

An Examination of the Moderating Effects of Self-Efficacy on the link between Unethical Management and Counterproductive Work Behavior

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Abstract

This study enquires whether or not the link between perceptions of management's unethical conduct and counterproductive work behavior is moderated by personal efficacy. Data is gathered from professionals of microfinance banks and a group of employees working on full-time basis, and is analyzed through multiple hierarchical moderated regression. Results reveal that highly self-efficacious employees have greater tendency to target co-workers with counterproductive work behavior when they perceive the management to engage in unethical activities, and also, that self-efficacy is not a moderator in the link between unethical management perceptions and manager-targeted counterproductive behavior. Results point toward the downside of self-efficacy, such that, dysfunctional effects of

unethical management spillover on innocent co-workers, and these effects are more intense for self-efficacious employees. This study is among the few analyze the variables capable of buffering the destructive effects of perceived unethical management on employees' workplace behaviors. Also, it is unique as it introduces personal efficacy in the unethical management literature

Key words: Unethical Management; Personal Efficacy; Counterproductive work Behaviors; Pakistan

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1. Introduction

Over the years, employees' perceptions of unethical management have captured increasing scholarly attention, particularly because of the extensive range of organizational and individual consequences with whom they are related (Bedi et al., 2016; Mayer et al., 2012). Among the range of detrimental effects on employees' work-based outcomes associated with perceptions of unethical management, counterproductive work behavior has been of special importance in the unethical management publications (Bedi et al., 2016). Counterproductive work behavior signifies discretionary behavior that transgresses major organizational rules and, by doing so, jeopardizes the welfare of a firm, its constituents, or both (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). Though the link between perceptions of unethical management and manager- and organization-targeted counterproductive work behavior has been consistently found in past studies,

more studies are still required to enquire how employees' perception of unethical management may be related with their tendency to engage in manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors (i.e., a spill-over effect).

Current studies propose that both indirectly experienced (i.e., learning about co-workers' experiences of being wronged) and directly experienced (i.e., self-perceived), unethical managerial practices can affect workers' responses to perceived unethical management (Bouckennooghe et al., 2015), and that workers' perceptions regarding the work environment can affect their behavioral inclinations related to perceptions of unethical management (Chughtai et al., 2015). A work-environment perception that has gotten a good deal of literary focus is self-efficacy (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018)—a motivational concept that signifies a worker's determination to influence his/her own work context and role (Cassidy, 2015). Though self-efficacy is widely known for its constructive motivational role in the workplace (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018), this study considers the potential dysfunctional effects of self-efficacy in connection with perceptions of unethical management and manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior.

Self-efficacy can influence how employees acknowledge unethical management. This study uses displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000) and reactance (Quick et al., 2013) theories to investigate how employees who have high or low self-efficacy differentially respond to perceptions of unethical management. These theories, taken together, explicate why employees with self-efficacy beliefs react to perceived unethical management with counterproductive work behavior and why do employees select their managers and co-workers as target for their counterproductive work behavior. Particularly, employees with strong self-efficacy are theorized to respond more negatively to managers' unethical conduct and retaliate against it by involving in counterproductive work behaviors as a way to reassert their self-determination and dominance over their work environment than employees with low self-efficacy. Furthermore, the study suggests that employees with self-efficacy beliefs will take reprisal against unethical management perceptions by directly involving in counterproductive work behavior aimed at their supervisors, and also indirectly by attacking their co-workers who are soft targets at which influence can be easily exerted on.

Despite the empirical evidence suggesting that employees' perceived self-efficacy positively contributes to their well-being and functioning (e.g., Maddux & Kleiman, 2018; Schwarzer, 2014), it is plausible that high self-efficacy may also have negative outcomes for organizations and employees (e.g., reciprocating managers' immoral conduct with immoral conduct; moral hazard). Specifically, it is likely that the employee-manager relationship may get strained because the managers may feel threatened by the employees' desire to exercise control on their work activities and events (Schwarzer, 2014). This can possibly happen because supervisors generally worry about 'loose cannons', i.e., overly-motivated employees, who take frequent uncalculated risks and exert too much dominance over their work behavior and environment (Schwarzer, 2014). Hence, this emphasizes a need to enquire into the downside of self-efficacy. In particular, research is required that considers the potential dysfunctional effects self-efficacy may have in some work situations.

Accordingly, this study's principal contribution is to examine how self-efficacy, a boundary condition at the employee-level, influences the association between employees' perceptions of unethical management and their tendency to involve in manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior. Even though self-efficacy is widely regarded to have functional effects in workplaces, it is imperative for firms to determine how encouraging employee self-efficacy may have dysfunctional effects as well. Hence, this two-sample investigation's purpose is to enquire whether or not employees' perception of self-efficacy plays a part in the linkage between perceptions of unethical management and manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Unethical Management

Unethical management reflects employees' perceptions of management treating workers unfairly, setting an unethical example, and actively manipulating moral standards through interpersonal relationships, personal actions, or both (Hoyt et al., 2013). Organizational, managerial, and employee factors play a critical role in ascertaining whether employees perceive immorality or not, and if yes, then to what extent they perceive it, and how do they react to such perceptions (Bedi

et al., 2016). Past studies have noted that perceptions of unethical management are related to undesirable workplace attitudes, intentions and tendencies (Bedi et al., 2016) and dysfunctional outcomes that have spillover effects on employee's home-based life (Li et al., 2017). In particular, employees' perceptions of unethical management have been found to positively affect anxiety (Mayer et al., 2012), job tension (Harms et al., 2017), job quitting intention (Nejati et al., 2020) and work-family conflict (Liao et al., 2015), and negatively affect work performance (Bouckenoghe et al., 2015; Aslam & Sheikh, 2018), job dedication (Engelbrecht et al., 2017), job satisfaction (Ozden et al., 2019), satisfaction (Young et al., 2019; Ansari et al., 2021) and psychological health (Rivkin et al., 2014).

The most worrisome finding of all is that perceptions of unethical management have consistently been linked with several forms of unhealthy, abusive and anti-social work-based behaviors. Especially, perceptions of unethical management have been found to greatly influence behaviors like service sabotage (Yeşiltaş & Tuna, 2018), workplace bullying (Stouten et al., 2010), deviance (Kuenzi et al., 2019), interpersonal incivility (Young et al., 2019) and various types of counterproductive work behaviors (Young et al., 2019). In addition, recent studies have found compelling empirical evidence which indicates that employees' perceptions of unethical management are directly and strongly associated with their inclinations to involve in organization-targeted (Braun et al., 2018), individual or co-worker-targeted (Kuenzi et al., 2019) and manager-targeted counterproductive work-related behaviors (Decoster & Tripp, 2018).

Several studies have concluded that individual differences between employees can possibly influence retaliatory behaviors linked with perceptions of unethical management/leadership. For instance, Gok et al. (2017) suggest that subordinates whose levels of moral attentiveness are high, are more likely to show deviant behavior as an aggressive response to perceptions of unethical leadership. Also, Taylor and Pattie (2014) deduce that core self-evaluations and conscientiousness interact with perceptions of ethical leadership, such that uncivil retaliatory behaviors increase for employees with relatively higher levels of core self-evaluations and conscientiousness. Next, Avey et al. (2011), in their multisource study, noticed that when unethical leadership's perceptions are low,

employees with weak self-esteem have less tendency to show deviant behaviors (like instigating conflict) in comparison to those with high self-esteem. Chuang and Chiu (2018), assert that employees' moral personality and moral ideology can substitute for unethical management in workplace. Specifically, a high moral ideology and moral personality may counterbalance the negative effects of unethical leadership on organizational deviant behaviors. Finally, the results from Gils et al. (2015) multisource experiment and field study reveal that subordinates with higher moral attentiveness levels involve in more organizational deviance when they perceive unethical conduct of leaders than subordinates with lower moral attentiveness. The present study extends the research linking unethical management with counterproductive work behaviors by examining self-efficacy as a employee-level difference factor that is capable of increasing employees' inclinations to involve in manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior in reaction to perceived unethical management.

2.2. Self-Efficacy

Employees contribute to their own socio-psychological performance through personal agency mechanisms. Among such mechanisms, the most pervasive or central is the belief of personal efficacy (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018). Employees have little motivation to work unless they feel their work can produce meaningful changes. Efficacy belief is, therefore, a prime reason for action. Employees guide their work-lives by their personal efficacy beliefs as they lie at the heart of human behavior. Possessing the requisite skills and knowledge to perform a job is not sufficient for employees; they must also have the belief that they can perform the required task(s) successfully under ordinary, and importantly, challenging circumstances (Bandura, 2010). Effectual functioning requires efficacy and skills convictions to execute task(s) properly—two elements that develop together as employees grow and learn. Besides, these elements of effectual employee functioning act upon each other in reciprocators' manner; where one element's functioning is partly dependent upon the other's functioning (Schwarzer, 2014).

Self-efficacy, an important component of the social-cognitive theory, is individuals' appraisal of their abilities to carry out courses of actions necessary to achieve designated level of results (Bandura, 2010). Self-efficacy, thus, has two aspects. One, it is a man's faith in his ability, irrespective of his actual performance ability. Schwarzer (2014) claims that the most valuable efficacy beliefs are those that are somewhat above one's real abilities. Two, individuals use their self-efficacy beliefs based on some goal, which demonstrates both the situation- and task-specific nature of personal efficacy judgments. This aspect contradicts other measures of expectancy, like self-concept, which are domain specific yet more global self-perceptions (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018).

Self-efficacy is hypothesized to affect an employee's choice of work, input and perseverance. Employees with low self-efficacy to accomplish a certain task may skip it, whereas those with beliefs of performance capacity are likely to pursue it. Furthermore, self-efficacious employees are found to exert more effort when confronted with challenges than those who are unconfident about their capabilities. This proclivity of efficacious employees to persist longer and effort harder is of especial importance since personal success generally demands persistent effort. This renders low self-efficacy a self-restricting process. To prosper, employees need to have job-specific self-efficacy beliefs along with inner strength to face unexpected obstacles in life (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018).

Past literature has validated the power of employees' self-efficacy to moderate the effects of perceptions of unethical management on their workplace outcomes. For instance, Liu et al. (2017) observed that self-efficacy strengthens the work engagement–perceived organizational support relationship. Hao et al. (2018) saw that employees' creative performance and task performance is more likely to improve under empowering leadership if their role breadth and self-efficacy levels are high. Qiu et al. (2020), in their two-sample research, noticed that the link between servant leadership perceptions and employees' service quality is stronger when self-efficacy beliefs are higher. Similarly, Rhee et al. (2017) noted that self-efficacy buffers the negative effects of co-worker incivility on emotional exhaustion, which resultantly helps to maintain employees' job performance.

In general, the past seven decades of research analyzing personal efficacy has recommended that efficacy at the employee, group and firm levels constantly has

advantageous effects on the well-being and performance of companies and their constituents. These results have influenced over 70% of firms to adopt ways of promoting self-efficacy in workforce (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018). Especially, self-efficacy beliefs have been linked with enhanced contextual and task performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction, as well as lower quitting intentions and job strain in both meta-analytic investigations (Shoji et al., 2016) and primary studies (e.g., Cassidy, 2015).

2.3. Linking Self-Efficacy with Unethical Management and Counterproductive Work Behaviors

Nevertheless, the strong support for the constructive results of personal efficacy on desirable work-related outcomes, some studies have shown that these results are not ubiquitous (e.g., McKay & Fanning, 2016). Scholars have therefore emphasized the need for studies analyzing contextual factors that could shed light on the flip-side or 'dark side' of self-efficacy. In response, this study examines how self-efficacious employees react to perceived breach of moral code by managers (i.e., unethical management perceptions).

Based on displaced aggression and reactance theories, it is suggested that employees' beliefs of personal efficacy will affect the degree to which self-efficacious employees engage in counterproductive work behavior, and also the targets at which they direct such dysfunctional behavior. Reactance theories put forward that people like to establish, exercise and retain personal control over their work environment (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2018). This theory has been widely used by scholars in explaining why, when and how employees react to perceived unjust or immoral conduct of management (e.g., Scott & Quick, 2012).

As per reactance theory, when employees perceive unfair control or/and constraint of their individual actions, they respond to limit or remove those perceived constraint(s) (Fogarty, 1997; Scott & Quick, 2012). Consequently, when employees perceive unethical management, they may respond with voluntary behavior aimed at demonstrating their power over the work context. Counterproductive behaviors may offer a way for employees wanting to show their influence and reaffirm their relevance over their context (Rosenberg & Siegel, 2018). Particularly, this study examines manager- and co-worker-

targeted counterproductive behaviors as discretionary deviance that could signify employees' perceived power over their job-related surroundings. Previous studies have empirically validated the linkage between employees' unethical management perceptions (i.e., perceived constraint) and manager- (e.g., Schyns & Schilling, 2013; May et al., 2015; Braun et al., 2018; Decoster & Tripp, 2018) and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Stoverink et al., 2014; Yue et al., 2016; Castille et al., 2017; Kuenzi et al., 2019;).

This study employs reactance theory to investigate if and why self-efficacious employees (i.e., those employees who feel motivated to influence their work environments) who perceive immorality in management are impelled to exhibit their control over the workplace roles and environment. The direct link from perceptions of unethical management to manager-targeted counterproductive behavior may appear obvious, yet it is vital to also study how perceptions of unethical management may have an effect on employees who are not the focal ones to perceive unethical managerial practices (e.g., vicarious unethical management). Since managers usually exercise direct control over the decisions regarding punishment, reward and resource allocation, and termination, continuation or amendment of employment contracts, it may not be an effective recourse for some ill-treated yet self-efficacious employees to reassert dominance by getting involved in manager-targeted voluntary counterproductive behavior.

Displaced aggression theory, in support, advocates that those employees who perceive unethical management may aim their counterproductive behaviors at their innocent co-workers as such people are more convenient and/or less powerful targets compared to the perceived source of immorality, i.e., the managers (Marcus-Newhall et al., 2000). In accord with previous unethical management studies using the displaced aggression theory (Yeşiltaş & Tuna, 2018; Kuenzi et al., 2019), this study postulates that since retaliating with counterproductive work behaviors targeted directly at the unethical manager may oftentimes be impractical considering that such retaliations can lead to escalations of maltreatment, employees may get involved in co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors. That being so, an 'eye for eye' phenomenon may not occur between subordinates and management because employees usually do

not exact revenge for unethical conduct of an influential manager (Blanchard & Peale, 2011).

Besides, employees generally have fewer managers than co-workers and lesser interactions with managers than co-workers, thus offering more opportunities to employees to show counterproductive behaviors directed at co-workers rather than the managers (i.e., fellow-workers may be soft targets). Kuenzi et al. (2019) and Yeşiltaş and Tuna (2018) offer similar viewpoints and propose that, at times, the wrongdoers (i.e., managers) may not be within easy reach to retaliate against. Also, the co-workers usually have less decision-making or resource-allocation power than managers, so they are by default at a vulnerable position to be retaliated against by the mistreated employees (Qureshi & Sabir, 2018). Gavrielides (2015) opine that the relation between management's immorality (i.e., perception of unethical management) and retribution and aggression toward co-workers may be moderated by fear of retribution, such that when fear of retribution is low, actual retribution and aggression toward co-workers increases. Since, compared to managers, co-workers have limited ability to exact revenge in meaningful ways, employees take them as accessible and easy targets for their counterproductive behaviors related to perceptions of unethical management.

Though the rationale above uses the theory of displaced aggression to propose that employees may target their counterproductive behaviors related to unethical management perceptions at co-workers, it is possible also that, as regards reactance theory, employees may react to unethical management perceptions directly through manager-targeted counterproductive behaviors. This may especially be the case when power distance in the organization is low, when efficacious employees regularly interact with their managers, or/and when managers do not have significant discretionary authority over their followers. Employees with high personal efficacy convictions often do not believe that their managers have a status significantly greater than theirs and also that manager can control the rewards they are entitled to.

Briefly, this study argues that perceived unethical conduct of management is the basis of perceived constriction that impels employees to get engaged in counterproductive work behaviors, especially among highly efficacious employees. Highly self-efficacious employees have a greater tendency to carry out counterproductive behaviors as a medium to reassert their beliefs, meaning

and importance over their work surroundings. Based on the degree to which managers and co-workers are considered to offer a medium for exhibiting influence over the surroundings, efficacious employees who perceive management's immorality will probably involve in counterproductive behaviors. The study, thus, hypothesizes that efficacious employees will have higher propensity than their less-efficacious counterparts to carry out manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors as reaction to perceived unethical management because interpersonal deviant behaviors represent a way to show that they are still important and impactful in the workplace.

Hypothesis 1: The link between perceptions of unethical management and co-worker targeted counterproductive work behaviors will be moderated by employees' self-perceptions of efficacy, such that the levels of co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors will be increased by highly efficacious employees under conditions of higher unethical management perceptions than less-efficacious employees.

Hypothesis 2: The link between perceptions of unethical management and manager-targeted counterproductive work behaviors will be moderated by employees' self-perceptions of efficacy, such that the levels of manager-targeted counterproductive behaviors will be increased by highly efficacious employees under conditions of higher unethical management perceptions than less-efficacious employees.

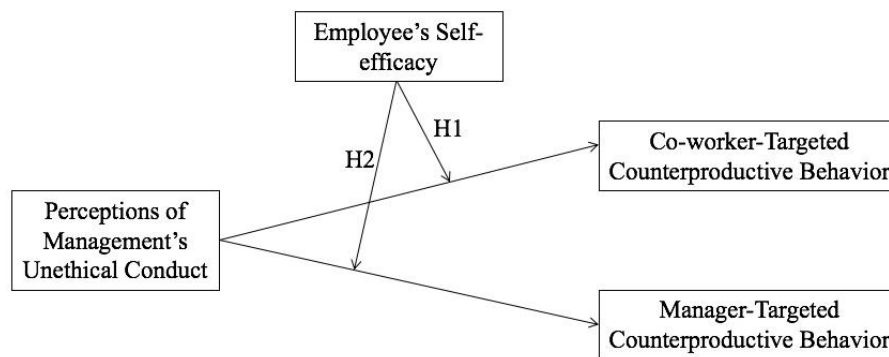


Figure 1: The research framework

2.4. Synopsis of Past Research

In an attempt to avoid the issues arising from single-sample designs (Nock et al., 2007), this study used a multi-sample design for testing the above hypotheses. In particular, this two-sample study analyzes employees' self-efficacy perceptions as a precondition in the association between unethical management perceptions and co-worker- and manager-targeted counterproductive work behaviors. The second sample acted as a way to reproduce the results achieved from the former one, and re-test the same through data gathered over multiple periods of time. The changes in sampling methods, subjects' selection, measurement scales or/and rating scores are considered to create useful reproductions that offer better confirmation of the soundness of initial findings (Gravetter et al., 2020). Also, invariable results across multi-sample research designs can facilitate researchers in drawing more meaningful and valid generalizations than those that could be achieved through single-sample designs (Nock et al., 2007). Hence, this study presents results derived from two contrasting samples using different sampling techniques in a bid to improve credibility of the generalizability and validity of achieved results.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sample 1

For first sample, data is gathered through questionnaires from employees of different private microfinance banks who are attending an annual seminar at a hotel in Islamabad. During tea break, two authors of this study distribute 112 questionnaires without directly discussing the study's contents. The participants are requested to complete the questionnaires immediately after the seminar and place them at a specified table in the corner of the hall. This practice yielded a total of 100 returned questionnaires (response rate = 89%).

Those questionnaires that has missing values for any of the main research variables are not included in the statistical analysis. The final size of the sample (n) is, thus, of 95 (response rate = 84%). The participants are mostly males (67%), aged around 38 years (standard deviation = 16.69), and had almost 13 years of work experience (standard deviation = 12.69). Further, participants are

predominantly post-graduates (81%) and held middle (38%) managerial positions.

3.2. Sample 2

In agreement with past general management research (e.g., May et al., 2015), university students are asked to assist in collecting data for the second sample. Undergraduate and graduate students from Bahria University Islamabad are given a marked assignment to bring names and contact numbers of their friends and relatives, who are 22 years old or above and have worked somewhere on full-time basis for at least 2 years. Such an approach for collecting data has been widely used in literature across several domains, and is mostly employed with the purpose of increasing the authenticity, robustness and generalizability of research findings (Nock et al., 2007).

In total, exactly 220 contact numbers are obtained from students. Once they are organized, authors of this study, directly communicated with the potential participants. Data is collected from them in two phases, i.e., at two different time periods that are roughly 4 to 16 weeks apart. Phase I resulted in 188 filled questionnaires (response rate = 85%), while phase II of the study generated 129 properly completed questionnaires (response rate = 58 %). All participants who attempt the surveys in phase I and phase II are tallied based upon their names and demographics. Sample members are mostly men (66%) around 40 years of age (standard deviated = 10.60), who have an average work experience of 16 years (standard deviated = 9.58). They are mainly graduates (73%) who hold lower (40%) managerial positions. Participants are working in various types of sectors, including social services, health and education (26.6%), rental and leasing, real estate, insurance and finance (16.6%), and manufacturing (14.3%).

3.3. Measures

3.3.1. Employees' Perceptions of Unethical Management

Unethical management perceptions are measured through Brown et al.'s (2005) 10-item scale. Participants are requested to tell how often they think their managers engaged in unethical conduct at workplace. Answers range between 1 (never) and 5 (very frequently). Sample items include: 'rewarding immoral conduct', 'acting unfairly', 'unethical vision', 'non-recognition of ethical

conduct'. Average of the 17 items is taken to determine on overall score (sample 1's $\alpha = 0.91$; sample 2's $\alpha = 0.94$). Perceptions of unethical management from sample 2 are gathered in phase I. A high score signaled a higher frequentness of perceptions of unethical management.

3.3.2. *Self-Efficacy*

Self-efficacy is assessed through a 12-item scale of Sherer et al. (1982). Participants have to tell that to what level they agree to perceive self-efficacy in their work settings on a scale of 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). Sample items include: 'I stick to a task and finish it no matter how unpleasant it is' and 'I make plans with confidence that I will make them work too'. Average of the 12 items is taken to determine on overall score (sample 1's $\alpha = 0.86$; sample 2's $\alpha = 0.91$). Self-efficacy data from sample 2 is gathered in phase II. A high score signaled a higher self-efficacy perception.

3.3.3. *Manager-Targeted Counterproductive Work Behavior*

Manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior is measured through three items adapted from Bennett and Robinson's (2000) scale that originally consisted of 24 items. Participants are requested to tell how often they demonstrate certain behaviors in their workplace on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). Items include 'leaving work early without manager's permission' and 'purposely ignoring manager's orders. The responses on those items are obtained from sample 2 in phase II, and are averaged in the end (sample 1's $\alpha = 0.87$; sample 2's $\alpha = 0.83$). A high average score signaled higher rate of engagement in such a behavior.

3.3.4. *Co-worker-Targeted Counterproductive Work Behavior*

Co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior is measured through five items taken up again from Bennett and Robinson's (2000) study. Sample items include 'playing mean pranks on co-workers', 'publicly embarrassing co-workers', and 'saying hurtful things to co-workers'. Participants are requested to tell how often they demonstrate certain behaviors in their workplace on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently). The responses on those items are obtained from sample 2 in phase II, and are averaged to in the end to reach a total score (sample 1's $\alpha = 0.86$; sample 2's $\alpha = 0.75$). A high average score signaled higher

self-reported rate of engagement in co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior.

3.3.5. Control Variables

Following the steps of several studies in the management literature, (e.g., Thomsen et al., 2005; Specht et al., 2013; Decoster & Tripp, 2018) participants demographic characteristics of gender, age and work experience are used as control variables in this study as they are closely intertwined with the three variables under research here. The rationale behind the inclusion of these control variables is that they could help in examining the main variables' incremental predictive validity over and above the relevant control variables (Kite, 1996).

4. Empirical Results

Table 1 presents sample 1 and 2's means and standard deviations along with zero-order correlations. Consistent with past studies (e.g., Yue et al., 2016; Kuenzi et al., 2019), for both the samples, perceptions of unethical management (sample 1's $M = 1.24$, $s = .39$; sample 2's $M = 1.43$, $s = .58$), co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior (sample 1's $M = 1.27$, $s = .59$; sample 2's $M = 1.26$, $s = .43$) and manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior (sample 1's $M = 1.27$, $s = .49$; sample 2's $M = 1.44$, $s = .58$) have small means and standard deviations which indicated that these phenomena have low base-rate. In addition, the correlations among perceptions of unethical management, co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior, and manager-targeted counterproductive behavior are all statistically significant (the highest correlation being $r = .63$ in sample 1 between manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors), which offer confirmation for the constructs' discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Multiple hierarchical moderated regression analysis (Anderson, 1986) is used to test the effect of perceptions of unethical management on manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors, and also the buffering effects of perception of personal efficacy on these linkages. Constructs are introduced in the regression equation in a step-wise manner. In step 1, gender, age and work experience (control variables) are entered into regression analysis.

Perceptions of unethical management (regressor) and perceptions of self-efficacy (regressand) are entered in step 2. Lastly, the interaction term i.e., unethical management Anderson, the moderating variable and the independent variable are mean-centered when generating the interaction term so as to avoid multicollinearity's likelihood of occurrence (Mansfield & Helms, 1982). In the end, the bootstrapping method (n = 5,000) is used to test moderation in a bid to validate the results (Bell et al., 2018). Besides, since the direction of the anticipated linkages is already specified, one-tailed sets is used to evaluate the significance of the linkages. Table 2 reports the results that are extracted from regression analyses.

Table 1: Correlations, Means and Standard Deviations among Research Constructs

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Gender	–	-.02	-.06	-.04	.06	-.14	-.12
2. Age	.10	–	.53**	-.05	.21	.04	.12
3. Work experience	-.19	.38**	–	-.07	.14	-.05	-.04
4. Unethical Management	-.13	-.04	.11	–	-.12	.16	.36**
5. Self-efficacy	–	.23*	.20	–	–	-.08	-.12
	.23*			.33**			
6. Co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior	-.20	-.23*	-.06	.32**	-.14	–	.46**
7. Manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior	-.04	-.14	-.09	.61**	–	.63**	–
				.37**			
Sample 1— \bar{X}	.67	38.02	12.81	1.24	5.64	1.27	1.27
Sample 1—s	.50	16.69	12.69	.89	.81	.59	.49
Sample 1— α	–	–	–	.91	.86	.86	.87
Sample 2— \bar{X}	.66	40.02	16.56	1.43	5.83	1.26	1.44
Sample 2—s	.49	10.60	9.58	.58	.85	.43	.58
Sample 2— α	–	–	–	.94	.91	.75	.83

Note. sample 1's (n = 95) correlations (r) are given below diagonal while sample 2's (n = 129) correlations (r) are given above diagonal; gender codes: 0 = female, 1 = male; correlations are generated through two-tailed tests; **p < .01, *p < .05; CWB = counterproductive work behavior

In sample 1, variation in co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior is significantly explained by age ($\lambda = -.02$, 90% CI = [-.02, .01], $\beta = -.22$, p < .05, t = -2.05), perceptions of unethical management ($\lambda = .69$, 90% CI = [.37, 1.02], β

= .45, $p < .01$, $t = 3.47$), and the unethical management \times self-efficacy cross-product term ($\lambda = .32$, 90% CI = [.09, .55], $\beta = .28$, $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.21$) in the last step of analysis. Moreover, unethical management's conditional effect on co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior increased as estimates of self-efficacy increased ($\lambda_{sBelowMean} = .45$, 90 % CI = [.18, .71], $\beta = .30$, $p < .01$, $t = 2.77$; $\lambda_{sAboveMean} = .94$, 90 % CI = [.48, 1.41], $\beta = .62$, $p < .01$, $t = 3.34$).

In sample 2, variation in co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior is significantly explained by perceptions of unethical management ($\lambda = .12$, 90% CI = [.01, .23], $\beta = .16$, $p < .05$, $t = 1.74$), and the unethical management \times self-efficacy cross-product term ($\lambda = .15$, 90% CI = [.03, .28], $\beta = .18$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .05$, $t = 1.93$) in the last step of analysis. Moreover, unethical management's conditional effect on co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior increased as estimates of self-efficacy increased ($\lambda_{sBelowMean} = -.02$, 90% CI = [-.16, .14], $\beta = -.02$, $p < .01$, $t = -.11$; $\lambda_{sAboveMean} = .24$, 90% CI = [.08, .40], $\beta = .32$, $p < .01$, $t = 2.46$). Hence, results from both samples supported hypothesis 1.

Table 2: Results of Regression Analyses

Constructs	Sample 1						Sample 2					
	Co-worker-targeted CWB			Manager-targeted CWB			Co-worker-targeted CWB			Manager-targeted CWB		
	Step # 1	Step # 2	Step # 3	Step p # 1	Step # 2	Step # 3	Step p # 1	Step # 2	Step p # 3	Step # 1	Step # 2	Step # 3
Gender	-.20*	-.18	-.15	-.04	-.02	-.02	-.15	-.14	-.11	-.15	-.13	-.12
Age	-.23*	-.21*	-.22*	-.12	-.06	-.06	.10	.11	.07	.20*	.22*	.21*
Work experience	.01	-.04	-.06	-.05	-.10	-.10	-.11	-.10	-.07	-.14	-.12	-.11
Unethical mgmt (UM)		.28**	.44**		.56**	.58*		.14	.16*		.34**	.35*
Self-efficacy (SE)		-.04	-.06		-.17*	-.18*		-.07	-.07		-.11	-.11
UM x SE			.28*			.03			.18*			.07
R ²	.10	.18	.22	.03	.41	.41	.03	.06	.08	.05	.18	.18
ΔR^2		.09**	.05*		.39**	.01		.03	.04*		.14**	.00
Adjusted R ²	.07	.13	.16	.01	.38	.37	.01	.02	.04	.03	.14	.14

Note. sample 1's $n = 95$, sample 2's $n = 129$; gender codes: 0 = females, 1 = males; beta coefficients are standardized; results are obtained from one-tailed tests; CWB = counterproductive work behavior

In order to graphically depict the statistically significant cross-product terms, low (i.e., a standard deviation lower the mean) and high (i.e., a standard deviation over the mean) levels of personal efficacy are plotted over the range of perceived unethical management scores. Simple slopes tests for sample 1 exhibit that both the high ($b = 2.42$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.35$) and low ($b = 1.93$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.39$) self-efficacy slopes are positive and significant too (see figure 2). For sample 2, the plot exhibited the cross-product between unethical management and self-efficacy on co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior. Simple slope test demonstrated that both high ($b = 1.06$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.10$) and low ($b = .82$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.14$) self-efficacy slopes were positive as well as significant (see figure 3). Further, both the interaction effects had the hypothesized direction. Surprisingly, highly self-efficacious employees seemed to have higher likelihood of engaging in co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior than the less efficacious ones under both, high and low, perceptions of unethical management.

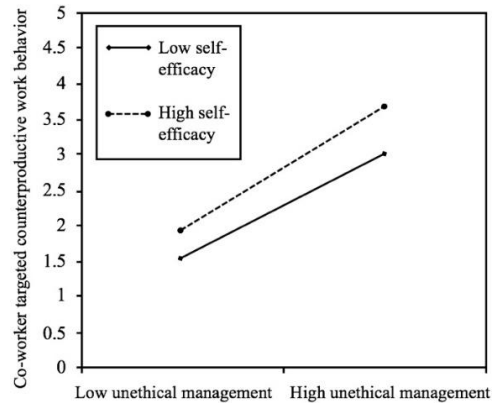


Figure 2: Unethical management and self-efficacy's interactive effects on co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behavior in sample 1

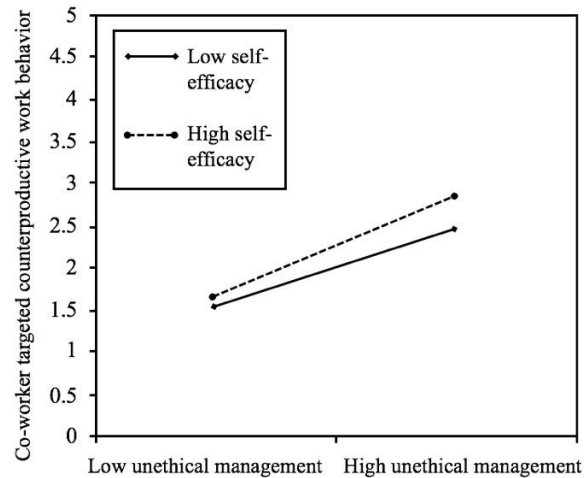


Figure 3: Unethical management and self-efficacy's interactive effects on co-worker-targeted counterproductive work in sample 1

In sample 1, variation in manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior is significantly explained by perceptions of unethical management ($\lambda = .72$, 90% CI = [.49, .96], $\beta = .58$, $p < .01$, $t = 5.07$) and personal efficacy ($\lambda = -.11$, 90% CI = [-.20, -.02], $\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$, $t = -1.77$). Regardless of an insignificant interaction effect between unethical management and self-efficacy on manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior, unethical management's conditional effect on supervisor-targeted counterproductive work behavior increased as estimates of self-efficacy increased (λ sBelowMean = .71, 90% CI = [.52, .89], $\beta = .56$, $p < .01$, $t = 6.17$; λ sAboveMean = .74, 90% CI = [.41, 1.07], $\beta = .59$, $p < .01$, $t = 3.68$).

In sample 2, variation in manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior is significantly explained by age ($\lambda = .02$, 90% CI = [.02, .04], $\beta = .21$, $p < .05$, $t = 2.00$) and perceptions of unethical management ($\lambda = .35$, 90% CI = [.21, .49], $\beta = .35$, $p < .01$, $t = 4.09$). The conditional effect, again, of unethical management on manager-targeted counterproductive behavior increased as estimates of self-efficacy increased (λ sBelowMean = .29, 90% CI = [.11, .47], $\beta = .29$, $p < .01$, $t = 3.28$; λ sAboveMean = .41, 90% CI = [.21, .61], $\beta = .41$, $p < .01$, $t = 3.28$). Thus, results from either of the samples did not lend support to hypothesis 2. This outcome is possibly because of the unfitness of the unethical management \times self-efficacy interaction to explain significant variance in manager-targeted

counterproductive work behavior over and above the direct strong effects of unethical management perceptions (sample 1's $\beta = .58$, $p < .05$; sample 2's $\beta = .35$, $p < .05$).

5. Conclusion

The findings here validate previous studies that suggest perceptions of unethical management are related to counterproductive behavior, but also advocate that this linkage may be more complicated than previously believed. Especially, the results of this two-sample study propose that employees having higher self-perceptions of personal efficacy were more susceptible than the less efficacious peers to involve in co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior under conditions of unethical management perceptions, while a positive link between perceptions of unethical management and manager-targeted counterproductive behavior may exist. Hence, this research offers empirical verification for a spillover effect, as per which, management's perceived immoral conduct (i.e., unethical management) is related to employees' proclivities of engagement in immorality (i.e., counterproductive behavior) targeted toward fellow-workers, specifically among highly self-efficacious employees. The findings also add to the limited literature analyzing the possible downside of personal efficacy, and advocate those high degrees of personal efficacy may not always be desirable in contexts characterized by immorality. As a conclusion, perceptions of unethical management can turn out to be surprisingly more scathing when the victims of management' immorality are highly self-efficacious employees who have the motivation to exercise personal influence by adjusting their work contexts, work roles and voluntary behaviors.

The above findings suggest that the link between employees' unethical management perceptions and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior is more complicated than the simple 'eye for eye' relationship usually observed between perceptions of unethical management and manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior. This propounds that important predictive mechanisms and pre-condition may have a critical role in influencing the association between self-perception of unethical management and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior. This study provides empirical confirmation

suggesting that highly self-efficacious employees who perceive unethical management target co-workers with counterproductive behaviors more frequently than those with less self-efficacy. This study improves the credence in the soundness and validity of past findings (Nock et al., 2007), and provides confirmation that perception of personal efficacy act as a major boundary condition that is capable of increasing employees' frequency of engaging in counterproductive behaviors in workplaces where unethical managerial practices are prevalent. Moreover, these results emphasize the important effects that employees' perceptions of self and work may have on their responses related to perceptions of unethical management.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study emphasizes that the relation between employees' experienced immorality (i.e., perception of unethical management) and their proclivities to show interpersonal immorality (i.e., manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors) is complicated, and that workplace's perceptions of employees play critical roles as pre-conditions in this linkage. It extends the past literature by providing empirical verification for the moderating role of employees' perception of personal efficacy in the relation shared between their perception of unethical management and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behavior. The study is among the first to examine self-efficacy's effects as a pre-condition capable of differently shaping the linkage between perceptions of unethical management and dysfunctional work behaviors. This study, thus, answers Williams and Rhodes's (2016) call for research to examine the flipside of self-efficacy.

The findings here propose that regardless of the several non-work- and work-related advantages of encouraging employees to be self-efficacious, it is likely that self-efficacious employees may retaliate against managerial injustice and immorality, and may target the retaliatory behavior toward their fellow workers. The study, thus, provides empirical validation for a kind of unethical management's spillover effect through which self-efficacious employees who perceive unethical management try to show their dominance and personal influence by engaging in co-worker-targeted counterproductive work behaviors. Displaced aggression and reactance theories supported the hypotheses here that highly efficacious employees had a greater propensity to carry out dysfunctional

behaviors (i.e., manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors) as a way to reassert their power and dominance over the job context than their less efficacious peers.

The results expand the current understanding regarding how individual-level differences (i.e., perception of personal efficacy) may affect the linkage between employees' unethical management perceptions and interpersonal counterproductive work behaviors. By analyzing employees' self-perceptions of efficacy, the study contributes to the existing insufficiency of unethical management literature by enquiring the role of individual differences as variables capable of affecting employees' responses to unethical management perceptions. The results recommend that unethical management is not only a subjectively and differentially perceived phenomenon, but aggrieved employees' responses related to it may also vary depending on their unique personal beliefs and judgements.

5.2. Practical Contributions

Management should be aware that despite the advantages of personal efficacy with regard to positive affective reactions and enhanced performance (Shoji et al., 2016), self-efficacy may be costly also; particularly, when employees with self-efficacy beliefs perceive immorality from their managers, they get hurt and displace their retributory behavior toward co-workers. Though the study does not advise that organizations should downplay or avoid self-efficacy promoting initiatives, it highlights that self-efficacious employee shutting their eyes to the interpersonal dynamics within the workplace may lead to dysfunctional outcomes for organizations and their members. Hence, management should be highly regardful of how its conduct toward some employees may, later on, result in toxic interpersonal behaviors. Highly self-efficacious employees have an indispensable role in influencing work contexts and roles, because by very nature, they like exercise control over the organization by shaping operating outcomes. Thus, through taking measures in ways that are viewed as unethical, management may be wronging employees who are capable of influencing the organization in a good manner or bad.

Besides, as suggested by Johnson (2019), organizations can create and whole-heartedly support policies against the breach of moral code, which, when

explicitly enforced (like ‘don’t be evil’ policy of Google), convey a message that organization has zero-tolerance for interpersonal immorality and that anyone caught committing unethical acts will be punished. Some human resource practices may be employed to promote moral principles in employees, and to support those who perceive injustice. 360° performance evaluations, for instance, can be useful for identifying sources of immorality (e.g., vertical, lateral) and similarly hotlines or suggestion boxes can be created with the aim of encouraging employees to report unethical activities in the organization. Lastly, in accordance with Johnson’s (2019) suggestions, organizations should teach employees through training programs that interpersonal misgivings, mistreatment and conflict are inevitable but surmountable part of work-life, and that they should take them constructively. Issues with management should be constructively addressed and not be suppressed or aggravated. In entirety, these small measures can help employees, particularly self-efficacious ones, to voice their complaints and constructively deal with immorality from management instead of reciprocating in a spillover or tit-for-tat way.

5.3. Limitations

This research is subject to limitations. Firstly, the scale of manager-targeted counterproductive work behavior consisted of three items only adapted from workplace deviance questionnaire of Bennett and Robinson (2000). Future studies should consider measuring manager-targeted counterproductive behaviors in a more extensive way like Kuenzi et al. (2019) have done in their study. Also, this study’s scope is limited to counterproductive work behaviors only. Surely, there are several other voluntary behaviors which employees may demonstrate when confronted with unethical acts of management like substance abuse and service sabotage.

A major shortcoming of this study was its sole dependence on self-reported perception-based measures which may heighten the chances of the presence of common method bias in the dataset. This particular bias can deflate or inflate the hypothesized linkages (Conway & Lance, 2010), and often exaggerates their effects (Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015). Nevertheless, this bias is not likely to lead to a feigned interaction effect but instead often reduces a genuine interaction effect (Bell et al., 2018). Hence, since the aim of the current enquiry was to validate interaction effects, its concern regarding common method bias was minimized.

However, the reliance on self-reports in this study is arguable (Van de Mortel, 2008) as an employee himself is the most capable person to report and evaluate the frequentness with which he engages in counterproductive behaviors, particularly since these behaviors are often clandestine and underhanded. Also, an employee is the most adequate person to report against unethical managerial conduct because, by nature, it is a perception instead of an actual phenomenon. In sample 2, the data collection on main variables of interest was separated by 4- to 16-week time period to lessen the apprehensions normally related to common method bias (Conway & Lance, 2010). Moreover, the measures of manager- and co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors did not just quantify their perception of counterproductive behavior but also asked respondents to self-rate their real behavior. The study argues that collecting data for the main variables in different periods and asking employees to self-assess the frequency of their actual counterproductive behavior reduces the chances for contamination because of common method bias. Besides, as a safety measure, demographic items and the constructs in the questionnaire were listed in a way that was intended to prevent priming effects (Jakobsen & Jensen, 2015).

5.4 Future Research Implications

Various directions for future research are worth mentioning here. First, in future, studies can analyze self-perception of efficacy at the industry, organizational, departmental and group levels. The magnitude of such levels may possibly play a major part in learning how personal-perception of efficacy is developed and what meaning and effect they have on employees. Another useful area for future studies is 'identity' since identities of employees may possibly contribute in determining that to what extent employees distinctively relate to their industries, organizations, departments and groups. Accordingly, more research is required to analyze how employees get self-efficacious and how perceptions of self-efficacy affect a broad spectrum of organizational outcomes and processes, not only the inclinations to involve in counterproductive behaviors.

Additionally, future works can keep on examining the negative side of self-efficacy (Maddux & Kleiman, 2018; Williams & Rhodes, 2016). Despite results seemed to suggest that highly efficacious employees had greater proclivity to react to perception of unethical management with co-worker-targeted counterproductive behaviors than less efficacious ones, future studies can probe

other ways in which self-efficacy leads to undesirable outcomes for the organizations and their members. For example, may be, self-efficacious employees display boldness when addressing work-based issues (e.g., biased allocation of resources, interpersonal mistreatments) that are outside their official range of duties. Such conduct, though probably well-meaning, may create bitterness between self-efficacious employees and the others who may get endangered or demoralized by seeing that self-efficacious employees are broadening their influence far over their official control span.

Consistent with this view point, the non- or less-efficacious employees may not like their highly self-efficacious peers compared to less efficacious ones, and may unintentionally trigger spirals of immorality or/and add to hostility and toxicity in the workplace. Consequently, future studies can also examine the interpersonal outcomes of highly efficacious employees' presence in the workplace, particularly concerning reciprocities distinguished by different levels of self-efficacy between employees. This line of reasoning suggests that the outcomes of self-efficacy can be curvilinear, such that too little or too much self-efficacy may exhibit some of the downside or dysfunctional consequences for the employees and organizations. Like, is a highly efficacious employee, very eager in his determination to make a difference that he is considered egotistical; or is he so empowered in his capacity to make significant developments that he is perceived as egotistical. This suggests that a favorable level of self-efficacy should exist, beyond or below which the consequences of self-efficacy are unfavorable. Thus, future studies can investigate this likelihood.

Also, past studies have conceptualized employees' perceptions of unethical management as a work-based stressor (e.g., Kessler et al., 2013; Skogstad et al., 2014). In compliance with Bolger and Zuckerman's (1995) differential exposure and reactivity model, future studies can see how employees' self-reported unethical management's perceptions influence their perceptions of and reactions to stressors, like perceptions of unethical management and other kinds of social injustices in the work context.

Lastly, the empirical shortcomings associated with this study can be addressed by future research. Researchers have explained the primary measurement problem that emerges when analyzing interpersonal immoral conduct, and stated that it may be inappropriate to regard different conducts that are distinguished as

counterproductive behaviors (i.e., behaviors that can disrupt the normal functioning of organization) as identical determinants of a fundamental concept. Measurement scales may also constitute an issue. In their study assessing workplace behaviors (i.e., counterproductive work behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors), They have also noted greater variance, ranges, means and standard deviations for work behaviors that were measured on agreement-based Likert scales (i.e., ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’) than behaviors measured on frequency-based scales (i.e., ‘every day’ to ‘never’). Nevertheless, at the end, the researchers suggested that using frequency-based scales is better. Hence, in future, the findings and suggestions of these and other studies should be incorporated when trying to develop instruments to soundly empirically measure counterproductive work behaviors.

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