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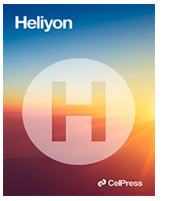

Beyond the universal perception: Unveiling the paradoxical impact of ethical leadership on employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior

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ABSTRACT

Ethical leadership, widely recognized as a positive leadership style, has shown inconsistent relationships with employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior in the workplace. This study draws on the social cognitive theory to investigate the paradoxical impact of ethical leadership on employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior. It also examines the mediating role of employees' psychological empowerment and the moderating effect of moral identity. The study collects data from 515 nursing staff working in public and private hospitals in Pakistan at three different time intervals, and analyzed using PLS SEM. Contrary to the previous studies and our initial hypothesis, the findings reveal a positive relationship between ethical leadership and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior. Additionally, the study demonstrates that employees' psychological empowerment positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior. This underscores the significance of employees' psychological processes. Furthermore, the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' psychological empowerment is moderated by employees' moral identity. This highlights the role of the individual differences in shaping employees' behavior within the workplace. Overall, these results challenge the universal perception of ethical leadership as a positive form of leadership, shedding light on the unintended consequences and paradoxical impact it can have in organizations.

1. Introduction

Ethical leadership (EL) plays a pivotal role in shaping employees' behaviors within organizations, exerting a profound influence through various mechanisms. Firstly, ethical leaders act as powerful role models by consistently demonstrating ethical conduct in their decision-making and interactions. This serves to inspire and guide employees, encouraging them to emulate these ethical actions in their own professional behavior [1]. Secondly, ethical leaders build trust and respect among their team members, fostering a positive work environment. When employees trust their leaders, they are more likely to follow their guidance and adopt ethical practices in their day-to-day work [2]. Thirdly, EL contributes to the creation of an ethical organizational culture. Leaders who prioritize ethical values and emphasize the importance of ethical behavior create an environment where ethical considerations become embedded in the

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organization's norms and values [3]. Fourthly, ethical leaders make decisions based on moral principles, encouraging employees to consider ethical factors in their own decision-making processes. This approach helps reduce unethical behaviors and misconduct within the workplace [4]. Finally, EL enhances employee engagement and commitment. Employees feel more motivated to contribute positively to the organization when they perceive that their leaders genuinely care about ethical practices [5].

The impact of EL on employee behavior is widely recognized in the field of management research. Recent investigations consistently affirm a positive association between EL and various behavioral outcomes among employees in the workplace. EL plays a central role by positively influencing employee perceptions of justice, enhancing the effectiveness of an ethical climate, and mitigating the negative consequences associated with personality traits. Managers are strongly advised to prioritize fairness, transparency, and the cultivation of moral attentiveness among their teams to foster ethical values in the workplace effectively [6–9]. Moreover, it is worth noting that EL has been found to significantly influence employees' behaviors particularly in situations of crisis [10]. Consequently, this leadership approach assumes even greater relevance when employees are confronted with ethical dilemmas, such as instances of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) at the workplace in organizations.

Employees' engagement in UPB has been recognized as a form of pro-social behavior within organizations [11]. However, it is important to note that UPB can have both positive and negative impacts on employees' outcomes. Consequently, understanding the antecedents and consequences of UPB has become a recurring area of investigation in management research [12]. Numerous investigations have examined the impact of different leadership styles on employees' propensity to engage in UPB [13]. Moreover, EL has also been investigated for its potential impact on employees' UPB [14,15]. However, the existing findings are not entirely consistent underscoring the need for further investigation.

Existing literature suggests that leadership style can predict constructive deviant behaviors, such UPB, within organizations [16, 17]. However, still the predictors of UPB have been insufficiently explored, warranting further investigation [14]. Consequently, identifying suitable antecedents that can influence employees' unethical behaviors in the workplace has been a longstanding question in management research [18]. Addressing this knowledge gap, the current study aims to examine the inconsistent findings concerning the impact of EL on employees' engagement in UPB. Through this investigation, we will contribute valuable insights to the literature on leadership and UPB in the workplace.

The existing literature has identified various mediating mechanisms that connect leadership styles with employees' behaviors [19]. However, inconsistent findings have emerged regarding the psychological processes that serve as explanatory mechanisms between EL and employees' UPB [14]. Psychological empowerment (PsyEmp), a crucial psychological and cognitive process, has been recognized as a mediating factor between contextual factors and employees' behaviors [20]. Therefore, the current study aims to explain the relationship between EL and employees' UPB by exploring the role of PsyEmp within the organizational context. This highlights the significance of employees' psychological and cognitive processes in guiding their behavior under leadership influence.

Moral identity (MID) is an individual difference and personal trait that has been found to shape individuals' ethical ideology [3,21]. Consequently, MID has been recognized as a crucial moderating factor that affects the link between different leadership styles and employees' psychological and cognitive mechanisms, as well as their behaviors [4,22]. This study examines the influence of employees' MID on the association between EL and employees' PsyEmp within the organizational context. It underscores the importance of considering employees' level of MID as a key factor in establishing a stronger link between leadership and employees' psychological and cognitive processes within the organization.

The study holds significant implications in several ways. Firstly, it highlights the influence of EL on employees' UPB in the non-Western country albeit with positive association contrary to the previous research. This offers valuable insights into the applicability and generalizability of leadership theories in diverse cultural settings. Secondly, the study introduces employees' PsyEmp as an explanatory mechanism connecting EL with employees' UPB. This underscores the significance of employees' psychological and cognitive processes. Thirdly, the study introduces employees' MID as a moderating factor that influences the link between leadership, employees' psychological and cognitive processes, and their behaviors. This expands our understanding of the complex dynamics at play in leadership research and highlights the importance of the individual differences in shaping employees' behavior within the workplace. Fourthly, the study sheds light on the paradoxical influence of EL on employees' UPB, challenging the conventional perception of EL as a purely positive form of leadership. This underscores the need for cross-cultural research to comprehend the cultural nuances and variations in the effects of EL. Finally, the study advances our understanding of the proposed theoretical model by examining it from a predictive perspective. By analyzing the relationships and interactions among EL, PsyEmp, MID, and UPB, the study enhances our knowledge of the underlying mechanisms and provides a foundation for future research in the field.

1.1. Theory and hypotheses development

The social cognitive theory (SCT) by Bandura [21] highlights the interdependence of a person's external environment, behavior, and psychological processes, as well as cognitive and other personal factors. According to this theory, these components have a bi-directional relationship in which individuals not only impact their environment but are also influenced by it [22]. The SCT particularly emphasizes people's learning through modeling, self-efficacy, motivation, and vicarious learning through observation [22,23]. The theory also proposes that people can take control of their own lives through human agency, which includes direct personal agency, proxy agency, and collective agency. Thus, the theory advocates for the human potential for self-direction, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, and self-motivation to achieve their goals [21]. The SCT suggests that self-regulation has a significant influence on an individual's thought, affect, motivation, and action, including their moral conduct [23]. This theory serves as an overarching framework for our study, as our entire research model is derived from it.

This theoretical model finds its grounding in SCT [21], a framework that underscores the role of cognitive processes, observational

learning, and interpersonal interactions in shaping human behavior. EL, in this model, functions as a potent source of observational learning, with leaders serving as role models for employees. Through the observation of ethical behavior, employees may emulate similar ethical conduct, thus aligning with the theory's principle of observational learning [22]. Moreover, the model posits that EL's influence on employees' UPB is mediated by their PsyEmp — a concept deeply rooted in self-efficacy beliefs as emphasized by SCT. By fostering a sense of empowerment, ethical leaders can potentially mitigate unethical behaviors among employees [23]. Furthermore, the inclusion of MID as a moderator in this model aligns with the theory's acknowledgment of the importance of personal characteristics. SCT posits that individual behavior is not solely determined by external factors; it can also be shaped by internal values and moral beliefs. In this model, MID serves as a moderating factor, suggesting that the impact of EL on employees' PsyEmp may vary depending on the strength of an individual's MID. This incorporation reflects the theory's principle that personal traits can modulate the influence of external factors on behavior [21,23]. Ultimately, the model encapsulates the dynamic interplay of EL, PsyEmp, MID, and UPB, mirroring the concept of reciprocal determinism within SCT. EL influences employees' PsyEmp, which, in turn, impacts employees' propensity for UPB. This interdependence captures the essence of SCT's view of human behavior as a complex interplay between personal, behavioral, and environmental factors [21–23]. Thus, by grounding our theoretical model in SCT, we establish a robust theoretical foundation for investigating the relationships and dynamics under examination in our research. The theoretical model of the study is illustrated in Fig. 1.

1.2. Ethical leadership and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior

Different scholars have defined EL with varying dimensions since its inception as a construct [24,25]. However, given the nature and objectives of this study, the most cited definition of EL by Brown, Treviño, & Harrison [24] was used. According to this definition, EL is "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making" (p. 120). This definition of EL embodies the concept of a "moral person" and a "moral manager," initially conceived by Treviño, Hartman, & Brown [25]. As a "moral person," EL is expected to be honest, trustworthy, caring, open to input, and principled. As a "moral manager," EL holds followers accountable for acting in normatively appropriate ways through rewards and reinforcements [1,2,5].

EL has demonstrated a positive association with employees' behaviors within organizations. Leaders who prioritize fair treatment and provide transparent information are more likely to create a work environment that discourages unethical behavior among employees [6]. Furthermore, the pivotal role of EL has been emphasized in fostering an ethical climate within organizations [7]. Additionally, interactions with ethical leaders prove more effective in diminishing unethical intentions [8]. Moreover, organizations that cultivate a responsible climate can effectively mitigate the adverse effects of unethical leadership on employees' personal growth and their intention to remain with the organization [9].

The concept of UPB was introduced in the literature in the last decade [26]. Employees' UPB has been defined as "actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct" [11, p. 622]. Broadly, UPB consists of three dimensions. First, unethical, immoral, and anti-societal acts. Second, the commission or omission of unethical, immoral, and anti-societal acts. Third, UPB involves employees demonstrating behaviors that are not described in their formal job descriptions or demanded by their superiors, but are still carried out in the interest of the organization. Thus, UPB primarily involves committing unethical acts that benefit the organization, its members, or both. Although the concept of UPB has far-reaching implications for organizations, its boundaries have been defined and limited in the literature [11,29].

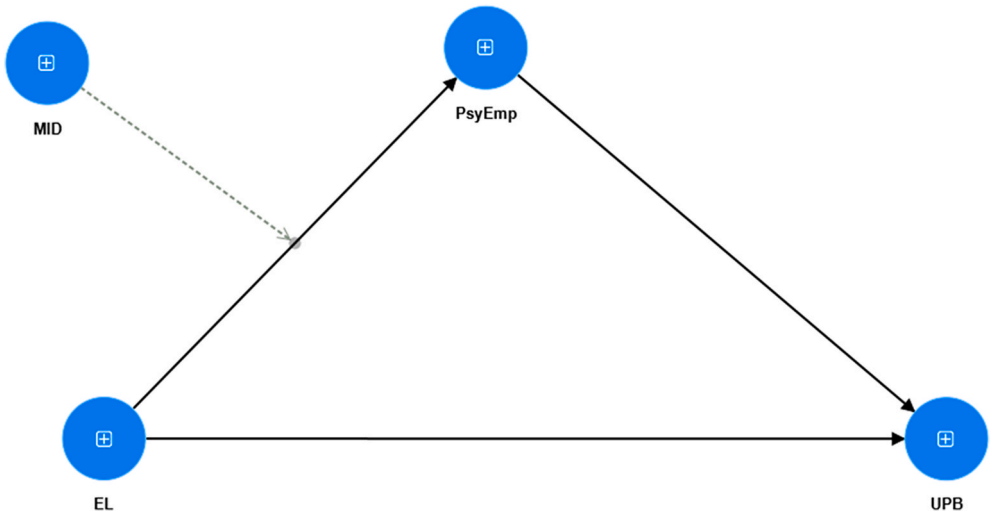

Fig. 1. Theoretical model.

Different leadership styles have been found influencing employees' UPB in organizations through different underlying processes and boundary conditions [13,19]. The literature also discusses the influence of EL on employees' UPB in organizations. However, their findings have been found inconsistent [14,15]. Overall, these studies collectively highlight the multifaceted nature of the relationship between EL and UPB among employees. They offer valuable insights into the mechanisms through which EL influences UPB and underscore the significance of certain contextual factors in moderating these relationships.

The SCT highlights the impact of EL on employees' beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes towards ethical conduct and unethical UPB. EL can influence employees' self-efficacy in behaving ethically and resisting the temptation to engage in UPB by modeling ethical behavior, providing positive feedback, and support [9,25]. Moreover, SCT suggests that EL can prevent moral disengagement, the process of rationalizing unethical behavior, by fostering a culture that values and rewards ethical conduct [6,14]. This helps establish a social norm of ethical behavior within the organization, encouraging employees to adopt ethical behavior and resist UPB [8,24]. Employees learn from observing leaders' behavior, making EL a powerful model for promoting ethical values and conduct. Conversely, unethical leadership can serve as a negative model, encouraging UPB among employees [7,10]. Setting clear goals for ethical behavior and providing feedback are also important in regulating the link between EL and employees' UPB [22,24]. Overall, SCT indicates that EL can significantly influence employees' behavior by shaping their beliefs and values related to ethics, and by promoting a culture of ethical behavior and positive support, EL can help prevent UPB and foster ethical conduct throughout the organization [1,2,5]. Therefore drawing from the SCT and the literature, we postulate the hypothesis as follows.

Hypothesis 1. Ethical leadership is negatively related to the employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior in the organization.

1.3. Mediating role of employees' psychological empowerment

Empowerment is a multifaceted construct consisting of three emotional effects, namely leader-driven, structural, and psychological. The PsyEmp is a multidimensional construct encompassing the cognitive dimensions of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact [27]. Initially defined as "a motivational construct manifested in the cognitions of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role" [30, p.1444], PsyEmp has been a significant topic of research in organizational behavior and human resource management.

Employees' PsyEmp is considered an important psychological mechanism and cognitive process that mediates the linkage between different leadership styles and employees' workplace behaviors in organizations [28]. Additionally, PsyEmp mediates the linkage between EL and employees' workplace behavior. Thus, PsyEmp has been found to mediate the linkage between EL and innovative work behavior, organizational citizenship behavior, and voice behavior [20]. Therefore, it can be inferred from the literature that different leadership styles positively influence employees' PsyEmp in the organization. Additionally, EL predicts employees' PsyEmp at the workplace. Moreover, employees' PsyEmp positively influences employees' behaviors in the organization. Furthermore, employees' PsyEmp has been found to mediate between different leadership styles and employees' behaviors at the workplace. Finally, employees' PsyEmp has also been found to mediate between EL and employees' behaviors at the workplace in organizations.

SCT [21] highlights the importance of observational learning and the influential role of role models in shaping individual behavior. Ethical leaders, who serve as exemplars of ethical conduct and values, naturally act as positive role models for their employees. When employees consistently witness their leaders demonstrating ethical behavior, they are inclined to emulate it, ultimately enhancing their PsyEmp [6,9,24]. SCT also introduces the concept of self-efficacy, related to an individual's belief in their ability to perform a particular behavior. EL significantly boosts employees' self-efficacy in ethical decision-making and pro-organizational behavior, particularly when they perceive alignment with their leaders' values and receive encouragement [7,10,25]. SCT further posits that human behavior results from the continuous interaction of personal factors, environmental influences, and behavior itself. In the context of EL, this implies that ethical leaders foster a positive work environment conducive to ethical behavior, reinforcing employees' PsyEmp as they perceive their actions aligning with organizational values [8,23].

The recent empirical investigation unveils an explanatory role of compassion in the connection between Person–Organization Fit and Organizational Citizenship Behaviors [29]. Compassion is indeed a crucial aspect of organizational behavior that can have a profound impact on ethical leadership and employee behavior. It is observed that employees who exhibit a strong alignment with their organization are more inclined to engage in compassionate behaviors towards both individuals and the organization as a whole. This finding implies that when employees perceive themselves as fitting well within an ethical and supportive work environment as advocated by the SCT, they are more likely to demonstrate positive and pro-organizational behaviors like UPB [11,16].

Conversely, SCT acknowledges the potential for moral disengagement, wherein individuals rationalize or justify unethical behavior. Ethical leaders can effectively mitigate moral disengagement by providing explicit ethical guidance and setting clear expectations [14,25]. Nonetheless, employees who possess self-efficacy and a heightened sense of PsyEmp are less inclined to succumb to moral disengagement because they exhibit a stronger personal agency for engaging in pro-organizational behavior [22]. Paradoxically, this heightened PsyEmp may inadvertently lead to UPB if employees misapply their newfound confidence and agency, rationalizing actions that, although appearing to benefit the organization, transgress ethical boundaries [11,16]. Hence, EL, through the mechanisms of observational learning and the cultivation of self-efficacy, can indirectly impact employees' UPB, mediated by the role of PsyEmp. Therefore drawing on the SCT and the literature, we postulate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2. Employees' psychological empowerment positively mediates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior in the organization.

1.4. Moderating role of employees' moral identity

Employees' MID has been identified as a key individual difference and personal trait that affects the linkage between leadership and employees' psychological mechanisms and behaviors [30]. MID can be defined as a "self-conception organized around a set of moral traits" [21, p.1424], which regulates moral thought and behavior in individuals within organizations [3]. Furthermore, an individual's expanded construct of MID can influence ethical choices in the workplace [31].

Employees' MID has been identified as a critical moderator of the linkage between EL and their psychological mechanisms and behaviors. Empirical evidence substantiates this assertion by revealing a notably stronger association between EL and employees' moral behavior among those with a high MID [32]. This finding lends empirical credence to the argument that employees' perceived MID effectively moderates the link between EL and PsyEmp, amplifying its impact for individuals with an elevated MID. It underscores the significance of considering individual attributes, notably MID, in the examination of the effects of EL on employee behavior and empowerment within the workplace.

MID plays a crucial role in an individual's moral judgments and ethical conduct, as individuals have been found striving to engage in behaviors consistent with their MID [3]. Therefore acting immorally would generate cognitive dissonance with the moral self, which is central to an individual's identity [33]. A meta-analytic study also found that MID is significantly related to an individual's moral behavior [34]. While MID can lead to moral action, it can also undermine moral behavior under certain conditions [35]. Similarly, employees with a high level of MID are more inclined to do what they believe is right [36]. Therefore, employees with a higher level of MID are more likely to poise towards morally correct behaviors than indulging into unethical behaviors [30].

Several studies have supported the moderating effects of MID in the linkage between leadership and employees' psychological mechanisms and behaviors. The findings have shown that employees' MID plays a significant role in the linkage between different leadership styles and employees' psychological mechanisms and behaviors [19]. Additionally, employees' MID has also been found to moderate the linkage between EL and employees' psychological mechanisms and workplace behavior. Empirical evidence revealed that employees' MID positively moderated the linkage between EL and their job satisfaction [4]. Similarly, recent study has likewise exhibited a more robust correlation between EL and employees' moral behavior among those with a high MID [32]. On the other hand, employees' MID can also weaken the positive influence of EL on employees' psychological mechanisms and behaviors. Empirical research demonstrated that employees' MID negatively moderated the linkage between EL and their organizational citizenship behavior [37].

The SCT posits that an individual's beliefs about their own MID have an impact on their behavior and cognitive processes in response to leadership. The theory also suggests that an individual's MID can moderate the relationship between EL and employees' psychological mechanisms and behaviors. Specifically, employees with a strong MID are more prone towards ethical behavior than engaging in unethical behavior [21,22]. Therefore, in the presence of EL, employees with a strong MID are more likely to be affected by the ethical behaviors modeled by their leaders [4,22]. Conversely, employees with a weak MID may be less influenced by EL and may engage in unethical behavior even when EL is present [37]. Hence drawing on the SCT and the literature, we postulate the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3. Employees' moral identity moderates the relationship between ethical leadership and employees' psychological empowerment such that the relationship is stronger for employees with higher moral identity than low.

2. Methods

2.1. Population and sampling

The current study aimed to examine the link between EL and employees' UPB within the healthcare sector of Pakistan. To ensure the generalizability of the findings, it was crucial to select a sample that reflects the diversity present in the healthcare sector across various regions of Pakistan. Consequently, the study included both public and private hospitals located in major cities such as Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, and Quetta, which effectively captured the wide range of perspectives within the country's healthcare sector. The rationale for focusing on this particular group lies in their significant role in patient care, as they possess first hand experiences of EL and UPB.

2.2. Sample size

The determination of the sample size was based on statistical considerations and recommendations from previous research. The GPower formula was utilized, taking into account an effect size of 0.05, a power of 0.90, and a maximum of one arrow pointing towards the endogenous construct. The GPower calculator indicated a minimum sample size of 150 for the study. However, to account for the complexity of multivariate statistical analysis techniques like PLS-SEM, scholars have suggested a sample size ranging from 160 to 300 [38]. Consistent with the SEM literature, a sample size of 500 was deemed appropriate for the study's model analysis, aligning with the recent recommendations [39]. By selecting a sample size of 500, the study aimed to ensure adequate representation of the population, minimize potential sampling errors, and enhance the statistical power to detect meaningful relationships between variables.

2.3. Data collection

To gain access to the hospitals, the researchers contacted the management through personal and professional networks and presented a letter from the university authorizing data collection. This approach secured authorization and top management support. The heads of administrative sections at each hospital played a key role in distributing and collecting the questionnaires from the nursing staff. The nursing staff was randomly selected from a list provided by the focal person.

For data collection, survey-based questionnaires were utilized ensuring consistency in measuring variables and reducing measurement errors. The questionnaires were distributed in English, as English is the official language for communication in public and private organizations in Pakistan, and the target population consisted of nursing staff with university degrees, where English is the medium of instruction. A letter was attached to the questionnaires, explaining the research purpose, ensuring confidentiality of responses, and informing the respondents of their voluntary participation in the study.

Our study employed a time-lagged cross-sectional design with three data collection waves (T1, T2, and T3) to minimize common method bias consistent with recommendations by Ref. [40]. We conducted a cross-sectional study at each of the three time points, focusing on different aspects of the research model. The time-lagged design allowed us to infer temporal associations among the variables. The data were collected from registered nursing staff from April to September 2022 in three times waves with interval of eight weeks each. T1 (Wave 1 – April–May 2022): At this initial time point, we administered 900 questionnaires to record demographic information and capture participants' perceptions of EL and MID. A total of 751 questionnaires were returned, resulting in an 83.44 % response rate. We used this data to establish the baseline measures for EL. T2 (Wave 2 – June–July 2022): Following an eight-week interval from T1, we administered 751 questionnaires to the same respondents who participated in T1. In this wave, we captured their perceptions of PsyEmp. A total of 649 questionnaires were received, yielding an 86.41 % response rate. This wave allowed us to capture the mediating variable (PsyEmp) over time. T3 (Wave 3 – August–September 2022): Again, following an eight-week interval, we administered 649 questionnaires to the same respondents who participated in T2. At this final wave, we captured their perceptions of UPB. A total of 591 questionnaires were received, reflecting a 91.06 % response rate. This wave allowed us to assess the dependent variable (UPB).

High response rates across the three waves indicated participants' commitment to the study and enhanced the reliability of the findings. To ensure data integrity, all questionnaires were checked for matching codes across the three waves. A total of 47 questionnaires were excluded due to incomplete information, and 29 questionnaires were excluded due to invalid responses. Consequently, a total of 515 questionnaires were deemed valid for data analysis. The overall response rate across the three waves was 65.66 %, while the valid response rate, considering the excluded questionnaires, was 57.22 %. This response rate is considered appropriate for a study involving time lag data. The sample characteristics are presented in Table 1, while Table 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the descriptive statistics [40,41].

2.4. Social desirability bias

The social desirability response behavior could bias the question on ethical behavior. Based on the recommendations from prominent management scholars [42], this study implemented a comprehensive set of strategies to mitigate both direct and indirect social desirability biases. The research methodology prioritized respondent anonymity and guaranteed the utmost confidentiality to

Table 1
Sample characteristics.

Demographics	Frequency (n = 515)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	219	42.5
Female	296	57.5
Marital Status		
Single	163	31.7
Married	352	68.3
Age		
21–30 years	123	23.9
31–40 years	258	50.1
41–50 years	110	21.4
51–60 years	24	4.7
Education		
Bachelors	214	41.6
Masters	221	42.9
MS/MPhil	80	15.5
Ph.D.	–	–
Experience		
1–5 years	230	44.7
6–10 years	162	31.5
11–15 years	78	15.1
16–20 years	37	7.2
>20 years	8	1.6

Table 2
Descriptive statistics.

Constructs	N	Missing	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
EL	515	0	1	5	3.962	.816	−2.024	4.196
UPB	515	0	1	5	4.039	.815	−1.561	2.935
PE	515	0	1	5	4.160	.666	−3.109	11.262
MID	515	0	1	5	3.003	1.411	.405	−1.472

EL: Ethical Leadership; MID: Moral Identity; PE: Psychological Empowerment; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior.

foster candid responses. Moreover, a deliberate effort was made to normalize respondents' behaviors by framing survey questions in a manner that encouraged participants to perceive the admission of certain mistakes or unethical actions as socially acceptable. Furthermore, the research context was contextualized within the hospital environment in Pakistan, offering participants valuable insight into prevalent ethical challenges within the healthcare sector. This contextual framing aimed to diminish the sense of isolation among respondents, potentially cultivating a more open and truthful sharing of experiences. In addition, the study focused on probing respondents' intentions regarding unethical behavior rather than their actual conduct. This approach recognized the potential reluctance of participants to admit to having engaged in unethical acts but allowed for a more comfortable discussion of intentions. Finally, the researchers emphasized the study's primary purpose as a scientific investigation, reassuring respondents that their responses were integral to research objectives rather than personal evaluations. This deliberate clarification aimed to alleviate concerns about how their input might reflect upon them, thereby minimizing perceived observability.

2.5. Measurements

The research model includes four variables, namely EL as the independent variable, UPB as the dependent variable, PsyEmp as the mediator, and MID as the moderator. All study variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scales used to measure all study variables were self-reported, and employees recorded their own perceptions about the study variables [41]. To mitigate common method bias, responses were gathered in three separate time waves [40]. In order to mitigate social desirability bias, essential measures were implemented during the data collection process [42]. Some measurement items were adapted from previous studies in the organizational context and modified to fit the hospital context of the current study [43]. The measurement scales are displayed in Appendix 1.

Ethical Leadership: The scale was measured on the 10 items ELS scale developed by Brown et al. [24] at T1. The sample item for EL included: ''My supervisor has the best interests of employees in mind''. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of EL was 0.919.

Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior: The scale was measured on the 6 items UPB scale developed by Umphress et al. [26] at T3. The sample item for UPB included: ''If it would help my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good''. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of UPB was .883.

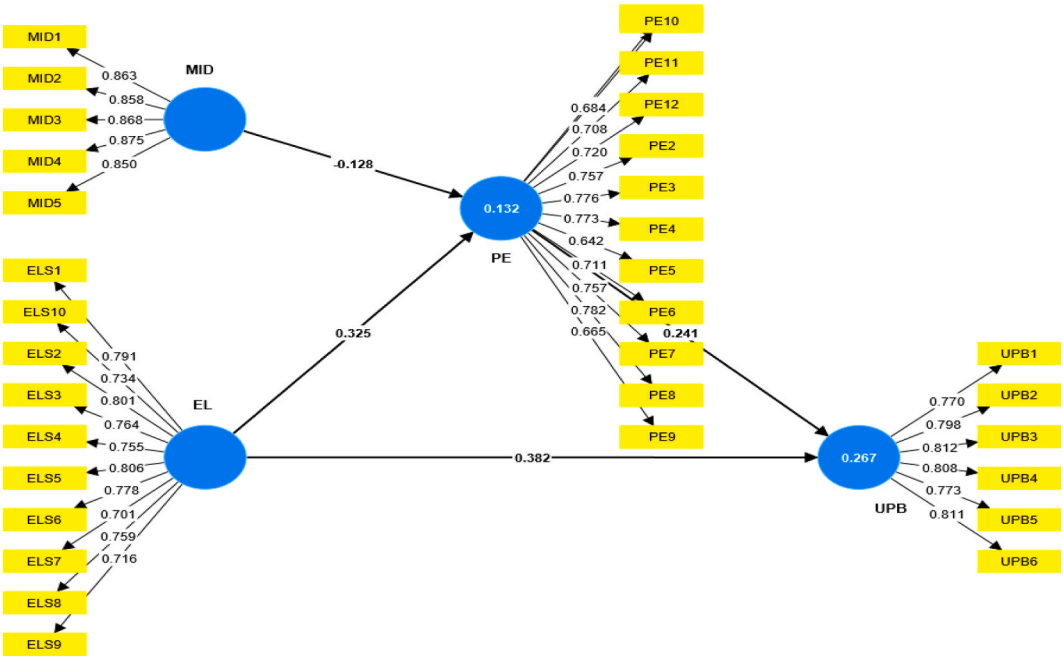

Fig. 2. Measurement model.

Psychological Empowerment: The scale was measured on the 12 items PsyEmp scale developed by Spreitzer [27] at T2. The sample item for PsyEmp included: "The work 1 do is very important to me"; "I am confident about my ability to do my job"; "I have significant autonomy in determining how 1 do my job" and "My impact on what happens in my department is large". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of PsyEmp was .919.

Moral Identity: The scale was measured on the 5 items MID scale (Internalization) developed by Aquino & Reed II [30] at T1. The sample item for MID included: "It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics''. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of MID was 0.915.

2.6. Data analysis

The preliminary and advanced data analyses were conducted using SPSS and PLS SEM (Smart PLS 4). SPSS was utilized for data entry, coding, and editing. The data underwent screening and descriptive and frequency statistics were generated. Normality and common method bias tests were also performed. PLS SEM (Smart PLS) was used for the measurement model, structure model, and hypotheses testing. The theoretical model was tested using PLS SEM to simultaneously examine mediation and moderation. Additionally, the theoretical framework was assessed from a prediction perspective [39].

3. Results

3.1. Measurement Model

The reliability and validity of the measurement model, also known as the outer model, were evaluated before testing the structural model and hypotheses [39]. The reflective measurement model was analyzed using the PLS algorithm with a path weighting scheme and standardized results in PLS SEM (Smart PLS). The measurement model is shown in Fig. 2.

The internal consistency or indicator reliability of the measurements was established using factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and Rho_a [39]. Except for PE 5, PE 9, and PE 10, the factor loadings of all items in the study constructs were above 0.708, explaining over 50 % of the variance in the indicators. Therefore, no item was removed from any study variable. The factor loadings of all study constructs are presented in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and Rho_a were all above 0.708 for all study constructs, establishing the reliability of the measurements, as shown in Table 3 [39].

The convergent validity of the constructs was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE) of the measurements [39]. The AVE of all study constructs was above 0.50 and below 0.85, establishing the convergent validity of the measurements, as shown in Table 3 [39].

The discriminant validity of the measurements was established using the Fornell and Larcker criterion and the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The AVE of all constructs was greater than their correlations with other study constructs. Therefore, the discriminant validity of the measurements was established using the Fornell and Larcker criterion. HTMT is a statistical measure used to assess the discriminant validity of constructs in a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework. HTMT is specifically designed to evaluate how different constructs correlate with each other compared to their correlations with themselves. HTMT calculates the ratio of the average correlations between constructs to the average correlations within constructs. This ratio helps determine whether the constructs under investigation are empirically distinct from one another or if they tend to overlap in terms of their correlations. The correlation between respective study constructs was less than 0.85, thus establishing the discriminant validity of the measurements using HTMT as shown in Table 4 [39].

3.2. Structural Model

The structure model, also known as inner model, was evaluated using several metrics, including lateral collinearity, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (F^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients [39]. To assess the out-of-sample predictive power of the model, the PLSpredict procedure was used. The structure model was evaluated using PLS SEM (Smart PLS) with a bootstrapping technique involving 10,000 subsamples, percentile confidence interval, two-tailed significance level less than 0.05 with fixed seeds, path weighting scheme, and standardized results. The structure model is illustrated in Fig. 3.

The VIF values of all indicators were found to be less than 3.0, indicating the absence of collinearity among the study constructs as

Table 3
Construct reliability and convergent validity.

Measurements	Chronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EL	0.919	0.924	0.932	0.579
MID	0.915	0.922	0.936	0.745
PE	0.919	0.924	0.931	0.53
UPB	0.884	0.888	0.912	0.633

EL: Ethical Leadership; MID: Moral Identity; PE: Psychological Empowerment; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior.

Table 4
Discriminant validity (HTMT ratio).

	EL	MID	PE	UPB
EL				
MID	0.133			
PE	0.364	0.173		
UPB	0.507	0.278	0.403	

EL: Ethical Leadership; MID: Moral Identity; PE: Psychological Empowerment; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior.

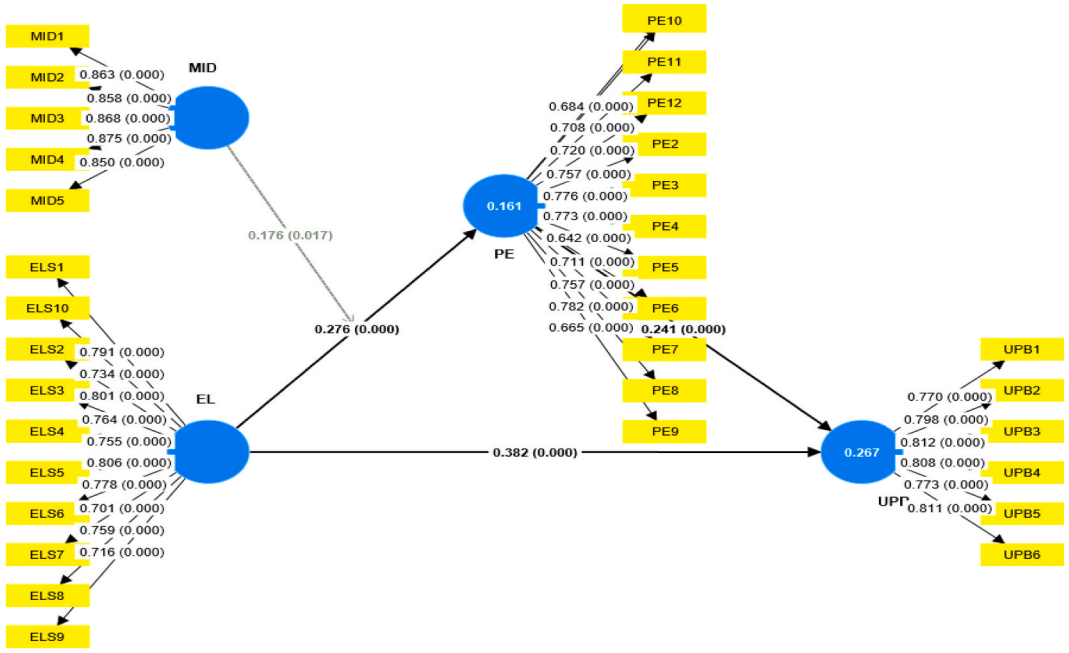

Fig. 3. Structural model.

shown in Table 5 [39].

The in-sample explanatory power of the model was assessed by the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 value for UPB was 0.341, which indicates that EL explained 34.1 % of the variance in UPB, indicating medium variance. The effect size (F^2) explained the variance induced by the single exogenous construct in the endogenous construct. The F^2 of EL was 0.176 on UPB, indicating a medium effect size of EL on UPB. The model's predictive accuracy was also assessed by Q^2, which was calculated using the blindfolding procedure. The Q^2 predict was 0.231 for UPB, representing medium predictive relevance for the model as shown in Table 6 [39].

The hypotheses were tested for direct, mediating, and moderating relationships using PLS SEM (Smart PLS) with a bootstrapping technique that involved 10,000 subsamples, the percentile bootstrap confidence interval method, a two-tailed significance level of 0.05, path weighting scheme, and standardized results. The path coefficients were evaluated for β, t-values, and p-values. Standardized path coefficients range from −1 to +1. Hypotheses were supported if $\beta = 0.10$, $t > 1.96$, and $p < 0.05$ [39]. The results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 7 [39].

Hypothesis 1 posited a negative relationship between EL and employees' UPB within the organization. Contrary to the hypothesis, the results revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between EL and employees' UPB ($\beta = 0.222$; $t = 4.774$; $p = 0.001$). The effect size, indicated by the F^2 value, further affirmed this positive association ($F^2 = 0.061$). The confidence interval analysis at a 95 % confidence level demonstrated that the direct relationship between EL and employees' UPB did not include zero (LLCI = 0.136;

Table 5
Multi-collinearity (VIF values).

	EL	MID	PE	UPB
EL			1.015	1.135
MID			1.015	
PE				1.135
UPB				

EL: Ethical Leadership; MID: Moral Identity; PE: Psychological Empowerment; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior.

Table 6
Explanatory and predictive relevance of the model.

Parameters	EL > UPB
R^2	0.341
F^2	0.176
Q^2	0.231

EL: Ethical Leadership; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior; R^2: Coefficient of Determination; F^2: Effect Size; Q^2: Predictive Relevance.

Table 7
Hypotheses testing.

Hypotheses	Relationships	β	t Values	p Values	LLCI	ULCI	Results
H-1	EL > UPB	0.222	4.774	0.001	0.136	0.317	Not Supported
H-2	EL > PE > UPB	0.046	2.907	0.004	0.021	0.085	Supported
H-3	MID X EL > PE	0.174	2.32	0.02	0.015	0.309	Supported

EL: Ethical Leadership; UPB: Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior; PE: Psychological Empowerment; MID: Moral Identity.

ULCI = 0.317). Consequently, while the relationship between EL and employees' UPB was statistically significant, it was in the opposite direction of the hypothesized negative association. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 postulated that employees' PsyEmp positively mediated the relationship between EL and employees' UPB. The results showed that the total effect of EL on UPB was significant (β = 0.404; t = 8.952; p = 0.001; LLCI = 0.315; ULCI = 0.489). The total indirect effect between EL and UPB was also significant (β = 0.182; t = 6.216; p = 0.001; LLCI = 0.13; ULCI = 2.430). The specific indirect effect of PsyEmp between EL and UPB was also significant (β: 0.046; t: 2.907; p: 0.004; LLCI = 0.021; ULCI = 0.085). Therefore, PsyEmp partially mediated the positive relationship between EL and employees' UPB. Since both the direct and indirect relationships were positive, the mediation of PsyEmp between EL and employees' UPB was a complementary partial mediation. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 posited that the relationship between EL and employees' PsyEmp is moderated by employees' MID, with a stronger relationship for employees with higher MID. The results showed that the relationship between EL and PsyEmp was significant (β =

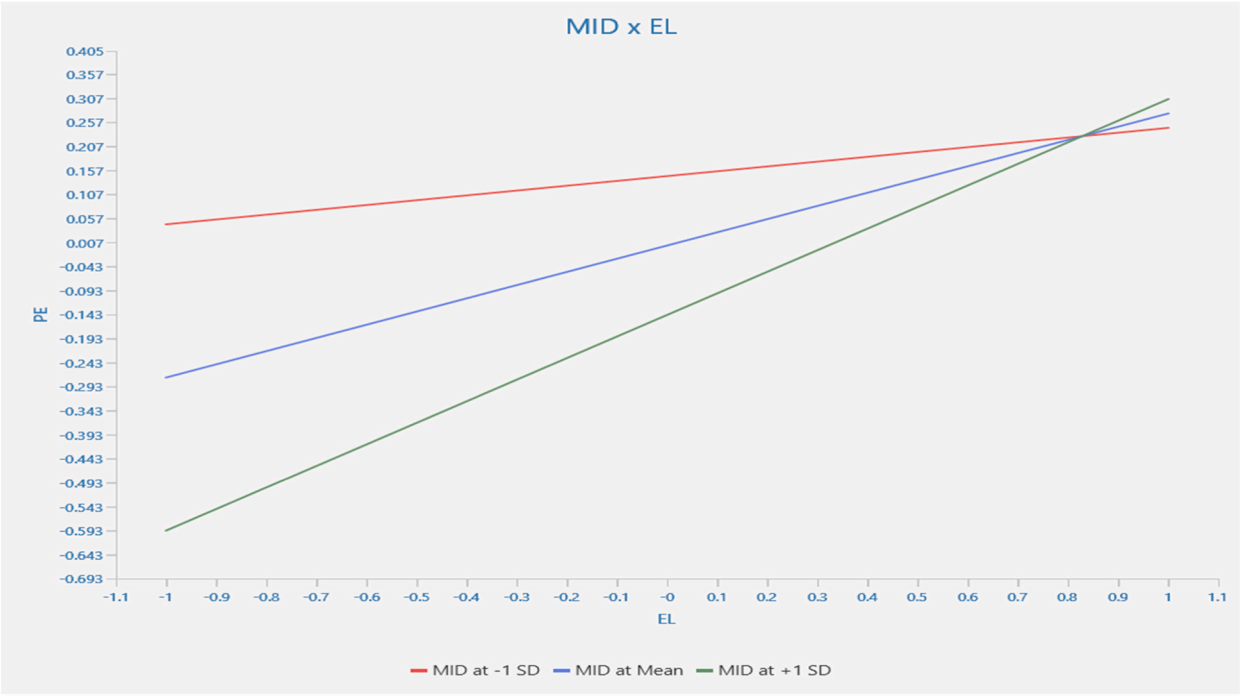

Fig. 4. Moderation graph.

0.275; t = 4.815; p = 0.001; LLCI = 0.158; ULCI = 0.384). Furthermore, the direct relationship remained statistically significant even in the presence of the interaction term of MID X EL (β = 0.174; t = 2.32; p = 0.02; LLCI = 0.015; ULCI = 0.309). The R^2 value was 0.110 for the direct relationship between EL and PsyEmp, but it increased to 0.152 in the presence of the interaction term of MID X EL. The path coefficient of the interaction term indicated that MID X EL had a positive moderation effect on the relationship between EL and PsyEmp. An interaction plot was also created to illustrate the interaction effects of MID on the relationship between EL and employees' PsyEmp. The plot showed that MID at +1 SD increased upward more steeply than MID at −1 SD, indicating that MID strengthened the relationship between EL and PsyEmp more for employees with higher MID. Therefore, the significant interaction term (β = 0.174; t = 2.32; p = 0.02; LLCI = 0.015; ULCI = 0.309) and the interaction plot supported Hypothesis 3. The interaction plot is presented in Fig. 4.

4. Discussion

Hypothesis 1 proposed that EL is negatively related to employees' UPB in organizations. However, the current study's results found that EL has a positive relationship with employees' UPB, which does not support the hypothesis. Previous research conducted in different countries has examined the link between EL and employees' UPB, but the findings have been inconsistent [14,15]. The current study's findings are counterintuitive but in line with previous literature highlighting the dark side of EL [44,45]. The findings challenge the universal perception of EL as a positive form of leadership prompting to explore various alternative explanations or interpretations to make sense of this intriguing paradox.

Firstly, EL emphasizes moral values, integrity, and fairness. In certain situations, employees may perceive that breaking a particular rule is necessary to uphold these higher-order ethical principles [11]. This normative conflict between following rules and adhering to ethical principles could potentially explain the positive relationship observed.

Secondly, ethical leaders are often perceived as fair and just. If employees perceive that a specific organizational rule or policy is unfair or unjust, they may engage in UPB behavior as a means of rectifying the perceived injustice [46]. This perception of organizational injustice may contribute to the unexpected positive relationship.

Thirdly, ethical leaders who consistently demonstrate high moral standards and ethical behavior may inadvertently grant their employees a sense of moral license, allowing them to engage in rule-breaking behavior while still considering themselves ethical overall. Employees may rationalize their UPB as an exception or a necessary means to achieve ethical ends [47].

Fourthly, employees who perceive their leaders as ethical may be more inclined to engage in UPB when they believe it serves the best interest of the organization and its members. They may interpret UPB as a means to help achieve organizational goals, perceiving it as morally acceptable within the ethical framework established by their leaders [16].

Fifthly, the profit-driven mindset of top management can potentially influence employees to engage in UPB to enhance their contributions within the workplace. When employees perceive that their actions align with the organization's pursuit of profitability, they may view UPPB as a means to achieve greater efficiency or effectiveness [48].

Sixthly, compassion constitutes a pivotal facet of organizational behavior, exerting a profound influence on ethical leadership and employee conduct. The recently conducted study demonstrates that employees who exhibit a strong alignment with their organization are predisposed to engaging in compassionate behaviors directed towards both individuals and the organization as a whole [29]. This observation underscores the notion that when employees experience a sense of belonging within an ethical and supportive work environment, they are more inclined to manifest pro-organizational behaviors [11].

Finally, it is essential to acknowledge the significant relationship of cultural differences on employees' inclination towards UPB for the benefit of the organization. Cultural factors, such as a society's future orientation and its emphasis on reputation, wield considerable influence over employees' behaviors within organizational settings. Notably, findings from the GLOBE study reveal pertinent insights. Countries characterized by a short-term and medium-low future orientation, like Pakistan, may demonstrate a higher likelihood of witnessing PSRB among leadership and employees. In contrast, countries like China, which exhibit a long-term future orientation and prioritize long-term organizational goals and reputation, are expected to display a different behavioral pattern in relation to pro-social behavior [49].

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the relationship between EL and employees' UPB would be positively mediated by employees' PsyEmp. The results reflected that the total effect of EL on UPB was significant, as was the total indirect effect, indicating the presence of mediation. Specifically, the indirect effect of PsyEmp on the linkae between EL and UPB was significant, suggesting that PsyEmp partially mediated the relationship between these two variables. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown the explanatory role of PsyEmp linking various organizational factors and employee outcomes [28]. Furthermore, employees' PsyEmp also explains the link between EL and employees' workplace behaviors [20]. Therefore the finding of this study is also in line with the existing literature.

Our research has identified a positive mediating effect of PsyEmp in the link between EL and employees' UPB. This phenomenon could be attributed to employees potentially misinterpreting their newfound self-assuredness and autonomy, perceiving UPB as a form of pro-social behavior congruent with the exemplary behavior exhibited by EL. Consequently, they might rationalize engaging in actions that might transgress ethical boundaries. In our specific case, it suggests that PsyEmp, when influenced by EL, may prompt employees to participate in UPB, warranting further exploration and inquiry.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the link between EL and employees' PsyEmp would be moderated by employees' MID, and that this moderation would be stronger for employees with higher MID. The findings showed that the direct effect of EL on PsyEmp was significant, indicating that EL was positively related to PsyEmp. This result is consistent with previous studies that have suggested positive leadership behaviors, such as EL, can enhance employees' PsyEmp [32].

It is emphasized that the terms "Direct Effects," "Indirect Effects," and "Specific Indirect Effect" used earlier are specific to the

relationships observed within our cross-sectional data at a particular point in time. Consequently, researchers should exercise caution and refrain from drawing causal conclusions solely based on these findings.

This study makes a valuable contribution to the literature on EL and UPB by shedding light on the psychological and cognitive mechanisms that link leadership with employees' unethical behavior in the healthcare sector of Pakistan. The findings underscore the need for organizations to consider the relationship between leadership and employees' ethical decision-making processes and to establish ethical policies and guidelines to promote ethical behavior. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of MID in mitigating the negative effects of leadership on employees' unethical behavior. These insights are relevant not only for the healthcare sector but also for other sectors and organizations in similar cultural contexts.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Theoretical contributions

This current study makes several noteworthy theoretical contributions to the existing literature on EL and employees' UPB. Firstly, one of the primary contributions of our research is the investigation of the paradoxical impact of EL on employees' UPB. While EL is widely regarded as a positive leadership style, our findings reveal an unexpected positive relationship between EL and employees' UPB. This counterintuitive result challenges the prevailing notion of EL as exclusively beneficial and highlights its potential unintended consequences. This finding contributes to the growing body of literature that recognizes the complexity and potential dark side of EL [45].

Secondly, our study introduces a novel perspective by examining the mediating role of employees' PsyEmp in the relationship between EL and UPB. This is significant as cognitive and psychological mechanisms have played a crucial role in explaining the mediating mechanisms between various leadership styles and employees' behaviors [28]. This represents advancement in understanding the underlying psychological processes that link EL to employee behavior. It underscores the significance of employees' cognitive and psychological states in explaining their engagement in UPB.

Thirdly, the study contributes to the PsyEmp literature by revealing its potential negative consequences, such as employees' engagement in UPB [20]. This finding challenges the assumption that PsyEmp always benefits employees and organizations emphasizing the importance of considering the underlying psychological processes driving unethical behaviors.

Fourthly, we contribute to the literature by investigating the moderating effect of employees' MID on the association between EL and employees' PsyEmp. Recognizing the significance of contextual and personal factors, the study highlights the importance of considering individual differences when understanding the factors influencing employees' UPB [4,19,22]. This adds a layer of complexity by highlighting the importance of individual differences in shaping the link between leadership, psychological processes, and behavior. It advances our understanding of how personal traits can influence the outcomes of EL.

Fifthly, this study underscores the importance of cross-cultural research in the study of EL. Our research extends the understanding of EL beyond Western contexts. By conducting our study in Pakistan, a non-Western country, we provide valuable insights into the applicability and generalizability of leadership theories in diverse cultural settings. This cross-cultural perspective underscores the need to consider cultural nuances and variations in the outcomes of EL suggesting that this linkage may vary in diverse cultural settings [49].

Lastly, our study contributes to the theoretical foundations of EL by examining it within the predictive framework of SCT. We extend Bandura's seminal work [21] by exploring the interplay between EL, psychological processes, and individual differences. This theoretical extension enhances our comprehension of how EL influences employee behaviors and decision-making process, contributing to the theoretical foundations of EL research.

Overall, our research offers a novel perspective on EL by challenging conventional wisdom, introducing mediating and moderating mechanisms, considering cross-cultural dynamics, and advancing theoretical frameworks. We believe that these contributions collectively enhance our understanding of the complex relationship between EL and employees' behavior, offering fresh insights to the field.

5.2. Managerial implications

The findings of this study carry significant and multifaceted managerial implications. Firstly, managers need to be acutely aware of the potential unintended consequences that may arise when implementing EL practices on employee behavior. Contrary to initial assumptions, the study reveals a positive association between EL and UPB. This surprising result underscores the complexity of the relationship between EL and employee behavior, suggesting that EL alone may not necessarily lead to a reduction in unethical behavior. Therefore, managers must adopt a more comprehensive approach to managing employee behavior, taking into account various contextual factors and individual differences to effectively promote ethical conduct within the organization.

Additionally, managers should recognize the pivotal role of employees' PsyEmp in strengthening the link between EL and UPB. The study highlights the significance of fostering PsyEmp among employees as a means to promote pro-social behavior. To achieve this, managers are encouraged to implement targeted leadership development programs that focus on enhancing EL practices and nurturing employees' PsyEmp. By providing employees with a sense of autonomy, control, and competence in their work, managers can create an empowering work environment that encourages UPB aligned with the organization's ethical values. This not only reduces the likelihood of unethical conduct but also fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among employees, leading to greater commitment and engagement.

Furthermore, the study sheds light on the moderating effects of employees' MID in the relationship between EL and PsyEmp. Recognizing the importance of MID in shaping employees' behavior, managers should prioritize efforts to promote and reinforce employees' MID within the organizational context. Identifying employees who exhibit a strong MID and designing appropriate interventions to enhance their sense of moral self can have a cascading effect on their PsyEmp. By aligning employees' MID with the organization's ethical values and EL practices, managers can strengthen the connection between EL and employees' pro-social behavior.

Importantly, the study's insights have broad applicability across different sectors and cultures, providing valuable guidance for managers facing ethical challenges. It emphasizes the need to consider the influence of contextual factors that shape the impact of EL on employee behavior. Managers should be mindful of the unique characteristics and needs of their organization and employees when tailoring leadership development programs and ethical behavior initiatives. By adapting these strategies to the specific context, managers can more effectively manage UPB and foster an ethical work environment.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

There are several promising future research directions that should be considered taking into account the limitations of this study. Firstly, to enhance the generalizability of the findings, researchers could explore the possibility of replicating the study using a more diverse sample. The current study relied on data collected from a single sector, which might limit the extent to which the results can be applied to other settings. By involving multiple sectors with varying characteristics, researchers can obtain a broader understanding of the relationship between EL, employees' PsyEmp, MID and their engagement in UPB.

Secondly, addressing common method bias is crucial to ensure the robustness of the findings. Future research could adopt innovative approaches to minimize this bias, such as employing multiple sources of data or objective measures in addition to relying solely on self-reported data. By triangulating data from various sources, researchers can enhance the reliability and validity of the study's outcomes.

Thirdly, gaining insights into the causal relationships between variables would significantly contribute to understanding the dynamics between EL, PsyEmp, MID and UPB. Researchers could consider adopting longitudinal or experimental research designs to establish causality more effectively. Longitudinal studies allow for the examination of changes in variables over time, while experimental designs enable researchers to manipulate variables and assess their direct impact on outcomes. These designs can provide more robust evidence regarding the directionality of relationships between EL, PsyEmp, MID and employees' engagement in UPB.

Fourthly, while the current study focused on the relationship between EL and employees' UPB, future research could broaden its scope by investigating the influence of EL on other constructive deviant behaviors, such as employees' pro-social rule breaking. Exploring the nuances of these behaviors in the context of EL can offer valuable insights into how leaders' ethical conduct impacts employees' actions beyond UPB.

Fifthly, different moral leadership styles, such as transformational, authentic, and servant leadership, might exert varying effects on employees' UPB. Future studies could systematically compare the impact of these leadership styles on employees' ethical behaviors to identify the most effective approach for fostering a positive organizational climate and reducing deviant behavior.

Sixthly, the moderating effects of various cultural dimensions on the relationship between EL and employees' UPB warrant investigation. Understanding how cultural factors, such as power distance, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance, influence the effectiveness of EL can provide important cross-cultural insights and inform leadership practices in diverse organizational contexts.

Seventhly, an exploration of the mediating mechanisms underlying the relationship between EL and UPB holds the potential to yield deeper insights into the underlying processes. Compassion emerges as a pivotal component within the landscape of organizational behavior, exercising substantial influence over the domains of ethical leadership and employee conduct. Moreover, this endeavor presents an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the ongoing discourse surrounding compassion-driven behaviors within organizational contexts. We contend that an examination of compassion as a mediator in our model can illuminate the intricate mechanisms that forge the connection between EL and employee ethical behaviors. Researchers may delve into the role of 'compassion' in shaping how EL influences employees' ethical behavior.

Finally, given the evolving landscape of business ethics and insights provided by scholars, future research could examine the influence of EL on proposed ethical standards within contemporary corporate settings. Scholars have proposed new ethical standards and principles in response to emerging ethical challenges and global trends (Babalola et al., 2022; Böhm et al., 2022; Palanski et al., 2021). Investigating how EL aligns with and impacts these proposed standards can shed light on the relevance and effectiveness of EL in promoting ethical conduct in the ever-changing business environment.

Confirmation of authorship

The authors affirm their authorship, affiliations, and respective contributions to the study.

Ethics statement

This study obtained approval from the Ethical Review Board. The informed consent was also obtained from all study participants.

Data availability statement

The dataset used in this study is available with the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data will be made available on request.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Mushtaq Ahmed: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Software, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Muhammad Ishfaq Khan:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests:Mushtaq Ahmed reports was provided by None. Mushtaq Ahmed reports a relationship with None that includes:. Mushtaq Ahmed has patent pending to None. There are no additional relationships or activities to declare. If there are other authors, they declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix 1

Ethical Leadership (Brown et al., 2005)

1. My supervisor can be trusted.
2. My supervisor listens to what employees have to say.
3. My supervisor defines success not just by results but also the way that they are obtained.
4. When making decisions, my supervisor asks “what is the right thing to do?
5. My supervisor disciplines employees who violate ethical standards.
6. My supervisor conducts his/her personal life in an ethical manner.
7. My supervisor has the best interests of employees in mind.
8. My supervisor makes fair and balanced decisions.
9. My supervisor discusses business ethics or values with employees.
10. My supervisor sets an example of how to do things the right way in terms of ethics.

Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior (Umphress & Bingham, 2011)

1. If it would help my hospital, I would misrepresent the truth to make my hospital look good.
2. If it would help my hospital, I would exaggerate the truth about my hospital’s services to the patients.
3. If it would benefit my hospital, I would withhold negative information about my hospital or its services from the patients.
4. If my hospital needed me to, I would give a good recommendation on the behalf of an incompetent employee in the hope that the person will become another hospital’s problem instead of my own.
5. If my hospital needed me to, I would withhold issuing a refund to a patient overcharged.
6. If needed, I would conceal information from the public that could be damaging to my hospital.

Psychological Empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995)

1. The work 1 do is very important to me.
2. My job activities are personally meaningful to me.
3. The work I do is meaningful to me.
4. I am confident about my ability to do my job.
5. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities.
6. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.
7. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.
8. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.
9. I have considerable opportunity for independence & freedom in how I do my job.
10. My impact on what happens in my hospital is large.
11. I have a great deal of control over what happens in my hospital.
12. I have significant influence over what happens in my hospital.

Moral Identity (Internalization) (Aquino & Reed, 2002)
A person having the characteristics of being caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind.

1. It would make me feel good to be a person who has the above characteristics.
2. Being someone who has the above characteristics is an important part of who I am.

3. A big part of my emotional well-being is tied up in having the above characteristics.
4. Having the above characteristics is an important part of my sense of self.
5. I strongly desire to have the above characteristics.

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