Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors in the Hospitality Front Line Employees

Abdul Rauf Qureshi

Department of Business Administration, National College of Business Administration & Economics Lahore, Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The hospitality and tourism industries are concerned with unethical pro-organizational behavior. The industry exhibited a surge in this sort of behavior during COVID-19. Drawing from social exchange theory, we investigate the mediating effect of frontline employees' moral disengagement and indebtedness on the relationships between two key individual determinants (organizational embeddedness, affective commitment) on their unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

Design/Methodology/Approach: We conducted time-lagged study on 315 hotel frontline employees in hospitality sector.

Findings: Results confirm the positive impact of these two studied determinants on frontline employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviors through their moral disengagement and indebtedness.

Practical Implications: We discuss limitations, future directions and implications.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 epidemic has ruthlessly hit the global economy, including the hospitality business (Elshaer, Azazz, & Saad, 2022). The whole tourist and hospitality business has seen a substantial rise in ethical workplace concerns. Hotel employees faced troubles by the COVID-19 contagion due to business disruption and mass dismissals (Tu, Li, & Wang, 2021). Such challenging working circumstances may account for the rise in ethical workplace issues across the whole tourist and hospitality sector (Elshaer et al., 2022). For instance, unethical actions cost businesses between 5% and 6% of their yearly profits in the food services and hotel industries (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2020). Additionally, unethical company activities seem to be at the root of visitors' unfavorable experiences, forcing them to seek out competitors and spreading unfavorable words around (Wong, Kim, Kim, & Han, 2021).

The epidemic has had a variety of biological and emotional effects on frontline workers who have direct contact with clients (Alyahya et al., 2021). Studies (Aliedan et al., 2022) revealed that hotel employees felt stressed, uneasy, and concerned about their jobs because of the epidemic. Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, hotel employees had various similar views, such as job instability, distributive injustice, and turnover intention (Alyahya et al.,2021), which frequently encouraged the use of unethical activity (Elshaer et al., 2022). This research intends to study influences of job embeddedness and affective commitment on UPB through intervention role of indebtedness and moral disengagement. Scholars have investigated the moral disengagement and moral dilemmas in front line during COVID-19 to make their jobs secure.

Unethical pro organizational behaviors assumes any unethical conduct to benefit the business (Ghosh, 2017). For instance, a hotel salesperson or receptionist can act unethically and tell a lie to entice a client to purchase an accommodation or a service from their hotel. Employees frequently adopt this

action to help the hotels and boost sales, especially in times of crisis like COVID-19 (Elshaer et al., 2022).. In order to prevent mass layoffs during the epidemic and maintain their employment security, employees engaged in this sort of unethical action (Elshaer et al., 2022). By participating in UPB, employees may attempt to defend themselves and keep their jobs intact. In spite of this, unethical pro-organizational behaviors violate society values, expectations, and conventions (Aliedan et al., 2022). The authors have examined various antecedents in the context of unethical pro organizational behaviors (Qureshi & Ahmed, 2021; Qureshi & Raza, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d, 2022a, 2023b, 2023c, 2023a).

Through the lenses of social exchange theory of Blau' 1964, and the resources conservation theory (Aliedan et al., 2022; Ghosh, 2017; Umphress, Bingham & Mitchell, 2010), other research has frequently explained and viewed the unethical pro-organizational behavior, which could help employees keep their jobs, be accepted by their organizations, and reduce any negative perceptions about this problem. According to the conservation of resources principle, both job security and job retention are resources (Ghosh, 2017). In order to conserve these resources and safeguard themselves in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, workforces may participate in UPB.

In contrast to traditional adversarial and self-interested understanding of unethical conduct, such as stealing consumers' credit card information, unethical pro-organizational behaviors are driven by noble motives (Yan et al., 2021). An employee who conceals evidence of latent safety issues in order to protect their employers would be an example of UPB. Studies show that workforces may display UPBs for the advantage of their businesses in the tourist or hospitality sectors (Aliedan, Sobaih, Alyahya, & Elshaer, 2022; Luu, 2021; Yan et al., 2021). Frontline employees may embellish or exaggerate the accomplishments of their employer's business, as in the hotel industry, to boost its image over a rival firm (Elshaer & Azazz 2022).

According to cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, 1991), a combination of situational and personal factors impacts an individual's cognition. People have mental control over their behavior based on internal and external moral standards. A sequence of cognitive mechanisms can quiet the moral self-regulation processes when environmental demands trigger them to act in ways that contradict ethical principles (Bandura, 1991). Such self-regulation may explain how they become willing to do unethical activities for their employer. So far, only some researchers have investigated the predictors of UPB in hospitality workplace (Elshaer & Azazz, 202).

Similarly, organizational and individual factors should also influence the adoption of UPB, as a particular type of unethical behavior, but only some hospitality and tourism researchers have studied them (Lee et al., 2020 Matherne & Litchfield 2012; Wang et al., 2021). This need should be fulfilled because if well-intentioned unethical behaviors may have short-term benefits, they are more likely to harm a business in future times (Umphress et al., 2010). They could endanger the guests' health, damage a company's brand and reputation, and lead to expensive fines (Luu, 2021; Yan et al., 2021). For example, hiding a potential threat from safer foods to boost short-term sales or delivering tainted food could help the hotel eliminate leftovers.

The research is important for a variety of reasons. The tourist and hospitality sector is experiencing tremendous problems, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 epidemic. Most businesses had to undertake structural and operational adjustments as a result of the sharp fall in demand and revenues (Elshaer, Azazz, Mahmoud, et al., 2022). Due to employment instability, excessive work demands, and the need of maintaining their organization throughout the epidemic, workers in this situation experience significant levels of stress. Employees may participate in UPB to accomplish work objectives as a result of workplace stresses. It is crucial for both academics and practitioners to recognize these contextual stresses (Aliedan et al., 2022). The results of this study may also help managers in service industries, especially the hotel industry, by empowering them to take approaches to discourage and minimize the likelihood of unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

This article is ordered as follows. We proceed by introduction of the research model and hypotheses. The methodology and results are then described successively. After discussing the findings and their implications, we highlight the study's limitations and suggest future research.

2.   Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

As explained in this section, the aim of this research is to test the research model outlined in Figure 1.
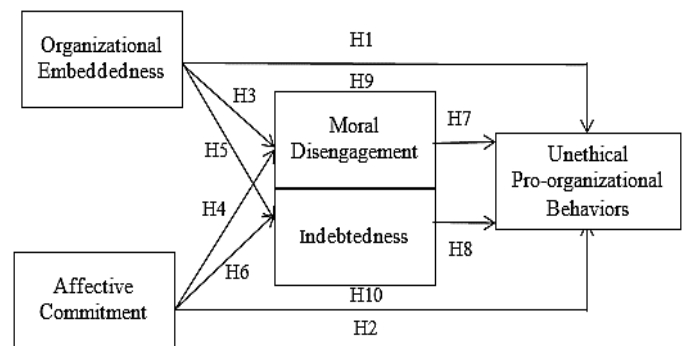

Figure 1: *Research model and Hypotheses*

2.1. The Social Exchange View of UPB

Social exchange is mutually beneficial process in which two persons adhere to the rules of reciprocity to give back the resources (such as assistance, compassion, or favors) that they have received from the other (Blau, 1964). In social exchange partnerships between employees and companies, both parties spend resources in the connection and anticipate receiving the desired results in return. The organizational viewpoint, which views firms as investor bodies and workers as receiving figures, has received the majority of attention in previous study on UPB literature. It was hypothesized that workers participate in UPB to return good exchanges with the business. Similar to this, Bryant & Merritt (2021) discovered recently a favorable correlation between leader-member interchange and boss-focused UPB. This is because leaders are spokespeople of their organizations. In the previous research, the employee perspective has been shockingly ignored, although workers may spend in trade relations based on how they see their own inputs and outputs. This exclusion is troublesome because it raises the concern of why workers prefer to engage in UPB rather than make more reasonable and desired contributions on

the job by putting up more effort and doing tasks more effectively (Meyer & Allen, 1993). As a result, studying UPB from an organizational standpoint will no longer help us understand the instigating processes that underpin UPB. In this research, we make the case that UPB only happens when deeply embedded and committed front-line workers in the hospitality industry choose to benefit the organization in order to sustain exchange relationships with their business.

2.2. UPB as an Ethical Dilemma

"Actions that are designed to promote the successful running of the organization or its members and contravene fundamental social norms, mores, regulations, or standards of good conduct" are denoted as UPB (Umphress and Bingham, 2010). Three features define UPB. First, because it is voluntary in its nature, any immoral activity carried out under supervision does not constitute UPB. Second, it has organizational-friendly motivations at its core. So, it cannot be deemed UPB if the main goal is to defraud clients or reach a personal sales goal. Third, UPB undermines the interests of the greater community by immoral actions. For instance, providing contaminated food puts consumers' health at danger.

UPB by frontline staff members most frequently occurs during a service interaction and involves actions that are advantageous to the company but detrimental to the consumers in the hospitality industry. For instance, providing contaminated food puts customers' health at risk while reducing waste for the restaurant. This type of unethical behavior differs from unethical behavior motivated by self-centeredness that has got significant devotion in the literature on hospitality (Cheng et al., 2013).

UPB may be viewed from the viewpoint of an ethical dilemma, which is defined as a circumstance in which a person is required to consider conflicting moral canons and/or stakeholder claims in order to determine what is the ethically proper action (Cheng et al., 2022). Employees, in case of UPB, face a difficult condition where several moral criterions are applicable, such as choosing between upholding an organizational requirement, a person may hold while working for an organization and upholding an extremely high obligation widely accepted by people (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994). Additionally, employees must choose between competing shareholder claims. Workers have the business's benefits and the customers' benefits in their mind alike, for instance, in a classic UPB situation when employees keep unfavorable information about the company's goods from consumers (Yan, 2021). This is especially true for front-line service workers in the hotel business, as they frequently deal with a splintered social environment and numerous expectations from both the company and the clients.

2.3. The direct effect of frontline workers' organizational embeddedness on unethical pro-organizational behaviors

Organizational embeddedness denotes to a variety of elements that influence an worker's desire to stay with a business (Mitchell et al., 2001). Organizational embeddedness, which relies on this social exchange route, is linked to positive managerial outcomes, including greater citizenship behavior, improved task performance, and decreased turnover behavior (Lee et al., 2020).

However, by focusing on the double-edged character of organizational embeddedness, which stands for both attachment and inertia, researchers have started to unearth the negative aspects of organizational embeddedness (Allen et al., 2016). Recent research has significant implications to further

our understanding of why workers engage in UPB at work, building on a plethora of social exchange literature (Umphress & Bingham, 2010). Highly entrenched individuals may recognize that they cannot afford to give up their resultant perks as they get closer and more devoted to the company, and as a result, these invested personnel become trapped (Allen et al., 2016). Highly embedded personnel will be more inclined to participate in UPB to help their organization while permitting themselves the moral clearance as long as they desire to maintain or establish a strong connection with the business (Ghosh, 2017). This idea is consistent with research showing that even constructive social interaction can occasionally spark immoral behavior. The mechanisms by which organizational embeddedness transmits to UPB will allow us to comprehend the complex nature of social exchange ties that take place in the organization because organizational embeddedness is thought of as an equivalent path with a social exchange between workforces and firms. On the basis of prior research (Lee & Park, 2020), we contend that frontline employees' organizational embeddedness will predict UPB in hospitality sector. Therefore, we hypothesize

H1: Frontline employees' organizational embeddedness is positively related to UPB: the higher the embeddedness.

2.4. The Direct Impact of Frontline Workers' Organizational Commitment on Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors

Organizational commitment has been the topic of extensive investigation for more than 30 years and is a psychological condition that describes an employee's association with an organization and has consequences for whether or not an employee wants to continue in the company (Meyer & Allen, 1993). Employees' emotional ties to an organization are known as affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Affective commitment is the utmost pertinent aspect of organizational commitment since the present emphasis of the study is on the extent to which employees will participate in unethical but regarded as advantageous to the business actions (Park et al., 2023). Therefore, this study simply takes affective commitment into account.

The workers' emotional connection to, association with, and engagement in the business is referred to as affective organizational commitment. The mainstream of the research on commitment has highlighted it as an affective connection to a business's such that the deeply committed person identifies with, is interested in, and enjoys membership in the business (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 2).

Higher organizational commitment levels are typically associated with stronger organizational identification (Cullinan et al., 2008). As a result, those people would want to keep their strong association with the group, and they would also want to keep the organization safe. According to research, people who have more commitment towards their organization are less likely to act in ways that would hurt their organization, which makes sense (Yurtkoru and Ebrahimi 2017). The topic of whether people who have a higher level of organizational commitment are more or less inclined to act unethically but, in the organization's, best interests is less clear.

Higher degrees of emotional organizational attachment may cause people to behave differently to situations when the organization stands to gain from dubious immoral activity. To illustrate, Cullinan et al. (2008) give the following example:

"An accountant within a corporation, for instance, can inflate sales prior to the organization requesting for a loan. The organization would be more likely to get the loan if its revenue was inflated. The organization gains since the loan

was issued with better conditions than those that would have been offered if the bank had known the organization's genuine revenue (p. 227).

It makes sense that those who are more committed to the organization would be highly likely to embellish the financial data in order to make sure the group achieves its objectives. Higher organizational commitment levels lead to a stronger sense of connection with the organization, which increases the likelihood that these people may participate in unethical activity, intended to further the company's objectives. In view of the previous findings (Matherne and Litchfield, 2012), we contend that frontline workers' organizational commitment is more likely to translate into UPB in hospitality business. Therefore, we hypothesize

H2: Frontline employees' organizational commitment is positively correlated to UPBs.

2.5 Mediation effect of frontline workers' moral disengagement on the association between embeddedness, organizational commitment and UPB

Employee involvement in UPB can, in turn, be impacted by moral disengagement. People who lack moral engagement are less likely to be mindful of an ethical problem which would raise the likelihood of unethical conduct (Cheng et al., 2022). Relating this to UPB, persons who experience moral disengagement tell themselves that moral principles are not relevant in the present because they are unaware of the ethical implications of their actions and instead place an excessive amount of emphasis on the pro-organizational aspects of UPB (Cheng et al., 2022). For instance, the pro-organizational facet of UPB aids employees in rationalizing UPB as duty-bound behaviors that promote the larger good of the company, which minimizes the personal liability for unethical behavior (Chen et al., 2016).

Social-cognitive theory assumes that moral disengagement refers to a series of cognitive rationalization processes that let someone participate in immoral behavior while disengaging from the moral standards and self-sanctions that would otherwise prevent such behavior (Bandura et al., 1999). Specifically, Bandura and colleagues (1999) identified three general cognitive pathways via which moral engagement takes place. The first is to reframe unethical behaviors in such a way that they look like immorally neutral, less moral, or even acceptable. The second is to downplay or distort who is to blame. Devaluing the subject of unethical behavior is the third tactic.

Moral disengagement hypothesis guides us to examine the link between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and UPB. The argument is based on the idea that most moral offenders are not essentially immoral entities. Instead, they defend self-regulatory principles that are largely in line with society rules. When self-regulatory moral norms become disengaged, or when violators find methods to excuse their unethical activities, unethical behavior results. Moreover, despite the fact that post-transgression justification is also possible, moral detachment is conjectured as a pretransgression rationalization (Cheng et al., 2013). Moral disengagement appears as a powerful mediator between more distant precursors and immoral action according to this pretransgression paradigm. However, earlier research also demonstrates that there is a general predisposition for moral disengagement approach (Moore et al., 2012).

We argue that organizational embeddedness and commitment might translate into UPB by triggering moral

disengagement that in turn removes self-deterrents to detrimental behavior and boosts self-endorsement of the unethical conduct, when employees encounter moral predicaments in which the organization's interests are at risk. All three of the moral disengagement processes offer enlightenments for how moral disengagement could act as a mediator between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and UPB. First, those who have higher organizational embeddedness and commitment are more likely to reinterpret UPB as a necessary and even moral act that advances the organization's goals making it adequate on individual or social level (Bandura et al., 1999; Duffy et al., 2012). The use of euphemistic language to disguise the unethical nature of lying by framing it as strategic information presentation (Duffy et al., 2012) is another example of this. This can be seen in people's obvious rationalization of otherwise unethical acts as essential to protect the interests of their group or business (Chen et al., 2016).

Together, the aforementioned observations allow us to make the following prediction: due to the relative easiness with which moral disengagement is triggered, individuals with stronger organizational embeddedness and commitment are more likely to use moral disengagement to defend UPB in order to protect organizational interests. To put it another way, we argue that moral disengagement gives people who have a higher level of organizational embeddedness and commitment more justifications for engaging in UPB by framing their unethical behaviors as serving the greater good, reducing their sense of moral responsibility, and making harmful consequences to members of the out group more tolerable. In other words, by morally disengaging, UPB becomes a decision made only for commercial purposes with the goal of protecting the company rather than an ethical choice that needs careful moral consideration (Umphress & Bingham, 2010). We anticipate that moral disengagement will act as a mediator in the association between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and UPB based on the justifications stated above.

H3: Organizational embeddedness is positively related to moral disengagement.

H4: Organizational commitment is positively related to moral disengagement.

H9: Frontline employees' moral disengagement mediates between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and their intent to engage in UPB.

2.6. Mediation effect of frontline workers' indebtedness on the association between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and their intent to engage in UPB

The definition of felt indebtedness is "a duty to pay back another" (Greenberg, 1980, p. 4). Feelings of obligation are a common reaction to getting organizational assistance but failing to give it back, according to social exchange experts (Fisher et al., 1982). In other words, when reciprocity rules are broken in social interactions, people feel indebted. This drives them to follow the rules by making payments on their obligations. Being viewed as socially insensitive by others can undermine a person's autonomy, lower their self-esteem, and cause anxiety (Fisher et al., 1982). The fact that the employees who are embedded and committed with their organizations will likely make them uncomfortable since they don't pay it forward to their organization even at the cost of ethical standards. They will consequently have a strong need to "pay

their debt," which may cause them to concentrate on the immediate results of their activities, in order to lessen these negative sentiments as fast as possible. Employees who feel obligated to the company may decide to reciprocate with UPB as it may immediately benefit organizations (Umphress & Bingham, 2011).

In conclusion, when employees show high levels of organizational embeddedness and commitment, they may feel obligated to support the organization in order to maintain mutually beneficial relationships, which may result in feelings of indebtedness and a strong and pressing motivation to engage in UPB in order to alleviate this discomfort. Consequently, we provide the following hypothesis:

H10: Frontline employees' indebtedness mediates between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and their intent to engage in UPB.

H5: Frontline employees' organizational embeddedness is positively related to indebtedness.

H6: Frontline employees' organizational commitment is positively related to indebtedness.

H7: Frontline employees' moral disengagement is positively to their intent to engage in UPB.

H8: Frontline employees' indebtedness is positively to their intent to engage in UPB.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design and Sampling Techniques

Twenty of the twenty-five three-star hotels from Lahore, one of the famous cities of Pakistan, responded positively when we approached them using the snowball technique. We created and delivered a questionnaire-based survey to their front-line staff. We carried out multi-wave surveys to have reduced common method bias. Two waves of data were collected from frontline staff in a time-lagged study methodology. In the first wave survey (T1), unethical pro-organizational behaviors were measured together with demographic data that was relevant to them. To assess employee organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment, moral disengagement, and indebtedness, we performed the second wave survey (T2) two weeks later.

370 frontline workers were requested to answer the questionnaire in T1 using a purposeful sample strategy. The questionnaire had a statement that the research was steered for educational intents and that the data would be held secret. Nearly 89% (n=330) of the workers finished it. Afterwards in T2, we went up to the workers who had completed the questionnaire before and requested them to fill a second one. 315 genuine completed questionnaires were returned (response rate: 95%).

3.2 Measurement of Variables

3.2.1 UPB

We utilized a 6-item scale designed by Umphress et al. (2010) to measure unethical pro-organizational behaviors. Examples include "If it would assist my organization, I would

overstate the truth about my company's products or services to consumers and clients" and "If it would help my organization, I would falsify the facts to make my business appear good." For this scale, Cronbach's alpha is.88.

3.2.2 Organizational Embeddedness

We used 5-items of the scale for organizational embeddedness by Crossley et al. (2007). Few Items include "I feel attached to this organization" and "it would be difficult for me to leave this organization".

3.2.3 Organizational Commitment

We used six items of affective commitment scale described by Meyer and Allen (1993). Two sample items are "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" and "This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me." Cronbach's alpha is .86.

3.2.4 Moral Disengagement

We measured this variable with the three-item scale developed by Chen et al. (2016). Sample items are "It would be okay to be misleading to protect my company's interests" and "It would be okay to withhold potentially damaging information to protect my company's interests." Cronbach's alpha is .77.

3.2.5 Indebtedness

Author made use of three items from Shen, Wan and Wyer Jr (2011) to measure Indebtedness. Few sample items are "I feel indebted to my company," and "I feel like I owe my company something". Cronbach's alpha is .75.

All the variables are measured on a scale from (1) Strongly disagree - (5) Strongly agree.

3.2.6 Control Variables

Authors used gender, education, age, and tenure of experience as control variables to find the likely significant association with key variables in the study.

3.3 Description of the Sample

The respondents include 174 females (55%). Quite reasonable number of respondents,84 hold MS or M.Phil degrees (27%) while more than half the respondents,174 are graduates (55%) and small number are undergraduates (n=57, 18%). Fairly large numbers of frontline employees are between age brackets 30 to 39 that comprise 55% of the sample. 141 employees possess 5 to 10 years' experience level, which constitutes 45% of the sample, the others have from 1 to 5 (n=77, 24%) or above ten years (n=97, 31%).

Results of the reliability and correlation tests are shown in Table 1 along with descriptive statistics. We applied the multi-wave response approach and the Harman single factor test. There is no common bias problem a single variable describes 36.7% of the total variance and is lower than 50% cutoff. With a Cronbach's alpha of at least 0.70, all of the scales exhibit sufficient internal consistency (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 1
Statistics, Internal Reliability, and Correlation (r)

	Means (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Organizational Commitment	3.35(.82)	(0.86)								

Organizational Embeddedness	3.26(.80)	.612**	(0.83)						
Moral Disengagement	3.37(.89)	.467**	.462**	(0.77)					
Indebtedness	3.24(.94)	.525**	.481**	.384**	(0.75)				
Unethical Pro-organizational Behaviors	3.26(.90)	.597**	.540**	.458**	.502**	(0.88)			
Gender	1.55(.50)	.009	.002	-.056	.202**	-.027			
age	1.88(.67)	.040	.009	.049	.132*	.016	.033		
Education	2.08(.74)	-.078	-.018	.070	.071	-.051	.010	.218**	
Experience	2.07(.75)	.114*	.152**	.056	.141*	.127*	.075	.312**	.090	1

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

Unsurprisingly, frontline employees' organizational embeddedness shows positive relationships with moral disengagement (r = 0.46, p ≤ 0.01), indebtedness (r = 0.48, p ≤ 0.01) and unethical pro-organizational behaviors (r = 0.54, p ≤ 0.01). While frontline employees' organizational commitment appears positively related with moral disengagement (r = 0.47, p ≤ 0.01), indebtedness (r = 0.53, p ≤ 0.01) and unethical pro-organizational behaviors (r = 0.60, p ≤ 0.01). Frontline employees' experience displays positive relationship with commitment (r =0.11, p ≤ 0.05), embeddedness (r =0.15, p ≤ 0.01), indebtedness (r = 0.14, p ≤ 0.05) and with unethical pro-organizational behaviors (r = 0.13, p ≤ 0.05). Interestingly frontline employees' gender shows positive relationship with indebtedness (r = 0.20, p ≤ 0.01).

Table 2 displays that the suggested 5-factor model indicates good fit figures (χ2 = 835.766, df = 220, χ2/df = 3.799, RMSEA= 0.08, CFI=0.838, NNFI=0.814). Hence, we proceeded with the proposed 5-factor model as it shows the best fit values.

Table 2
Confirmatory Factor Analyses Results

Variables	χ2	Df	Ratio χ2 / df	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA
1-factor frame[a]	1550.597	230	6.742	0.653	0.619	0.135
2-factor frame[b]	1329.109	229	5.804	0.711	0.681	0.124
3-factor frame[c]	1175.106	227	5.177	0.751	0.723	0.115
4-factor frame[d]	998.591	224	4.458	0.797	0.770	0.105
5-factor frame[e]	835.766	220	3.799	0.878	0.844	0.080

a. OE, OC, MD, IND and UPB, all joined as one-factor
b. OE, OC in one factor, MD, IND and UPB in one factor
c. OE, OC in a factor, MD, IND in a factor, and UPB, in a factor
d. OE in a factor, OC in a factor, MD, IND in one factor, and UPB in one factor
e. OE, OC, MD, IND and UPB, each, in one factor

As we can notice from the table 3, all criteria are met fully.

Table 3
Factor Loading & Scale Validities

Variables	Items	EFA					CFA	CR	AVE	Square Root of AVE
UPB	UPB1	.813					.795	0.80	0.56	.75
	UPB2	.788					.716			
	UPB3	.648					.761			
	UPB4	.655					.733			
	UPB5	.692					.697			
	UPB6	.700					.775			
Organizational Commitment	OC1		.784				.721	0.86	0.52	.72
	OC2		.757				.835			
	OC3		.705				.773			
	OC4		.560				.682			
	OC5		.629				.680			
	OC6		.609				.604			
Organizational Embeddedness	OE1			.565			.627	0.83	0.50	.71
	OE2			.750			.791			
	OE3			.749			.768			
	OE4			.693			.666			
	OE5			.664			.678			
Moral Disengagement	MD1				.775		.817	0.78	0.54	.74
	MD2				.744		.747			
	MD3				.771		.634			
Indebtedness	IND1					.843	.768	0.88	0.54	.73
	IND2					.726	.705			
	IND3					.671	.719			

3.4 Data analysis

We used SPSS 23 and AMOS 23 to test our hypotheses. We verified the mediation effect using the bootstrapping technique. The results demonstrate that the model fulfilled the

standards of good fit ($\chi2$ = 563.748, df = 207, $\chi2$/df = 2.723, RMSEA= 0.074, CFI=0.91, NNFI=0.89).

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 4 displays the analyses designed to test the first eight hypotheses, and Figure 2 illustrates them with research model. Organizational embeddedness shows statistically significant relationship with frontline employees' UPB (β= 0.23, p<0.05), which supports hypothesis 1. Similarly Organizational commitment shows statistically significant relationship with frontline employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviors (β= 0.464, p<0.001), which supports hypothesis 2. Results support other hypotheses 3, 5: frontline employees' organizational embeddedness is positively linked to moral disengagement (β= 0.236, p<0.05) and indebtedness (β= 0.411, p<0.05. Likewise, our findings support hypotheses 4, 6: frontline employees' commitment is positively linked to moral disengagement (β= 0.34, p<0.001) and indebtedness (β= 0.575, p<0.001). Moral disengagement and indebtedness exhibit significant positive relationships with frontline employees' UPB.

Table 4
Structural Model Results

Hypotheses	"Hypothesized Paths"	(β)	t-value	P-value
H1	OE→UPB	0.23	2.149	*
H2	OC→ UPB	0.464	4.151	***
H3	OE →MD	0.236	2.538	***
H4	OC →MD	0.34	3.887	***
H5	OE→IND	0.411	2.952	***
H6	OC →IND	0.575	4.335	***
H7	MD→ UPB	0.19	2.175	*
H8	IND→ UPB	0.177	2.700	***

*** p ≤ 0.01, *. p ≤ 0.05.
OE: Organizational embeddedness//OC: Organizational commitment
MD: Moral disengagement//IND: Indebtedness// UPB: Unethical pro-organizational behaviors
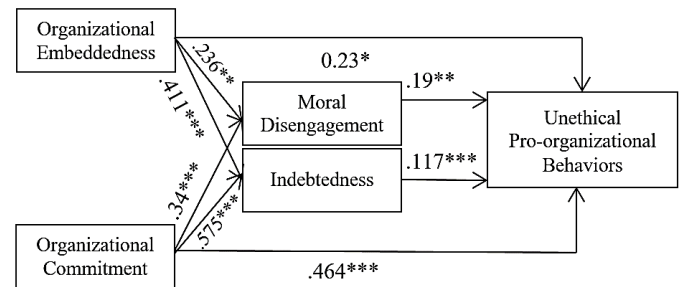
"***, p < 0.01, **, p < 0.05, *, p < 0.10".
Figure 2: *SEM Results*

Results in Table 5 confirm Hypotheses 9 &10. Frontline staffs' moral disengagement and indebtedness mediate the association between organizational embeddedness, organizational commitment and UPB.

Table 5
Mediation of Frontline Employee's Moral Disengagement and Indebtedness

		Bootstrap BCa 95 % CI		
	Estimate	Lower	Upper	P
Link between organizational embeddedness and UPB	.230	.042	.497	.043
Mediating impact of moral disengagement and indebtedness	.118	.036	.278	.01
Total effects of organizational embeddedness on UPB through moral disengagement and indebtedness	.347	.160	.596	.002
Relation between organizational commitment and UPB	.464	.263	.683	.002
Mediating impact of moral disengagement and indebtedness	.167	.060	.335	.007
Total effects of organizational commitment on UPB thrU moral disengagement and indebtedness	.631	.434	.833	.001

"BCa: bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapping confidence intervals. Estimate based on 10,000 bootstrap samples".

5. DISCUSSION

Based upon SET, the study explains the association of embeddedness, and organizational commitment with unethical pro-organizational behaviors through moral disengagement and indebtedness. Results show that embeddedness and organizational commitment have significant positive association with frontline employees' UPB thus generating the support for all our hypotheses. The moral disengagement and indebtedness exhibit significant mediation impact between explanatory variables and UPB. All the results are in

congruence with previous studies (Matherne et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021). The organizational strategists should pay attention to increase the moral engagement of frontline employees in hospitality sector as a way to diminish wide spread UPB. The managers in services sector should recognize that indebtedness can transform into UPB.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of examining the frontline workers' UPB using social cognitive and social exchange theories. Study confirms that high embeddedness and organizational commitment can translate into UPB through moral disengagement and indebtedness. In conformity with social exchange theory, frontline employees in hospitality setting engage in unethical pro-organizational behaviors to maintain reciprocal ties with the organization. This coincides with cognitive minimization to provide the moral justification and to protect oneself from moral denouncements.

5.2 Managerial Implications

Organizations have experienced the negative effects of UPB. The hotel business puts workers in enticing settings, such those involving frequent currency transactions, which might provide them even more chances to engage in UPB. When such circumstances are present and pro-organizational motives are present, managing unethical pro-organizational behavior has become even more difficult. However, the majority of managers in the hospitality industry have a tendency to focus on selfishly motivated unethical conduct with just a minimal knowledge that excellent organizational practices may also result in this specific sort of unethical behavior, or UPB. In order to uncover its immoral consequences, managers will need to take a deeper look to identify workers' UPB. The study's findings give businesses in the hospitality, service, and tourist sectors additional information about how to approach frontline staff as an investment for a competitive advantage. Front-line staff members in hotels frequently have the chance to act unethically for the corporation. The study demonstrates how organizational embeddedness, and organizational commitment among frontline hospitality staff influence unethical pro-organizational actions through moral disengagement and indebtedness. This suggests that fostering a solid service atmosphere is equally as vital as devising a strong ethical infrastructure, which aids in increasing employee understanding of ethical concerns, communicating the value of acting ethically, and emphasizing the consequences of doing otherwise. This is crucial in the case of UPB since employees might not realize how immoral their actions are because they are motivated by company goals. Finally, the results of the study on moral disengagement imply that organizations may impact the moral disengagement of their personnel. Additionally, as previously said, staffs are more expected to morally disengage while working for a company where the bottom line takes precedence over ethical considerations. As a result, firms would benefit from making greater efforts to increase workers' moral engagement, such as via the establishment of a solid ethical culture that is genuinely concerned with the welfare of customers rather than just the business's bottom (Moore *et al.*, 2012). Our findings may influence managers and policymakers in the hospitality and service sectors to develop methods and tactics to curb UPB among their front-line staff by lowering their moral disengagement.

5.3 Future avenues and Limitations

Despite the fact that this study makes important theoretical and managerial advances, it has certain drawbacks. First, we depend on workers' self-reported UPB since, in the hotel business, services are frequently delivered without direct supervision and might not be readily apparent to others, making other people's assessments of UPB not always more truthful in reporting UPB. However, future research may employ an experimental design using fictitious circumstances to capture UPB, which will assist to confirm the data from self-reports that support our theory. Future research, for instance, may use the strategy adopted in Chen et al.'s (2016) work, which used management decision-making based on scenario to gauge UPB.

The cross-sectional technique adopted has the most serious drawbacks. However, we lessened the likelihood of common technique bias by employing a two-time lag survey. Furthermore, our findings cannot be applied to the whole hotel sector or to other nations. This research was done with a modest sample size of Pakistani hotel front-line staff members. This investigation should be repeated using different samples and incorporating additional precursors.

6. CONCLUSION

Our study shows that there may be a possible downside to good social exchange relationships between frontline employees and their employer since they favor the adoption of UPBs in the workplace. Managers and employees must recognize the importance of ethical dilemmas in their everyday activities and be trained to foster their moral engagement and capacity to solve them in the best interest of all stakeholders and in a durable way

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Impact of Statement

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Abdul Rauf Qureshi, Currently serving as Assistant Professor, Business School, National College of Business Administration & Economics. I bring with me 20 years of sales & marketing experience with Multinational Pharmaceutical GlaxoSmithKline and more than 14 years teaching experience of management subjects in renowned business schools. I have done PhD in Business administration, have published research papers in national and international impact factor journals. I got the opportunity to attend a number of courses in Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) and Pakistan institute of management sciences (PIM).