

Impact of Psychological Entitlement and Prevention Work Regulatory Focus on Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors: Mediating Role of Reflective Moral Attentiveness

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Abstract

This study investigates the effects of psychological entitlement and prevention work regulatory focus on unethical pro-organizational behaviors through reflective moral attentiveness. The data was gathered from three hundred managers from services sector of Pakistan and exposed to hierarchical multiple regression and SEM analyses with SPSS version 23. Drawing from social exchange theory, the results show that psychological entitlement and prevention work regulatory focus are significantly positively related with the unethical pro-organizational behaviors and reflective moral attentiveness exhibits significant mediation role. This article discusses the study's findings including practical and theoretical implications and limitations, as well as future directions.

Keywords: Psychological Entitlement (PE), Prevention Regulatory Focus (PWRP), Reflective Moral Attentiveness (RMA), Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors (UPB), Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Because of their contradictory nature, unethical pro-organizational behaviors (UPB) have gotten scholarly attention in recent years (Tang et al., 2022). They are committed for two reasons: first, they enrich the organization or its members, and second, they violate widely accepted ethical standards (Umphress et al., 2010). In the long run, the organizations may face undesirable outcomes such as lawsuits, penalties, client loss and financial loss, and a tarnished reputation (Liu et al., 2021). UPB can be defined as withholding true information from customers or misleading information to customers in the hopes of receiving customer help for a problem organization (Zeng et al., 2022). These UPB examples, such as providing improper information to customers, falsifying accounting records, and selling defective products to customers, all have broad implications and consequences.

Psychological entitlement (PE) is found one of the important predictor of the UPB (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022). PE refers to how much people believe they are entitled to all of the resources and the best of the organizational resources (Campbell et al., 2004). They believe the lifeboat should be delivered to them first (Campbell et al., 2004). PE differs from narcissistic tendencies in that the former is focused on others rather than self, whilst the latter is self-centered (Shah & Khawaja, 2020).

Work regulatory focus (WRF) describes the work attitudes and work beliefs, entails two foci, promotion and prevention WRF (Neubert et al., 2008). The first dimension describes the degree to which the individuals are focused on advancement, growth and gains while prevention focused individuals are apprehensive about their job security, accomplishing the assignments, and loss deterrence (Lemarié et al., 2019; Yanzi & Xiangling, 2021). Both types of foci have been incorporated in context of UPB in only few studies (Bryant, 2020; Graham et al., 2015).

Reflective moral attentiveness (RMA) is the action oriented dimension (Miao et al., 2020) that describes the degree to which the people consider the morality and moral consequences of their actions in routine decisions (Reynolds, 2008). Developing the employees cognitively will certainly decrease the likelihood of engaging in unethical behaviors (Halbusi et al., 2021). The organizational efforts can transform the inattentive employees to pay attention to moral issues suggesting that RMA is a malleable feature (Dong et al., 2021).

The psychologically entitled and prevention focused employees are likely to perform UPB due to inattention to moral matters. The organizations can decrease the prevailing UPB by improving the RMA of the employees. Drawing upon Blau (1964)'s social exchange theory (SET), we connect PE and PWRP with UPB. Psychologically entitled individuals perceive the undeservingness and tend to uphold exchange relationships with the organization in order to have unrelenting access to organizational resources (Naseer et al., 2020). They desire to have the best of everything irrespective of their capabilities. SET entails that when one party is offering the benefits, the other part feels indebted to payback. With this sense of obligation, the psychologically entitled

individuals are likely to transgress the ethical boundaries and execute UPB (Naseer et al., 2020). Similarly prevention focused individuals are concerned about job security (Lemarié et al., 2019). They are duty bound and accomplish the assignments with the utmost sense of responsibility (Lemarié et al., 2019). In order to be reassured about job security, they are predisposed to engage in UPB in line with SET (Blau, 1964). They feel obliged to reciprocate the organization as a way to preserve the relationships with the organization. The reciprocation is necessitated as the employees expect to be recognized and appreciated. The organizational managers can reduce the UPB by improving the RMA in consistent with SCT (Bandura, 2005). The psychologically entitled and prevention focused individuals need to be sensitized to moral matters to prevent them from moral transgressions.

We aimed to explain the effect of PE and PWRP on UPB through RMA. RMA is an action-oriented component of moral attentiveness that benefits the organizations in improving the cognitive capabilities of the employees as a way to lessen prevalent UPB. The scholarship is the first that incorporates RMA as a mediator in association of PE and PWRP with UPB. There has been limited scholarly attention on the role of RMA in context of UPB (Halbusi et al., 2021). Employees with high PE and PWRP are likely to perform UPB to uphold mutually beneficial ties with the organizations (Halbusi et al., 2021; Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2020; Bryant, 2020; Naseer et al., 2020; Cornwell et al., 2021). There is now growing concern on emergent UPB challenging the organizations due to undesirable consequences (Liu et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2022; 2022; Wang et al., 2022; Xiong et al., 2021; Zeng et al., 2022).

This study generates many useful insights on the constructive role of RMA for organizational managers. The managers should recruit employees on the basis of their sensitivity to moral matters and subjecting them to psychometric tests. The employees who pay attention to moral issues should be placed at the key positions. They can become the source of inspiration and encouragement for the other employees. The managers should present themselves as a salient role model for enhancing the RMA in the organization. The managers must not overlook the unethical behaviors, otherwise this will tantamount to upsurge UPB. Developing the cognitive abilities of the employees continuously helps the organizations in reducing the UPB.

We add to the literature by examining the mediating role of RMA in relationship of PE and PWRP with UPB. We demonstrate that psychologically entitled and prevention focused individuals display the disposition to perform UPB due to inattention to moral matters. We underline the importance of RMA in decreasing UPB. The organizational executives can develop moral orientation and RMA of their employees. Examining such issues is very crucial from practical viewpoint as UPB can result in considerable reputational damage to the organization. By highlighting the role of RMA in diminishing UPB, our study has significant valuable implications for the managers.

Research Question 1: Whether PE and PWRP have any influence on UPB? Whether RMA shows mediation effect between the relationship of PE and PWRP with UPB?

Research Objective 1: To examine the direct and indirect effect of PE and PWRP on UPB?

The next sections of the study are organized as follows: theoretical and empirical background, methodology, data analysis, and a discussion of the findings and their implications.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Unethical pro-organizational behaviors

Unethical behaviors are cause of concern (Darren et al., 2021; 2021; Tang et al., 2022) They are widespread in the organizations and have destructive effects (Halbusi et al., 2021). These include loss of valued customers, irretrievable damage in repute, monetary losses, and deterioration in organizational performance. Adherence to ethical standards and guidelines is imperative to ensure that violations of moral principles do not occur (Zeng et al., 2022). Sometimes supervisors and peers encourage unethical behaviors thus allowing a culture to nurture that promotes unethical behaviors (Liu et al., 2021). The organizations should condemn the wrongdoings and imitative practices in the best interest of market performance to ensure that corporate goals are met and the organizations strive to understand the predictable driving forces behind unethical behaviors to avoid the damaging consequences (Xiong et al., 2021).

The definition of UPB embraces two key components Umphress et al., 2010). First UPB are unethical as they are against the widely held norms, moral standards and values. Second these are executed with the intention of benefitting the organization and its members (Liu et al., 2021). Therefore UPB are different from other self-centered behaviors that are performed for giving the benefits to perpetrator (Tang et al., 2022). For example employees may intentionally misinterpret the information to the customers so that organization looks good or they exaggerate the

information about the products or services (Tang et al., 2022). Other instances of UPB include covering-up of negative information regarding products or withhold giving refund to customers unintentionally overcharged (Tang et al., 2022).

The employees put effort to boost their contributions to the organizations when they perceive themselves vulnerable of being disqualified from group membership (Wang et al., 2022). Therefore, we argue that employees exhibit their inclination to execute UPB as a way to protect themselves from uncertain job situations. Whenever they find themselves in insecure circumstances and face threats to access the organizational resources, they would increase hard work to ensure accessibility to resources (Wang et al., 2022). We argue that workers intend to perform UPB to continue the organizational membership and to maintain the exchange relationships. We contend that UPB is prosocial in nature and individuals use the helping behavior as a way to increase their worth in the organization. By engaging in UPB, the employees are going above and beyond as the boundaries of the job were restraining them to exercise intraoral behaviors (Xiong et al., 2021). We argue that employees use UPB as a way to enhance their contributions to social exchange relationships.

The workers assess their immoral actions as being acceptable without taking into account the moral consequences (Zeng et al., 2021). They cognitively reduce their unethical action in a cognitive exercise as a way to construct rational arguments (Bryant, 2020). The employees feel indebted to reciprocate the organization in order to build up the exchange relationships. In doing so it is essential that employees must acknowledge that behavior is immoral or cognitively reduce the moral repercussions of their behavior (Bryant, 2020). The employees protect their self-image by neutralizing the moral effects of their unethical action (Bryant, 2020). They go through internal reasoning process that behavior is imperative, preferred by the organization and worth violation (Bryant, 2020). This self-confirming secures the employee from discomfort of self-condemnation and the employee performs the unethical action without suffering in any anxiety (Bryant, 2020). The moral violation is thus justified and UPB becomes an attractive option and an opportunity to satisfy the social exchange demands. By cognitively diminishing the moral implication of the behavior, the employee has skewed to the tolerant of the behavior allowing him to engage in UPB (Wang et al., 2022). These processes are argued additionally below in the section on RMA, which reveals cognitive courses related to the engagement in immoral behaviors.

Psychological Entitlement and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors

PE is prevalent sense of deservedness (Campbell et al., 2004). The employees perceive they deserve the most of everything and best of everything (Bedi, 2021). Although this is not in proportionate with their natural talents and abilities (Bedi, 2021). Research has established the association between PE and personality narcissistic syndrome (Shah & Khawaja, 2020). The research has drawn an important distinction between the two conceptions (Shah & Khawaja, 2020). The narcissism is about the self-centeredness whereas PE is about self to others (Shah & Khawaja, 2020). The entitled employees are deeply apprehensive of what others think of them (Eissa et al., 2021). They adjust with the thoughts of others and have craving to be very near to them (Eissa et al., 2021). The entitled individuals display high levels of self-image and self-worth (Hrcek, 2021). There is huge work done on PE linking it with undesirable work outcomes but there is limited focus on the relationship between PE and UPB.

The entitled individuals have convictions of self-respect so they long for more rewards, higher status and more privileges, inconsistent with their abilities (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022). They are profoundly engrossed of having preferential treatment from others (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022). They regard themselves as exceptional and special entities contributing to the belief of deservedness (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022). They have the tendency to exceed the ethical and moral standards in getting not justified (Naseer et al., 2020). Building on social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964) they are inclined to reciprocate the organization to uphold the relationships with the organization. This reciprocation is essential to have the trusting and mutually beneficial relationships (Lee et al., 2019). Therefore, we argue that entitled individuals neutralize the moral obligations and feel motivated to execute UPB.

Extraordinary levels of PE have been demonstrated to be associated with unethical and counterproductive behaviors (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022). We contend that exceedingly entitled persons are likely to display their willingness to engage in UPB but reasons are quite different. The predominant reason of highly entitled individuals engaging in UPB is their status apprehension (Bedi, 2021). The highly entitled employees are intensely concerned about their self-esteem and self-image (Bedi, 2021). We argue that this inflated perception of self- pride and self-worth may motivate the individuals with high PE to execute UPB. The individuals with high points of PE want appreciation and approval from others (Naseer et al., 2020). They display the desire to be regarded

high performers and high achievers from others (Lee et al., 2019). They may use short cuts to attain their self-centered goals to maintain and uphold the status within organization (Eissa et al., 2021). The UPB reflects the behaviors that are extended to benefit the organization, thus high entitled overlap their self-centered goals with organizational goals (Aqeel & Siddiqui, 2022).

Moreover individuals with high PE display attribution biases (Bedi, 2021). They take immoral as being morals through a process moral rationalization (Bedi, 2021). They are predisposed to hold others liable others for destructive consequences (Eissa et al., 2021). Thus, we argue that individuals with high PE due to attribution biases and moral justification transcend moral principles leading them to engage in UPB.

H₁: Psychological Entitlement Is Positively Related To Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors.

Prevention Work Regulatory Focus and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors

One's regulatory focus would undoubtedly be having the effect as it regulates the person's intuitions and behavior in the fulfillment of some goal (Neubert et al., 2008). Such self-regulation characteristically proceeds in one of two foci: promotion focus and prevention focus (Neubert et al., 2008). The individuals with high prevention regulatory focus are apprehensive of job security and would certainly complete tasks adequately (Cornwell et al., 2021). They pay focus on whatever assignments are given to them. When they are on work, they do everything to avoid losses and concatenated on avoiding failures at work (Neubert et al., 2008; Yanzi & Xiangling, 2021). They would not expose themselves to potential losses at work (Neubert et al., 2008; Yanzi & Xiangling, 2021). They give preference to job security and would attempt to fulfill tasks that provide the support to their need for security (Neubert et al., 2008; Yanzi & Xiangling, 2021).

The individuals with promotion regulatory focus give preference to jobs which provide them the opportunities of growth and advancement (Lemarié et al., 2019; Neubert et al., 2008). They pay attention to gains and adopt riskier behaviors. They are motivated in the organization where their aspirations and hopes are fulfilled (Lemarié et al., 2019; Neubert et al., 2008). There is huge research done on work regulatory focus but research investigating work regulatory focus in association with UPB is limited. Only one research has studied the promotion regulatory focus in context of UPB (Graham et al., 2015) and other has investigated the PWRF in connection with UPB (Bryant, 2020). Prevention regulatory focus has been demonstrated to lead to deviant behaviors through the violation of organizational norms (Bryant, 2020).

Drawing on SET (Blau, 1964), this research is motivated to investigate the influence of PWRF on UPB. We contend that the workers with high PWRF are predisposed to maintain exchange associations with their organization. They perceive that organizations are offering them the needed security. They are receiving the assignments which give them sense of delight and motivation. They want to reciprocate the organization to uphold the relationships with the organization. In an attempt of reciprocation, they transcend the moral principles allowing them to engage in UPB. They consider immoral as morals and justify their conduct in the process of moral rationalization.

The employees with prevention regulatory focus would not want to lose the resources the organization is offering (Bryant, 2020). This would tantamount to damaging the exchange relationships (Bryant, 2020). This pushes the employee to disregard the moral standards letting them to engage in UPB (Bryant, 2020). The prospect of this is echoed in the fact that individuals with prevention focus are predisposed to uphold higher continuance commitment enhancing their levels of engagement in UPB (Bryant, 2020). It is probable that they may not be able to endure the insecurity that could result from permitting the connecting bond deteriorate. Therefore, we postulate that higher is the PWRF, the greater is the employees' readiness to engage in UPB.

H₂: Prevention Work Regulatory Focus Is Positively Related with Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors.

The Mediating Role of Reflective Moral Attentiveness

Moral attentiveness(MA) encompasses two dimensions, Reflective MA and perceptual MA (Reynolds, 2008). RMA states the extent to which ethical matters are deliberated and thought upon in everyday decision making (Reynolds, 2008). PMA denotes the predisposition to recollect moral matters in the situations (Reynolds, 2008). PMA can therefore be viewed as an involuntary response, while RMA is intended (Dong et al., 2021). Reynolds (2008) established the two dimensions of MA to be significantly associated yet theoretically discrete. Though workers with greater levels of PMA are more mindful of the ethical matters of their behavior, researchers suggest that this does not essentially transform into ethical behaviors that implicate acts (Miao et al., 2020). Actually, previous research effort proposes that RMA shows more strong influence on moral cognitions than PMA dimension (Wurthmann, 2013). As an example, Wurthmann (2013) demonstrated that although ethical teaching improved both the RMA and PMA of learners, it

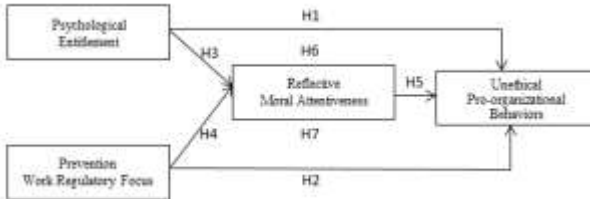
remained RMA, but not PMA that intermediated the effects of commerce ethical principles learning on the degree to which people observed that ethical beliefs and societal obligation are essential. Additionally, Reynolds (2008) found that while RMA is related with employees' moral performance, PMA is not.

We draw on Bandura,(2005)' social cognitive theory (SCT) to propose that individuals with high PE and PWRF display the readiness to engage in UPB due to inattention to moral matters. We argue that MA assists the individuals to ethical course that leads them to be vigilant and heedful of ethical matters. Linked to MA, we expect that people vary in the extent of thoughtfulness they give to moral signals (Khan et al., 2022). In line with SCT (Bandura, 2005) if individuals are greatly focused to ethical subjects, they will be inquisitive regarding them and will recognize the matters as greatly intense and noticeable (Halbusi et al., 202). Moreover, their reasoning frame of mind would keep these individuals more prepared to recognize and route information relating to the moral matters (Miao et al., 2020). They then expectedly evaluate and analyze inward information in an ethical framework, through a ethicality perspective (Miao et al., 2020).

Though it has been suggested that MA was initially conceptualized as a trait, and thus could not be influenced by external stimuli, Reynolds (2008) was unambiguous that MA encompasses thoughtfulness process reflecting the enduring awareness and deliberation of ethics. In pertinent with the SCT of MA, current work proposes that MA can be advanced and nurtured through moral direction. We argue that high PE and PWRF result in UPB at the disregard of moral principles, the individuals can be sensitized to moral matters through triggering action focused element of RMA. Therefore, we hypothesize

- H₃:** *Psychological Entitlement is negatively related to Reflective Moral Attentiveness.*
- H₄:** *PWRF is negatively related to Reflective Moral Attentiveness.*
- H₅:** *Reflective Moral Attentiveness is negatively related to Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors.*
- H₆:** *Reflective Moral Attentiveness mediates between Psychological Entitlement and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors.*
- H₇:** *Reflective Moral Attentiveness mediates between Prevention Work Regulatory Focus and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors.*

Figure 1.
Research framework



Research Methodology

Research design and sampling

The data for this cross-sectional and quantitative study was obtained from managerial personnel in Pakistan's service industry, which includes hotel, health, educational institutes, banking, pharmaceuticals, construction, insurance, and audit organizations, using the convenience sampling approach. The questionnaires were accompanied by a letter explaining that the questionnaires were being used for academic purposes, that all information gathered under the use of the questionnaire will be kept confidential. The questionnaires were distributed to middle and higher-ranking managers. To avoid response bias, the data on demographic factors, UPB, and RMA were gathered first, followed by the data on PE and PWRF after a one-month break (Podsakoff, 2003). The response rate was 66% (330/500). The data of 300 respondents was entered in SPSS version 23 after sorting incomplete responses. There is no evidence of common bias since all scale items load into a single latent variable that accounts for 43.18% of the total variance and is below the 50% cutoff. The study has not demonstrated any statistically significant differences among gender, various age and professional groups in performing the UPB. Given that the questionnaire has 29 questions, the sample size would be 290 in accordance with the item ratio rule (10:1) (Randall & Gibson, 2013). For this investigation, we chose a sample size of 300

respondents to reduce sample error and to ensure that there is no any non-responsiveness or generalizability problem. The details of measuring instruments are as follows.

Measurement of variables

Unethical pro-organizational behaviors

UPB was measured with well-established scale (Umpress et al., 2010) consisting of six items. One sample item of this scale is: "If my organization required me to, I would hold back issuing a repayment to a customer unintentionally overcharged". The scale has respectable internal consistency with reported alpha value 0.90 whereas in the existing study it is 0.88.

Psychological entitlement

PE was measured with well recognized scale (Campbell et al., 2004) comprising of nine items. The sample item of this scale is: "Abundant things should come to me and I justify additional things in my life". The scale exhibits good internal consistency stated of 0.87 whereas in the present study it is 0.94.

Prevention work regulatory focus

PWRF was assessed with well documented scale (Neubert et al., 2008) consisting of nine items. The sample item of this scale is: "Satisfying my work obligations is very essential to me and I concentrate on evading failure on the job". The scale has decent internal consistency described of 0.92. In the current investigation it is also 0.92.

Reflective moral attentiveness

RMA was evaluated with familiar scale (Reynolds, 2008) comprising of five items. The sample item of this scale is: "I frequently find myself preoccupied with moral matters and I like to reflect on ethics". The scale has excellent internal consistency reported of 0.85 whereas in the existing study it is 0.93. All study variables were measured on five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data Analysis and Results

The table 1 below gives basic information on demographic variables, age and gender. The sample size of 300 respondents includes 60(20%) females and 240(80%) males in three age groups. The majority of respondents are in age grouping 20 to 29 (68%). The results show that the model satisfied the criteria of good fit ($\chi^2 = 607.254$, $df = 372$, $\chi^2/df = 1.632$, $RMSEA= 0.046$, $CFI=0.96$, $NNFI=0.96$).

PE and PWRF show strong positive relationships with UPB whereas both these explanatory variables exhibit strong negative relationships with the RMA at $p \leq 0.01$ (Table 1). PE and PWRF are significantly positively related to UPB while PE and PWRF are significantly negatively related to RMA. It can also be observed that there exists statistically significant negative relationship between RMA and UPB (Table 1). The correlation coefficients shown in parentheses are in consistent with the previous studies. The table also shows the means and standard deviations of all study variables.

Table1.

Displaying descriptive data, reliability, and correlation (r)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.UPB	(.88)								
2.PE	.59**	(.94)							
3.PWRF	.62**	.52**	(.92)						
4.RMA	-.52**	-.50**	-.50**	(.93)					
5.Gender	-.082	-.047	-.033	-.030	-.082				
6.Age	-.036	-.033	-.002	.024	.033	-.036			
7.Exp	.054	.107	-.047	-.008	-.012	.012			
8.Edu	-.050	-.010	-.081	.010	.092	.138*	-.008		
9.Profession	.022	-.041	.029	.028	.034	.079	-.016	.053	
Mean	3.35	3.23	3.23	3.28	1.20	1.47	1.72	2.20	3.08
SD	.916	.955	.957	1.147	.401	.764	.802	.634	2.490

** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$. Cronbach's alphas (α) are on the diagonal in parentheses.

Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female

Age: 1= 20-29, 2= 30-39, 3= 40-49, 4= 50-59, 5= 60 or above

Seniority in years: 1= 1-5, 2= 5-10, 3= 11-15, 4= 16-20

Academics: level 1= undergraduate, 2= graduate, 3= M.S/M.phil.

Measurement Model

As part of the analysis, the measurement model was evaluated first. It showed good model fit ($\chi^2 = 508.831$, $df = 371$, $\chi^2/df = 1.372$, $RMSEA = 0.035$, $CFI = 0.98$, $NNFI = 0.97$) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

The convergent and discriminant validity

Using average variance extracted and composite reliability (CR), the model's convergent validity was assessed (AVE). As shown in Table 2, this model exhibits convergent validity because both CR and AVE are higher than 0.70 and 0.50, respectively. Additionally, square roots of AVE are larger than correlations of variables in the primary diagonal, indicating the presence of discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 2.

Fornell-Larcker criterion

Variables	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4
1. PWRF	0.92	0.563	0.750			
2. RMA	0.93	0.722	-0.50**	0.850		
3. UPB	0.90	0.549	0.62**	-0.52**	0.741	
4. PE	0.94	0.629	0.52**	-0.50**	0.59**	0.793

Note. "The square root of the AVE is presented in the main diagonal. CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted. Correlations are significant at ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ ".

Table 3 shows the results of our analyses aimed at testing first five study hypotheses, and Figure 2 represents them using the research model. PE is statistically significant linked to UPB ($\beta = .316$, $p \leq 0.001$), which does support Hypothesis 1 While PWRF is statistically significant linked to UPB ($\beta = .439$, $p \leq 0.001$) which does support Hypothesis 2. Our results support hypotheses 3 and 4 and 5. PE and PWRF are negatively linked to RMA whereas RMA is negatively linked with UPB ($p \leq 0.001$).

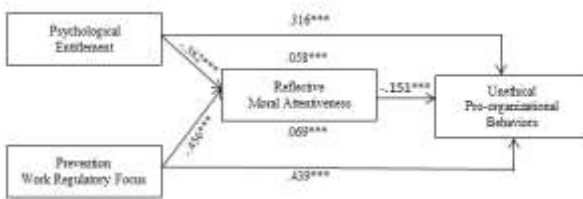
Table 3.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths	(β)	t-value
H ₁	PE → UPB	.316	6.273
H ₂	PWRF → UPB	.439	7.044
H ₃	PE → RMA	-.382	-6.309
H ₄	PWRF → RMA	-.456	-6.374
H ₅	RMA → UPB	-.151	-2.984

Figure 2

The SEM results



Note: ***, $p < 0.01$, **, $p < 0.05$, *, $p < 0.10$.

The table 4 confirms hypotheses 6 and 7. As expected RMA exhibits significant mediation role in the relationships of PE and PWRF with UPB. Both antecedents transform into UPB at the cost of RMA. Therefore the organizations should enhance RMA of employees to convert the relationships of PE and PWRF with UPB into negative.

Table 4.*The mediating role of RMA on the relationship of PE and PWRF with UPB*

	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
Direct effect of PE on UPB	.316	.202	.447	.001
Indirect effect of PR on UPB	.058	.024	.105	.003
Direct effect of PWRF on UPB	.439	.309	.569	.001
Indirect effect of PWRF on UPB	.069	.030	.125	.003

BCa: bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping confidence intervals (95%). Estimate based on 10,000 bootstrap samples.

Discussion and Implications

Participation in UPB by team members may be a potential catalyst for other team members to participate in UPB (Mishra et al., 2022). People pick up on appropriate workplace conduct through watching others and copying them (Mishra et al., 2022). In light of this, we propose that UPB is infectious and that workers who see their team colleagues engaging in it and being rewarded for it would be more inclined to do the same (Mishra et al., 2022). Our prediction is consistent with other research that shows vicarious learning causes unethical conduct among spectators to mimic unethical peer behavior (Mishra et al., 2022).

Organizations all over the globe are losing billions of dollars in settlements for their workers' UPB, making unethical pro-organizational conduct a pressing problem in today's corporate scene. The study is on untapped & prevalent UPB in the services sector of Pakistan. The study incorporates RMA as mediator in the relationships of PE and prevention work regulatory focus with UPB. The study is focused on research question Do psychological entitlement and preventive work regulatory focus has any significant positive effect on unethical pro-organizational behaviors? Does RMA play any significant mediatory role in the relationships of psychological entitlement and preventive work regulatory focus with unethical pro-organizational behaviors? We have found significant positive direct, indirect and total effects in alignment with the hypotheses. The direct effects of PE and PWRF with UPB are significant and positive in alignment with the hypotheses 1 & 2. Higher the employees' exhibit PE and PWRF, higher will be the likelihood they will engage in UPB. The indirect effects of PE and PWRF with UPB through RMA are also significant and positive in alignment with the hypotheses 3, 4, 5 and 6 & 7. The total effect which includes direct and indirect effects on UPB are also significant and positive in alignment with the hypotheses. Psychological entitlement and prevention work regulatory focus show significant negative relationships with RMA that shows significant negative relationship with UPB in conformity with hypotheses 3, 4, 5. We have found significant mediation role of RMA. Both PE and PWRF are likely to transform into UPB at the expense of RMA. These outcomes are in agreement with previous research that proposes it is RMA that has mitigating effects on employees' immoral (Halbusi et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2020; Reynolds, 2008; Wurthmann, 2013). Therefore we suggest organizational managers can diminish UPB via enhancing employees' RMA. In the subsequent sections, we describe the theoretic and applied repercussions of these outcomes.

This research constructs the literature by investigating the mediation role of RMA in associations of PE and PWRF with UPB. This study demonstrates that psychologically entitled and prevention focused individuals display the disposition to engage in UPB due to inattentiveness to moral issues in affirmation with social exchange and cognitive theories (Bandura, 2005; Blau, 1964). In line with SET (Blau, 1964), the psychologically entitled persons tend to engage in UPB as way to have gainful access to organizational resources.

The employees reciprocate to maintain trusting and favorable relationships with the organization (Miao et al., 2020). If they do not reciprocate they fear the loss of recognition and approval from organizational managers (Miao et al., 2020). The prevention focused individuals are predisposed to UPB in order to ensure their job security (Bryant, 2020). Developing the cognitive abilities of employees would certainly transform the inattentive employees to deliberate the moral issues and moral consequences of their day to day decisions in line with SCT (Halbusi et al., 2021). This suggests the importance of moral attentiveness to lessen the ever growing menace of UPB (Dong et al., 2021). The employees need to be sensitized and cognizant of perils of moral violations (Halbusi et al., 2021). They need to unambiguously follow the moral standards as a way to diminish UPB (Khan et al., 2022).

Therefore, moral attentiveness is a pliable individual element and it is probable to nurture individuals' levels of moral attentiveness through social learning and education (Khan et al., 2022). Undoubtedly, identifying a moral issue is the main and utmost critical step in ethical decision making (Dong et al., 2021). It assists those with unclear beliefs rebuild their cognitions, lessen their moral disquiet and direct them to actively attending the moral issues (Dong et al., 2021).

The study highlights the importance of RMA in reducing UPB. The organizational managers can improve moral orientation and moral attentiveness of their subordinates. Examining such matters is very essential from practical perspective as UPB can result in substantial reputational harm to the organization.

By emphasizing on the role of RMA in reducing UPB, this research has essential useful implications for superiors. First, it proposes that organizational managers should encourage juniors to be thoughtful on moral concerns confronting them at work (Halbusi et al., 2021). To diminish unethical behavior, organizations might enact ethical leadership advancement training programs which focus on the significance of role modeling ethical behaviors, motivate management to emphasize the significance of performing in a moral way to the assistants, and hearten the management to reward juniors for their moral behavior, not just their target achievement figures only (Miao et al., 2020). We recommend the executives that rather than disentangling ethical issues unaccompanied, they should get ethical problems to the consideration of their juniors, and work as team to resolve them, so juniors are capable to vicariously acquire from their seniors how to meet ethical concerns at work. Furthermore, to lessen unethical behavior in their organizations, managers might deliberate hiring workforces with extraordinary levels of RMA. This can be practiced through the using psychometric tests, case-based scenarios or moral queries to establish prospective workers' RMA.

To the degree that job procedures, doings, and routines comprise moral content and nurture moral conduct, workforces are expectedly to follow moral codes in their on-the-job conduct. Lastly, frequent training interventions might support managers expand capability in sharing the significance of moral principles and study how to function as ethicality role models; the training program must also embrace ethical virtue materials (e.g., uprightness, fair-mindedness, sentiments for others, righteousness) that reassures the management to ponder on how to institute high ethical values in the workplace (Miao et al., 2020). The morally attentive employees should be placed at strategic positions as a way to foster ethical work environment. Therefore, by confirming that management ranks are employed by moral leaders, HR executives should be creating an unbroken circle that improves the ethical conduct of workforces and hence enhances the ethical character of the organization.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This study is not deprived of limitations. For example, in Study, we measured workers' inclination to perform UPB rather than real recounted UPB. We contend that other factors impact UPB, and we expect prospective research to additionally examine other prospective precursors. Though we established our predictions with working persons who are employed in various industries and jobs, signifying that our outcomes are expectedly to generalize to various service situations, we motivate the future researchers to expand the research in other untapped industries and service sectors.

Another possible limitation of this study is the usage of self-report to measure UPB. We think that self-reports were suitable because managers or colleagues may not possess the intuition needed to evaluate the focal member's intent for immoral behavior. However, requesting delicate questions (like UPB) may develop social desirability bias, predominantly when workers consider that their owner might get their responses. Social desirability effects were probably decreased given our data collection methods such as e-mail or using an online survey and because there was no likelihood of undesirable concerns from respondents' managers. Furthermore, we recommend the future research to address these biases meticulously by controlling for social desirability in their investigations.

Though our measures of UPB concentrated on actions deliberated to support the organization, it is likely that those persons who have strong PE and PWRF comprehend UPB as an apparatus for self-advantage. Our estimates were reinforced but upcoming research should study whether PE influences workers' explanation of UPB. It might be that person with extraordinary PE and PWRF are less likely to deliberate the ethics (i.e., moral awareness) of unethical acts that provides the benefit to their organization. If employees miss the opportunity to reflect the moral content of UPB, then ethical rational is less likely to happen, and employees might feel unrestricted to execute these immoral actions.

Our measuring instrument of UPB comprises both acts of omission (i.e., concealing information from the community that can be detrimental to my business) and commission (i.e., pervert the truth to make my organization look decent). The outcomes of both kinds of unethical acts have the possibility to cause harm to organizational stakeholders and the society at large. Nevertheless, unethical actions of commission are mostly observed as more dreadful than deeds of omission. Future research must examine whether our outcomes hold true with both categories of

unethical acts. Future research is required to additionally comprehend the intrinsic intricacies of UPB. Alongside these positions, we reassure researchers to pay cautious consideration to workers' behavioral intentions (i.e., to damage, to benefit, and/or to exclusively self-benefit) and to discover other precursors and probable consequences. Further research is desired to unravel the nature of reciprocity beliefs in terms of exchange relationships and immoral behavior.

Contemporaneously, our outcomes may reveal a prevailing organizational culture that cultivates unethical behavior. That is, when workers anticipate that they will be compensated for engaging in unethical behavior, they will probably do the same. These arguments are reinforced by social learning theory (Bandura, 2014)—individuals apprehend what is deliberated tolerable work behavior (even unethical behavior) by observing relevant role models (i.e., managers, associates, peers) and through own experiences. Workers who find others being remunerated for unethical actions might perceive these behaviors as suitable and engage in comparable behaviors. Workers who were formerly remunerated for unprincipled behavior will be more likely to do the same yet again in the future. Linking this rewards-culture with workers having strong PE and PWRP may upsurge the probability of UPB and other sorts of unscrupulous behavior. Forthcoming investigation should examine this option.

The present study, based social cognitive and exchange theories, has provided useful insights into the role of RMA to diminish UPB. UPB are pervasive in the organizations and are performed to benefit the organizations in violation of ethics. PE refers to perceived deservedness of the employees. The prevention regulatory focus refers to work attitudes and work beliefs of the employees. The employees are focus on completing assignments with responsibility and duty. RMA is action focused component of moral attentiveness that directs the employees to be cognitively attentive to their actions and the moral implications of their routine decisions. The organizational managers can enhance the RMA of the employees as a way to reduce their willingness to engage in UPB. This study extends the literature by providing the empirical support of positive effects of PE and prevention regulatory focus on UPB through RMA.

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