workers should improve the generalizability of results, as a student sample from the university may not be sufficient in terms of generalizability given the contextual differences between the two samples (Highhouse, 2007).

This research adopted a multi-wave framework to allow the temporal process of mediation to play out and to account for common method bias (Griep et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2003). While previous research has relied on longer temporal separations between data

collection waves, Griep et al. (2021) brought to light the ambiguity around the length of time lags and recommended that time lags be justified using the theories and variables pertinent to each study. The theories that support the grounds for this research occur in daily exchanges between employers and employees. Additionally, the nature of the pandemic is random and changing. As such, the temporal separation between each data collection wave was one week to account for the daily interactions and the changing nature of our world.

Prescreening improves the quality of data collected on MTurk (Chandler et al., 2019). The prescreen was conducted to be mindful of resources and improve the robustness of the online data collection process and ensured that participants included in the multi-wave study were at least 18 years of age or older, were living in the United States, were working full time at the start of and throughout the pandemic, and were with the same organization since March of 2020. Additional questions, such as whether participants transitioned back into an in-person work environment, how many hours participants worked remotely if they did so before the pandemic, and if participants worked any job other than a crowdsourcing platform, were asked to further understand potential participants. 940 participants participated in the prescreen and were compensated $0.15 for their participation in a one minute survey.

355 participants who completed the prescreening process qualified for the longitudinal study based on the predetermined inclusion criteria (were with their organization since March of 2020, were currently employed, worked full time or at least 30 hours per week, were 18 years of age or older, and lived in the US). These participants were assigned wave 1 of the multiwave survey through CloudResearch. Participants read an information sheet and, upon giving agreement to the information sheet, began the survey. All participants received the same questions. Upon completion of the survey, participants exited the browser and received payment

for their participation. Payment incrementally increased for every participation period such that, for the first wave, participants were paid $1.00, for the second wave participants were paid $1.85, and for the third wave participants were paid $3.00. In total, from the prescreen to the completion of wave 3, participants were paid $6.00.

Attrition rates for the multi-wave study were low. 355 participants were invited to take wave one of the survey based on the prescreen data, but only 249 completed the first wave. Participants who did not start wave one of the survey were not included in wave two. From wave one to wave two, the sample experienced a 6.4% attrition rate, with 233 participants completing wave two. Likewise, participants who did not start wave two of the survey were not included in wave three. Between waves two and three, there was a 7.7% attrition rate, with 215 participants completing all three waves of the study. In total, this multi-wave study only experienced a 13.7% attrition rate across all three time points.

This study collected data via an online survey and careless responding may be an issue with this method (Meade & Craig, 2012). The survey included three careless responding items to ensure that participants were responding attentively. Participants who incorrectly responded to two out of three of the careless responding items across two of the three waves were excluded from analysis. Additionally, participants in the third wave whose responses to the organizational tenure and hours worked remote questions that were not reflective of their prescreen data were removed. The data contained no outliers, as examined by Mahalonobis distance (Mahalanobis, 1930).

As such, the final sample size across all three waves of data was 163 participants. The participants' age ranged between 22 and 69 years (M_{age} = 40.44, SD_{age} = 10.78) and 47.2% of the sample identified as female. Most of the participants were White (76.7%) and a variety of

industries were represented in the sample, but the most represented industries were health care and social assistance (12.3%), retail (9.2%), manufacturing (9.2%), and insurance and finance (9.2%).

Measures

Independent variable

Organizational response type was measured with Donia et al.'s (2017) Corporate Social Responsibility Substantive and Symbolic Scale. This scale consists of 14 items, with eight of the items measuring substantive response type and six of the items measuring symbolic response type. The wording of the items was adapted to include information about COVID-19 precautions organizations instilled and framed the statements in the past tense. Sample items from the substantive category include, "My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it wanted to help solve problems in the community," and "My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it felt it was important to help those in need." Sample items from the symbolic category include, "My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to avoid looking bad in front of others," and "My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to appear to be an ethical company." Items are scored using a five-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (clearly does not describe my organization's motives for engaging in CSR) to 5 (clearly describes my organization's motives for engaging in CSR). This scale demonstrated construct, convergent, discriminant, and incremental validities as well as an acceptable Cronbach's alpha score, in line with researchers' recommendations for internal consistency scores (Donia et al.,

2017; Cortina et al., 2020; Taber, 2017; Nunnally, 1978). Instructions were created for this scale to better fit the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The full scale is available in Appendix A.

Dependent variable

Employee affective commitment was measured with Allen and Meyer's (1990) 8-item affective commitment subscale. Items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' Sample items from the affective commitment subscale include, "I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization," and "I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one." Three of the items from the subscale were reverse scored. The affective commitment subscale has demonstrated acceptable reliability scores, with the scale demonstrating an alpha of .87 (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This reliability level is in line with researchers recommendations for acceptable Cronbach's alpha scores when measuring internal consistency reliability (Cortina et al., 2020; Taber, 2017; Nunnally, 1978). Finally, the subscales that comprise the overall commitment scale demonstrate convergent and discriminant validities (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Instructions were added to frame the scale in the context of the pandemic. The scale is available in Appendix B.

Mediator variable

Psychological contract violation was measured using Robinson and Morrison's (2000) psychological contract violation scale. This scale consists of four items measured on a Likert type scale with response options ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' The wording of the items was adapted to include information about COVID-19 and framed the statements in the past tense. Sample items from the scale include, "When working during the pandemic, I felt betrayed by my organization," and "During office reopening, I felt extremely frustrated by how I was treated by my organization." The scale has demonstrated an acceptable

reliability score with an alpha level of .92. This reliability value is in line researcher's recommendations for acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cortina et al., 2020; Taber, 2017; Nunnally, 1978). The scale is available in Appendix C.

Moderator variable

The moderator variable, fear of COVID-19, was measured with Ahorsu et al.'s (2020) Fear of COVID-19 scale. This is a seven-item scale consisting of five-item Likert type response options ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree.' The items in the scale were adapted to the past tense. Sample items include, "It made me uncomfortable to think about coronavirus-19," and "My heart raced or palpitated when I thought about getting coronavirus-19." Scores for this scale can range from 7 to 35, with a higher score indicating a greater fear of COVID-19. The scale has demonstrated acceptable reliability scores with an alpha level of .82. Again, these reliability values are in line researcher's recommendations for acceptable internal consistency reliability (Cortina et al., 2020; Taber, 2017; Nunnally, 1978). Per Bitan et al.'s (2020) study, this scale does, in fact, have acceptable convergent and discriminant validity. Additionally, Martínez-Lorca et al.'s (2020) study demonstrated acceptable criterion-related validity of the Fear of COVID-19 scale. The full scale is available in Appendix D.

Control variables

Age and gender were entered into the model as control variables. Not only are these popularly used control variables, but Bernerth and Aguinis (2015) point out that control variables should be related to the variables of interest and should be theoretically and practically based. Age and gender were selected for two reasons. First, gender differences in the commitment literature have been found, albeit mixed. Marsden et al. (1993) and Meyer et al. (2002) both found that men have higher levels of organizational commitment than women depending on the

job performed, whereas Dixon et al. (2005) found that women have higher levels of affective commitment than men. Either way, gender differences have been found in the commitment literature and for this reason, gender was included as a control variable.

Age as a control variable in this model poses an interesting discussion. First, significant differences in organizational commitment have been found in younger versus older employees, with younger employees displaying higher levels of commitment (Cohen, 1993). Likewise, Kooij et al. (2009) and Meyer et al. (2002) found age differences in affective and organizational commitments in their meta-analyses. In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic, the sandwich generation, or those who are caregivers to the generation above and below them, may have had a uniquely hard pandemic experience (Lei et al., 2022). Working individuals in the sandwich generation may have had greater fears of getting sick with COVID-19, as they had more than just themselves to care for. Relatedly, older individuals were especially susceptible to succumbing to COVID-19 (Lee, 2020). For these reasons, age is a control variable in the model to account for the unique variance that generational experiences may have had on workers.

Study design

The analytic strategy for this study was a moderated mediation analysis using Hayes PROCESS macro model 7, the moderated mediation (Hayes, 2013). In this study, fear of COVID-19 is the moderator variable that was proposed to affect the strength of the relationship between organizational response type and psychological contract violation. Psychological contract violation was the proposed variable that would mediate the relationship between organizational response type and employee commitment, thus showing the indirect effect of contract violation on response type and commitment. Substantive and symbolic responses were run as either independent variables or covariates in each respective model to account for the

unique variance each may play. As stated above, age and sex were entered into the model as control variables.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas for study scales are provided in Table 1. Age was significantly negatively related to symbolic response type (r = -.25, p < .01), and sex was significantly positively related to substantive response type (r = .17, p < .05).

Participants were presented with a series of statements that represented examples of organizational substantive and symbolic responses, displayed in Table 2. Of note, almost 30% of the sample indicated that their employers said they would provide time off when exposed to COVID-19, but did not actually do so. Alternatively, participants indicated that, for the most part, employers provided masks (67.5%), enforced wearing them (66.3%), gave time off when sick with COVID-19 (81%), and kept office spaces clean and sanitized (72.4%). Thus, it appears that participants in this sample perceived their organizations to enact substantive responses.

Tests of conditional indirect effects

Prior to running the moderated mediation, the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and collinearity were tested. The data were normally distributed as assessed by a P-P plot, homoscedastic as assessed by a scatterplot, and were not multi-collinear as assessed by VIF values (Keith, 2019). All analyses were run with bootstrapping 5000 times to account for the indirect effect (Hayes, 2009). All hypotheses and research questions were tested while controlling for the effects of age and sex. Results were similar with or without the controls of age and sex in the model, but results are reported with controls included.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that substantive responses would be positively related to affective commitment. Hypothesis 1 was supported, as the path between substantive responses and affective commitment was statistically significant (Table 3; b = .52, SE = .10, p < .001, 95% CI = [.32, .71]). Hypothesis 2, which suggested that symbolic responses would be negatively related to affective commitment, was not supported. The path between symbolic responses and affective commitment was not significant due to 0 being included in the confidence interval (Table 4; b = -.24, SE = .12, p = .05, 95% CI = [-.48, .00]), providing no support for hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that there would be no relationship between substantive responses and feelings of psychological contract violation. This hypothesis was rejected, as the path between substantive response type and psychological contract violation was significant and negative (Table 3; b = -.17, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI = [-.23, -.10]). This suggests that employees whose organizations provided substantive responses actually experienced less psychological contract violation, rather than no psychological contract violation like originally hypothesized.

Hypothesis 4 suggested that employees whose organizations responded symbolically to the pandemic would experience feelings of psychological contract violation. A significant positive path between symbolic responses and psychological contract violation was found (Table 4; b = .12, SE = .04, p < .01, 95% CI = [.03, .20]), providing support for hypothesis 4. The more symbolic responses organizations exhibited, the more feelings of psychological contract violation in employees increased.

Hypothesis 5 suggested that employees who experience feelings of psychological contract violation, or employees whose organizations' responded symbolically, would experience decreased affective commitment. Hypothesis 5 was supported, as psychological

contract violation had a significant and negative path to affective commitment (Table 4; b = -.71, SE = .21, p < .001, 95% CI = [-1.12, -.31]). Because hypothesis 3 suggested that there would be no relationship between substantive responses and feelings of psychological contract violation, a hypothesis testing the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment for substantive responses was not created. However, this path was still tested due to the rejection of hypothesis 3. The path between psychological contract violation and affective commitment for substantive responses was significant and very similar to the path proposed in hypothesis 5 (Table 3; b = -.71, SE = .21, p < .001, 95% CI = [-1.12, -.31]).

Hayes' (2013) PROCESS Macro was used to examine fear of COVID-19 in the model. There was support for Hypothesis 6, which suggested that fear of COVID-19 would moderate the relationship between organizational response type and psychological contract violation such that when fear of COVID-19 is high, a substantive response will lead to less intense feelings related to contract violation and a symbolic response will lead to more intense feelings of contract violation. The interaction between substantive responses and fear of COVID-19 was significant (Table 5; b = -.01, SE = .00, p < .01, 95% CI = [-.02, -.00]). This relationship was significant with medium levels of fear of COVID-19 (Table 9; b = -.16, SE = .03, p < .001, 95% CI = [-.23, -.09]) and maintained significance as fear of COVID-19 increased to one standard deviation above the mean (Table 9; b = -.25, SE = .05, p < .001, 95% CI = [-.35, -.15]). However, the conditional indirect effect of fear of COVID-19 on substantive responses and psychological contract violation was not significant when fear of COVID-19 was low (Table 9; b = -.07, SE = .05, p = .17, 95% CI = [-.17, .03]) . The relationship between symbolic response type and psychological contract violation was not significant, as shown by a non-significant

X*M interaction term (Table 6; *b* = -.00, SE = .01, *p* = .81, 95% CI = [-.01, .01]). Thus, hypothesis 6 only received partial support.

Research question 1 assessed the conditional indirect effect of fear of COVID-19 on substantive responses and affective commitment via psychological contract violation. The results indicate a significant index of moderated mediation (Table 5; *b* = .01, SE = .00, 95% CI = [.00, .02]). Specifically, the conditional indirect effect was significant at medium (Table 7; *b* = .11, SE = .05, 95% CI = [.03, .21]) and high levels (Table 7; *b* = .18, SE = .08, 95% CI = [.04, .35]) of fear of COVID-19, but not low levels (Table 7; *b* = .05, SE = .04, 95% CI = [-.02, .14]). Thus, research question 1 was supported.

Research question 2 was not supported, as the conditional indirect effect of symbolic responses on affective commitment via psychological contract violation moderated by fear of COVID-19 did not have a significant index of moderated mediation (Table 6; *b* = .00, SE = .01, 95% CI = [-.01, .01]).

Discussion

Substantive and symbolic organizational responses had unique effects on employee commitment. As previous literature on organizational response type suggests, symbolic organizational responses aim to promote the look of commitment to a cause and have negative outcomes, whereas substantive responses aim to promote actual commitment to a cause (Hyatt & Berente, 2017). Regarding substantive and symbolic responses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and employee commitment, there are a number of interesting findings to discuss. First, by examining employees' perceptions of their organizations' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current study determined how different levels of fear of COVID-19 impacted employee affective commitment via psychological contract violation. Because previous literature

did not encapsulate employee affective commitment with these variables during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study is the first of its kind.

Results revealed that, overall, substantive organizational responses had a significant impact on employees' affective commitment via psychological contract violation across medium and high, but not low, levels of fear of COVID-19. Substantive responses had a negative relationship with psychological contract violation, meaning that the more substantive responses organizations had, the less employees experienced feelings of psychological contract violation. Although not hypothesized, this implies that substantive organizational responses strengthen psychological contracts. The interaction between fear of COVID-19 and substantive responses was significant and negatively related to psychological contract violation, which indicates that individuals who have medium to high levels of fear of COVID-19 may experience feelings of psychological contract violation, even with the substantive response. The more afraid someone is of coming into contact with the virus, the more likely they will experience feelings of violation even with substantive responses.

In terms of substantive responses, the relationship between psychological contract violation and affective commitment was negative. This implies that employees who experience greater feelings of psychological contract violation will experience less intense feelings related to commitment to their organization. Intuitively, this makes sense; employees will feel less emotionally attached to an organization who has violated the psychological contract between the two (Rousseau, 1989). Finally, the moderated mediation was significant, albeit weak, indicating that substantive organizational responses during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as promoting mask wearing, enforcing masks, and providing time off when sick not only increased employees'

psychological contracts with their organizations, but it lead to increases in affective commitment. Employees felt more emotionally attached to organizations who responded substantively.

While paths within the symbolic model were significant, overall, symbolic organizational responses did not have a significant impact on employees' affective commitment via psychological contract violation across different levels of fear of COVID-19. The relationship between symbolic responses and psychological contract violation was significantly positive. Why is this? For one, symbolic responses are known to be lacking action. In other words, symbolic responses are mainly for show. Employees want to be with organizations who uphold their ends of psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1989). The moderating effect of fear of COVID-19 on the relationship between symbolic responses and psychological contract violation was not significant, suggesting that individuals, no matter their levels of fear of COVID-19, experienced feelings of contract violation when organizations responded symbolically. Organizations who said they would promote mask wearing , enforce mask wearing, and provide time off when sick, but did not, lead employees to perceive breaches and subsequent violations of their psychological contracts.

In terms of symbolic responses, the path from psychological contract violation to affective commitment was significantly negative, indicating that employees who felt their psychological contracts were violated felt a decreased emotional attachment to their organization. This mimics the relationship found in the substantive model. This may imply that universally, psychological contract violation leads to decreased affective commitment. Evidently, symbolic responses pose serious threats to organizations and should be avoided. This will be discussed further in the practical implications section.

Theoretical implications

This research offers several theoretical implications. First, while previous studies (Donia et al., 2017; Donia & Sisly, 2019) have established substantive and symbolic responses in the organizational literature, this study appears to the be first to establish substantive and symbolic responses in the organizational commitment literature. Second, a theoretical link between substantive responses, psychological contract violation, and affective commitment was supported and confirmed. This is similar to previous research that has found links between psychological contract breaches and organizational commitment (Cassar & Briner, 2011). However, the current study offers a unique contribution to the literature by zeroing in on affective commitment, especially during crisis.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1986) and psychological contract theory (Rousseau, 1989) were used to formulate this study. These theories appeared to support the findings of this study, such that employees' social exchange of safety with their employer lead to psychological contract violations in the case of symbolic organizational responses, but not substantive. Likewise, the negative experiences of social exchange that employees experienced when their organizations responded symbolically lead to decreases in affective commitment.

Interestingly, the negative relationship between substantive responses and psychological contract violation was stronger than the positive relationship between symbolic responses and psychological contract violation. Perhaps employees whose organizations responded symbolically to the pandemic had higher thresholds. Future research may explore this.

Practical implications

The practical implications of this research are robust. Previous research has demonstrated that employees' attitudes are partially determined by how they view their organization in terms of social responsibility (Rupp et al., 2016). This seems to ring true. Practically, organizations

should respond to crisis situations, future pandemics included, with substantive actions. Following through with statements and providing substantive responses may encourage employee OCBs, which have been shown to have positive organizational outcomes (Donia & Sicily, 2019). Now that substantive and symbolic organizational responses have been linked with employee commitment, organizations should take care to respond appropriately to crises in hopes to retain their employees.

As shown in this study, a practical implication of substantive responses is increased employee affective commitment. Affective commitment, or employees' desire to stay with their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990) has demonstrated positive organizational results, such as increased job performance and lowered turnover intentions (Vandenberghe et al., 2004). If organizations wish to increase affective commitment of their employees, one way is to consider how they handle crisis situations. Knowing now that symbolic responses lead to decreases in employee affective commitment shows that these types of responses need not take place in the future.

Study limitations and future research

While this study offered contributions to the I/O psychology literature, it is not without faults. First, while attrition rates were relatively low, the number of participants who were excluded at the end of the final wave may have been reduced with better researcher controls. Perhaps future research may consider more robust inclusion criteria or the use of other careless responding tactics throughout the survey.

Second, substantive and symbolic responses appear to be relatively sparse in the I/O psychology literature. As such, this made hypothesizing and formulating the current model challenging. Future research should continue to bring substantive and symbolic responses to the

I/O literature, especially considering how relevant these response types are to employee attitudes. Finally, sample demographics may have been limiting. Most of the sample was white, limiting the generalizability of findings. Also, data were collected only from workers living in the United States. It would be interesting to see if these findings transfer cross-culturally.

The future directions for the findings are both exciting and compelling. First, it would be interesting to see if these effects hold up with the other forms of commitment, namely normative commitment and continuance commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Additional moderators may be explored to further understand the relationship between the variables included in this model. Specifically, industry or perception of risk within each respective industry may show to what extent organizational response type leads to psychological contract violation. Examining other mediators in the model may be interesting as well.

An important note is that the researcher expects these findings to transfer across different crises. Corporate social responsibility often comes to the forefront during natural disasters (Johnson et al., 2010), pandemics (García-Sánchez & García-Sánchez, 2020), or economic crises (Ellis & Bastin, 2011). Employees and society as a whole look to organizations to be proactive yet flexible in times of emergency (Ellis & Bastin, 2011). With this being known, the moderating role of employees' fear of COVID-19 may very well be replaced with future fears. Whether it is fear of another pandemic, fear of a recession, or fear of a natural disaster, the findings from this study can help organizations handle future crises. Future research should make use of times of crisis and study the outcomes of organizational responses.

A final note for future research is that of job insecurity. Job insecurity poses as a stressor for workers and leads to strains (American Psychological Association, 2014). Furåker and Berglund (2014) found many links between decreased organizational commitment and

perceptions of job insecurity. It may be interesting to examine how job insecurity as a long-term stressor impacts workers' commitment when organizations respond substantively and symbolically.

Conclusion

Substantive organizational responses have a direct influence on employee affective commitment. Meanwhile, symbolic organizational responses have an indirect, but rather robust influence on employee affective commitment via psychological contract violation. As such, the responses that organizations had during the COVID-19 pandemic had implications that either made their employees more emotionally attached or pushed them away. Future research offers exciting opportunities to further determine the when, where, what, and how organizational responses influence employees' attitudes and behaviors. The order, "do as I say, not as I do" is not a helpful or strategic human resources approach. Organizations should do as they say they will, all the time, and especially in times of crisis.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics, Variable Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age	40.44	10.78	-						
2. Sex	1.47	0.50	.13	-					
3. Substantive Response	28.35	8.38	.03	.17*	*(.95)*				
4, Symbolic Response	16.69	6.78	-.25**	-.09	-.05	*(.93)*			
5. Fear of COVID-19	16.68	7.60	-.00	.15	.02	.14	*(.93)*		
6. Psychological Contract Violation	7.94	4.17	-.14	.02	-.31**	.27**	.39**	*(.95)*	
7. Affective Commitment	35.74	11.58	.03	.05	.46**	-.21**	.01	-.41**	*(.92)*

Note. Items in italics represent scale reliabilties.
***p* < .01, * *p* < .05.
N = 163.
Sex coded 1 = male, 2 = female.

Table 2

Frequencies of Substantive and Symbolic Statements

Response type	Statement	Yes (N)	% Yes	No (N)	% No
Substantive response					
	My employer provided masks for employees.	110	67.5	53	32.5
	My employer enforced masks for employees.	108	66.3	55	33.7
	My employer provided time off when employees were sick with COVID.	132	81	31	19
	My employer provided time off when employees were exposed to COVID.	76	46.6	87	53.4
	My employer accommodated office spaces to be socially distanced.	89	54.6	74	45.4
	My employer kept office spaces clean and sanitized.	118	72.4	45	27.6
	My employer provided COVID-19 tests.	48	29.4	115	70.6
Symbolic response					
	My employer said they would provide masks for employees but didn't.	10	6.1	153	93.9
	My employer said they would enforce mask wearing but didn't.	0	0	163	100
	My employer said they would provide time off when employees were sick with COVID but didn't.	9	5.5	154	94.4
	My employer said they provide time off when employees were exposed to COVID but didn't.	47	28.8	116	71.2
	My employer said they would accommodate office spaces to be socially distanced but didn't.	24	14.7	139	85.3
	My employer said they would keep office spaces clean and sanitized but didn't.	21	12.9	142	87.1
	My employer said they would provide COVID-19 tests but didn't.	34	20.9	129	79.1

Note. $N = 163$.

Table 3

Psychological Contract Violation as a Mediator between Substantive Response Type and Affective Commitment

	DV: PCV				DV: Affective Commitment			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	*b*	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	8.55***	1.31	5.96	11.14	43.82***	4.02	35.88	51.76
Age	-.03	.03	-.08	.02	-.05	.08	-.20	.10
Sex	.37	.57	-.75	1.48	-.24	1.59	-3.37	2.90
Substantive Responses	-.17***	.03	-.23	-.10	.52***	.10	.32	.71
PCV					-.71***	.21	-1.12	-.31
Direct effect of Substantive Responses on Affective Commitment	-	-	-	-	.52***	.10	.32	.71
Indirect effect of Substantive Responses on Affective Commitment	-	-	-	-	.11***	.05	.03	.21
R^2	.33**				.30***			
F	12.76***				13.56***			

Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01.
N = 163.
Sex coded 1 = male, 2 = female.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval, PCV = psychological contract violation.

Table 4

Psychological Contract Violation as a Mediator between Symbolic Response Type and Affective Commitment

	DV: PCV				DV: Affective Commitment			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	*b*	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	8.70***	1.33	6.05	11.33	43.82***	4.02	35.88	51.76
Age	-.03	.03	-.09	.02	-.05	.08	-.20	.10
Sex	.38	.58	-.76	1.52	-.24	1.59	-3.37	2.90
Symbolic Responses	.12**	.04	.03	.20	-.24	.12	-.48	.00
PCV					-.71***	.21	-1.12	-.31
Direct effect of Symbolic Responses on Affective Commitment	-	-	-	-	-.24	.12	-.48	.00
Indirect effect of Symbolic Responses on Affective Commitment	-	-	-	-	-.09**	.04	-.18	-.01
R^2	.30***				.30***			
F	11.32***				13.56***			

Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01.
N = 163.
Sex coded 1 = male, 2 = female.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval, PCV = psychological contract violation.

Table 5

Fear of COVID-19 as a Moderator of the Relationship between Substantive Responses and Psychological Contract Violation

	DV: PCV				DV: Affective Commitment			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	*b*	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	8.55***	1.31	5.96	11.14	43.82***	4.02	35.88	51.76
Age	-.03	.03	-.08	.02	-.05	.08	-.20	.10
Sex	.37	.57	-.75	1.48	-.24	1.59	-3.37	2.90
Substantive Responses	-.17***	.03	-.23	-.10	.52***	.10	.32	.71
FOC	.19***	.03	-.23	-.10	-	-	-	-
Substantive responses x FOC	-.01**	.00	-.02	-.00	-	-	-	-
PCV	-	-	-	-	-.71***	.21	-1.12	-.31
Index of Moderated Mediation					.01	.00	.00	.02
R^2	.33**				.30***			
F	12.76***				13.56***			

Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01.
N = 163.
Sex coded 1 = male, 2 = female.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval, PCV = psychological contract violation, FOC = Fear of COVID-19

Table 6

Fear of COVID-19 as a Moderator of the Relationship between Symbolic Responses and Psychological Contract Violation

	DV: PCV				DV: AC			
	b	SE	LLCI	ULCI	*b*	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	8.57***	1.33	6.05	11.33	43.82***	4.02	35.88	51.76
Age	-.03	.03	-.09	.02	-.05	.08	-.20	.10
Sex	.38	.58	-.76	1.52	-.24	1.59	-3.37	2.90
Symbolic Responses	.12**	.04	.03	.20	-.24	.12	-.48	.00
FOC	.20***	.04	.03	.20	-	-	-	-
Symbolic Responses x FOC	-.00	.01	-.01	.01	-	-	-	-
PCV	-	-	-	-	-.71***	.21	-1.12	-.31
Index of Moderated Mediation					.00	.01	-.01	.01
R^2	.30***				.30***			
F	11.32***				13.56***			

Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01.
N = 163.
Sex coded 1 = male, 2 = female.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval, PCV = psychological contract violation, FOC = Fear of COVID-19

Table 7

Conditional Indirect Effect of Substantive Responses on Affective Commitment via Psychological Contract Violation Across Levels of Fear of COVID-19

			95% Confidence Interval	
Fear of COVID-19	***b***	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
-9.68 (low)	-.07	.05	-.16	.03
-.68 (medium)	-.16	.03	-.23	-.10
8.33 (high)	-.25	.05	-.35	-.15

Note. N = 163.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval.

Table 8

Conditional Indirect Effect of Symbolic Responses on Affective Commitment via Psychological Contract Violation Across Levels of Fear of COVID-19

			95% Confidence Interval	
Fear of COVID-19	***b***	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
-9.68 (low)	-.09	.07	-.24	.01
-.68 (medium)	-.09	.04	-.18	-.01
8.33 (high)	-.08	.05	-.19	.02

Note. N = 163.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval.

Table 9

Conditional Indirect Effect of Substantive Responses on Psychological Contract Violation Across Levels of Fear of COVID-19

			95% Confidence Interval	
Fear of COVID-19	***b***	**SE**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
-9.68 (low)	-.07	.05	-.17	.03
-.68 (medium)	-.16	.03	-.23	-.10
8.33 (high)	-.25	.05	-.35	-.15

Note. $N = 163$.
LLCI = lower level confidence interval, ULCI = upper level confidence interval.

Appendix A

The Corporate Social Responsibility—Substantive and Symbolic Scale (CSR-SS) (Donia et al., 2017)

Instructions: With your organization's involvement in socially responsible practices in mind, such as such as masking, frequent testing, and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below explains this. While different motivations may be at play at different times, please indicate how well you think each motive listed below explains your organization's reasons for engaging in these behaviors. Answer options are: 1 (clearly does not describe my organization's motives for engaging in CSR), 2 (mostly does not describe my organization's motives for engaging in CSR), 3 (somewhat describes my organization's motives for engaging in CSR), 4 (mostly describes my organization's motives for engaging in CSR), and 5 (clearly describes my organization's motives for engaging in CSR).

Substantive CSR:

1. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it cared about what happened to the community in which it operates (both domestic and internationally, if operating globally).
2. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it cared about what happened to external actors it does business/interacts with.
3. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it wanted to help solve problems in the community.
4. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it had a genuine interest in the welfare of external individuals affected by its practices (i.e. such as the local community in which it operates).
5. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it felt it was important to help those in need.
6. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it wanted to help external actors it does business/interacted with in any way it can.
7. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it valued a role of interacting with the community.
8. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) because it took on the needs of the community and external individuals as its own.

Symbolic CSR:

1. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to avoid looking bad in front of others.

2. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to look good relative to its competitors.
3. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to look better than its competitors.
4. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to avoid criticism from the media and/or external actors it does business/interacts with.
5. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to appear to be an ethical company.
6. My organization imposed COVID precautions (masking, mandatory testing, social distancing, etc.) to impress its employees as caring for those outside the company.

Appendix B

Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Instructions: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements listed below when considering your feelings towards your organization and their responses (masking, frequent testing, social distancing, etc.) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Answer options range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). R indicates reverse scoring is necessary.

- *Affective Commitment Scale Items*:
    1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization.
    2. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside of it.
    3. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
    4. I think that I could easily become as attached to another organization as I am to this one.
    5. I do not feel like "part of my family" at this organization (R).
    6. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization (R).
    7. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
    8. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to this organization (R).

Appendix C

Psychological Contract Violation Scale (Robinson & Morrison, 2000)

Instructions: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements listed below, specifically recalling how you felt from March 2020 to March 2021.

1. When working during the pandemic, I felt a great deal of anger towards my organization.
2. When working during the pandemic, I felt betrayed by my organization
3. I felt that my organization has violated the contract between us during the reopening phase.
4. During office reopening, I felt extremely frustrated by how I was treated by my organization.

Appendix D

Fear of COVID-19 Scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020)

Instructions: Please indicate to what extent you agree with the statements listed below, specifically recalling how you felt from March 2020 to March 2021.

1. I was most afraid of coronavirus-19.
2. It made me uncomfortable to think about coronavirus-19.
3. My hands became clammy when I thought about coronavirus-19.
4. I was afraid of losing my life because of coronavirus-19.
5. When watching news and stories about coronavirus-19 on social media, I became nervous or anxious.
6. I could not sleep because I was worrying about getting coronavirus-19.
7. My heart raced or palpitated when I thought about getting coronavirus-19.