



Coping with Supervisor Bottom-Line Mentality: The Mediating role of Job Insecurity and the Moderating Role of Supervisory Power

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Abstract

According to the transactional model of stress and coping, this study explores how and when supervisor bottom-line mentality (BLM) affects subordinate unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), considering the role of job insecurity and supervisory power. The results from a three-wave field survey of 215 employees from five Chinese companies indicate that subordinate job insecurity mediates the positive relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB. Moreover, supervisory power positively moderates the relationship between supervisor BLM and job insecurity such that the relationship is strengthened when supervisory power is higher. Furthermore, supervisory power positively moderates the mediating effect of job insecurity on the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB such that this indirect effect is strengthened when supervisory power is higher. The theoretical and managerial implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords Transactional model of stress and coping · Supervisor bottom-line mentality · Job insecurity · Supervisory power · Unethical pro-organizational behavior

Introduction

Bottom-line mentality (BLM) refers to “a one-dimensional frame of thinking that revolves around securing bottom-line outcomes to the neglect of competing priorities” (Greenbaum et al., 2012, p.344). Ensuring the achievement of bottom-line goals is a way for enterprises to gain profits and employees to be promoted (Wolfe, 1988). Nevertheless, some scholars have noted that supervisor BLM can arouse unethical behavior among subordinates that benefits their supervisors and organizations (Farasat & Azam, 2020; Greenbaum et al., 2012). Unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), which is 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” (Umphress

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& Bingham, 2011, p. 622), has serious consequences for organizations and society because it is not consistent with core societal values, norms, and laws (Miao et al., 2013).

Prior research has provided several perspectives on the detrimental effects of supervisor BLM on subordinate UPB. Building upon social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), some scholars point out that supervisors might act as the role model in organizations; thus, their BLM may cause subordinates' BLM, which in turn evokes subordinates' UPB (Zhang et al., 2020). Drawing on social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1991), some researchers have argued that by weakening the moral adjustment mechanism of subordinates, supervisor BLM leads them to rebuild UPB cognitively and regard it as a reasonable way to achieve bottom-line objectives, which causes employees to conduct UPB (Zhang et al., 2020).

Although these perspectives provide diverse views, they ignore the fact that subordinates can view their supervisors' BLM as a stressor and adapt behavioral strategies to cope with it. Previous studies have also shown that individuals are more likely to violate their own moral standards and exhibit unethical behavior when they experience stress (Schweitzer et al., 2004). For subordinates, supervisor BLM may not be a way of thinking or behavior that should be learned and imitated but a source of stress that affects their cognition and behavior (Babalola et al., 2020). Therefore, drawing upon the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), this study aims to explain how and when supervisor BLM may lead to subordinate UPB.

According to the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), when confronted with supervisor BLM, individuals may interpret or appraise it as a hindrance stressor. This is because supervisor BLM emphasizes only results rather than considering the well-being of subordinates. In addition, supervisors with BLM believe that achieving only a bottom-line result is an absolute victory. This win-loss mentality leads to the formation of a competition orientation within organizations (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Failure to satisfy a supervisor's BLM may result in the loss of internal competitions or job opportunities (Callea et al., 2016; Hartley et al., 1991), which leads to job insecurity among subordinates. Job insecurity is defined as "perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984, p.438). To cope with hindrance stressors from supervisor BLM and reduce job insecurity, subordinates may engage in behavior that helps their supervisors achieve bottom-line goals. As a coping strategy, UPB has a significant advantage in terms of helping supervisors or organizations achieve bottom-line goals (Zhang et al., 2020) because certain unethical behaviors may be more profitable than ethical behaviors (Moore & Gino, 2013). Thus, our study explores an important but neglected path (e.g., job insecurity) to explain how supervisor BLM affects subordinate UPB.

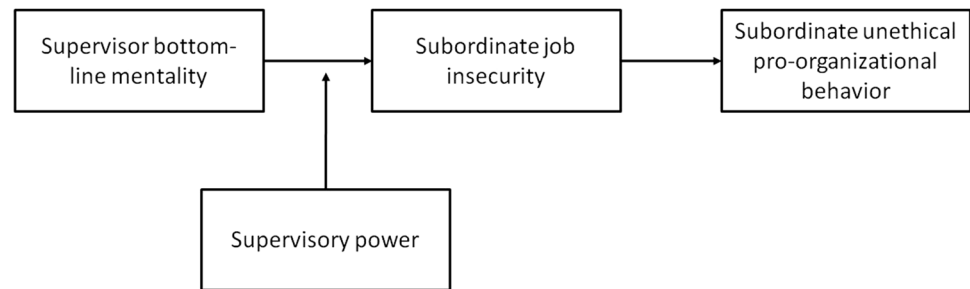
Furthermore, we consider how supervisory power, which is the ability of supervisors to influence others by providing resources or enforcing punishment (French & Raven, 1959), influences the stress process by affecting how subordinates appraise and cope with stressors. In essence, we suggest that supervisory power strengthens the influence of supervisor BLM as a hindrance stressor on subordinates. When a supervisor has greater power, his or her subordinates feel that they have a greater risk of being fired if they fail to acquire the supervisor's bottom-line goals. In other words, supervisor power may affect the sensitivity of the subordinates to supervisor BLM. Therefore, this study proposes a twofold effect: first, supervisor power reinforces the relationship between supervisor BLM and job insecurity, and second, it intensifies the influence of job security in the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB as a result.

Our study extends previous research in three major ways. First, this study explores the influence of supervisor BLM on subordinates' psychology and behavior from a new perspective and provides a new understanding for the detrimental effects of supervisor BLM, responding to a call for research on the "dark side" of supervisor BLM (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Second, previous studies on supervisor BLM have used cognitive mechanisms to link supervisors' BLM and subordinates' behavior (Zhang et al., 2020). From stress appraisal and coping perspective, our research introduces a new mediating mechanism (i.e., subordinate job insecurity) to explain the impact of supervisors' BLM on subordinates' unethical behavior, which extends the existing research. Third, our work expands the moderating role of supervisory power in the framework of the transactional model of stress and coping, which extends previous research. By considering supervisory power from the perspective of stress appraisal, this study connects the power literature with the broader stress assessment and response literature in a way that enriches both. Therefore, our work provides considerable boundary conditions for the stress appraisal and coping literature. Our findings can also help researchers recognize the importance of supervisory power in the context of subordinates' unethical decision-making processes. Figure 1 is the theoretical model.

Theory and Hypotheses

Supervisor Bottom-Line Mentality And Subordinate Job Insecurity

Based on the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), when individuals encounter a stressor, they try to analyze the possible impact of the stressor on themselves through the primary appraisal process (Lazarus & Folkman, 1987). Through this process,

Fig. 1 Hypothesized theoretical model

individuals appraise the extent to which a stressor is related to their own well-being (i.e., "benefit"; see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Then, individuals classify stressors as hindrance stressors or challenge stressors based on the corresponding expected potential for harm or gain (Lazarus, 1999; Sharma & Pearsall, 2016), which triggers a series of individual psychological and behavioral responses.

According to the transactional model of stress and coping, we provide two main reasons why supervisor BLM is likely linked to subordinate job insecurity. First, BLM is a framework of thought that prioritizes bottom-line outcomes while ignoring other competing goals (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Supervisors adopt BLM view bottom-line results as their primary priority and the most suitable means to boost their financial rewards from their firm (Bonner et al., 2017), and they tend to focus on bottom-line goals such as bonuses, promotions or reputation while ignoring the needs of their subordinates at work, such as support, help or care (Sims, 1992). When they encounter supervisor BLM, subordinates primarily appraise it as a hindrance stressor, which makes them feel anxious and concerned about their jobs (Shoss, 2017). This is because their supervisors pay much attention to whether they can achieve bottom-line goals, but not the well-being of their subordinates (Greenbaum et al., 2012). These emotions, such as worry and anxiety, make subordinates perceive threats from their current job, which represent an extension of job insecurity (Låstad et al., 2014). Wang et al. (2020) showed that abusive supervision acts as a hindrance stressor and can cause subordinates to experience job insecurity.

In addition, the basic assumption of the primary appraisal process is that it assesses the balance between stressors and individuals' well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). When this balance is disrupted, individuals feel psychological pressure (Li et al., 2017). To relieve this pressure, individuals can change their behavior or adjust their psychology to restore balance (Mesdaghinia et al., 2019; Wolfe, 1988). Specifically, when exposed to pressure from supervisor BLM, subordinates realize that if they cannot help their supervisors accomplish the goals, they would be punished with salary cuts, criticism, or dismissal (Bonner et al., 2017). Therefore, such subordinates may lose their sense of belonging to their

organization and feel betrayed by their supervisor, which leads to concerns about unemployment. Following this, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1. Supervisor BLM is positively related to subordinate job insecurity.

The Mediating Role of Subordinate Job Insecurity

Based on the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), after individuals conduct the primary appraisal of the influence of the stressors, they enter the secondary appraisal stage: the individuals determine what coping strategies should be adopted to eliminate or reduce the negative effects of the stressors. Coping is an attempt to change or master a situation through behavior (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Job insecurity mainly involves uncertainty regarding the future of one's career or worry about losing current work (Shoss, 2017). When facing supervisor BLM, subordinates' sense of job insecurity comes from their supervisors' ultimate pursuit of bottom-line goals. Such supervisors require their subordinates to struggle to deliver bottom-line results, which often exceeds subordinates' abilities, while the supervisors do not provide support. To reduce or eliminate their job insecurity, subordinates may use unconventional methods to cope with the excess tasks assigned by their supervisor, obtain rewards from their supervisor, and reduce the risk of being punished by him or her. Therefore, they may adopt behaviors that do not conform to ethical norms but help improve work efficiency because these behaviors help subordinates achieve the performance goals required by their supervisors faster and more easily (Moore & Gino, 2013).

UPB is a typical behavior that is thought to benefit organizations or supervisors (Umphress et al., 2010). Its pro-organizational characteristics can allow job-insecure individuals to achieve organizational or supervisor goals, and its unethical characteristics can benefit individuals more than ethical behavior under the same conditions (Chen et al., 2016). Moreover, job insecurity makes employees more likely to cognitively redefine their UPB through moral disengagement (Huang et al., 2017). For example, an employee

who deceives customers may view this behavior as a way to protect company's profits without self-ethical condemnation. Ghosh's (2017) study showed that job insecurity may be one of the important antecedents of UPB. Therefore, by engaging in UPB, employees can achieve bottom-line goals while earning additional benefits for their supervisors, thereby coping with the anxiety and worries caused by their job insecurity. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 2. Subordinate job insecurity mediates the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB.

The Moderating Role of Supervisory Power

In the workplace, supervisors can require their subordinates to work hard for their goals by controlling the resources and rewards that subordinates expect and implementing punishments and sanctions (Lian et al., 2014); this is broadly called supervisory power. In the context of the extreme requirements of supervisors who adopt a BLM, the strength of supervisory power reflects the amount of resources that subordinates can obtain (or the extent of the punishment that they fear) (Greenbaum et al., 2012). Therefore, in contrast to previous studies on supervisory power from a multidimensional perspective (Adler, 1983; French & Raven, 1959), we focus on the coercive and reward power of supervisors, which is consistent with the actions of supervisors with a BLM, who mainly use rewards or punishments to emphasize the importance of bottom-line objectives (Zhang et al., 2020). Supervisory power affects subordinates' judgment of the stress source of supervisor BLM because failure to meet the requirements of supervisors may result in fewer rewards or greater punishments (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1989).

Therefore, we propose that supervisory power may play a particularly important role in subordinates' appraisals of stressors, such as supervisor BLM. That is, we suggest that supervisors who have a high level of power emphasize their subordinates' understanding of achieving bottom-line goals by providing personal growth opportunities for subordinates or employing punitive measures. Indeed, supervisors with a high level of power may emphasize the relevance of bottom-line results and the careers of their subordinates by conveying their attitude toward the realization of bottom-line outcomes. Subordinates are likely to believe that if they fail to reach their supervisor's demand, they will face absolute punishment, which leads to concerns about losing their jobs.

In contrast, when supervisors have a low level of power, subordinates' incentives to pursue bottom-line goals are weakened. In addition, subordinates perceive that the pressure to achieve bottom-line results is reduced and that they do not need to worry about punishment (i.e., losing their job) when they fail to meet requirements; thus, they are less

concerned about losing their jobs. Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3. Supervisory power moderates the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate job insecurity. That is, the positive relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate job insecurity is stronger when supervisory power is higher.

Based on the above mentioned hypotheses, we propose a moderated mediation model in which supervisor BLM affects subordinate UPB via subordinate job security and supervisory power moderates this indirect relationship (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Subordinates are more worried about being punished if they fail to meet supervisors' bottom-line requirements when their supervisors have a high level of power than when they have a low level of power, so they are more likely to engage in UPB to cope with such concerns under these circumstances. As such, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 4. Supervisory power moderates the indirect relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB. That is, the indirect positive relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB through subordinate job insecurity is stronger when supervisory power is higher.

Methodology

Sample and Materials

The data was collected from participants in five Chinese companies. The respondents were from the sales, human resources, manufacturing, and financial departments of these companies. We first contacted the top managers of these companies and explained the purpose of our study. After obtaining their agreement, we distributed questionnaires to 350 subordinates in these companies; all surveys were conducted online. The questionnaire was completed during the participants' working hours. We collected data in three waves in order to reduce common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The participants reported information regarding their direct supervisors' BLM and their demographics (including their age, tenure, education level, gender) at Time 1, their direct supervisors' coercive and reward power and their job insecurity at Time 2, and their UPB at Time 3, and the waves were spaced one month apart. Because the questionnaire was anonymous, we used stable indicators to match the responses from the three waves, namely, the last four digits of each respondent's phone number. We obtained 215 valid matching questionnaires from Times 1, 2 and 3. Consistent with earlier studies, we used a self-report scale to measure

Table 1 Comparison of Measurement Models

Model	Descriptions	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
Model 1	Four factors: SBLM, SP, JI, UPB	255.96	203	1.26	0.04	0.97	0.97
Model 2	Three factors: SBLM + SP, JI, UPB	761.42	206	3.70	0.11	0.72	0.69
Model 3	Three factors: SBLM + JI, SP, UPB	482.50	206	2.34	0.08	0.86	0.85
Model 4	Two factors: SBLM + SP + JI, UPB	992.18	208	4.77	0.13	0.61	0.57
Model 5	One factor: SBLM + SP + JI + UPB	1381.17	209	6.61	0.16	0.42	0.36

Notes: SBLM = supervisor bottom-line mentality, SP = supervisory power, JI = job insecurity, UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, CFI = comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, “+” = combined into one factor

UPB because pro-organizational intentions are difficult for others to observe (Chen et al., 2016). To reduce the risk of assessment anxiety and socially desirable responses, we promised the participants that the survey results would be anonymous and would be used for academic research only. We also rearranged the items of the scale to create psychological separation.

In the final sample, the age distribution of the respondents was as follows: 18–25 years old, 24.19%; 26–30 years old, 31.63%; 31–40 years old, 19.53%; 41–50 years old, 12.09%; and older than 50, 12.56%. Of the respondents, 26.05% had worked for their company for less than 2 years, 38.14% for 3–5 years, 17.21% for 6–10 years, 4.19% for 11–15 years, 10.70% for 16–20 years, and 3.72% for more than 21 years. Three point seven two percent of the participants had a high school degree, 33.02% had a college degree, 53.95% had a bachelor's degree, and 9.30% had a master's or doctoral degree. 47.91% of the respondents were women. We created four dummy-coded variables and utilized these terms in our analyses in order to control the influence of different companies.

Measures

We used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) to measure most of the substantive variables except for job insecurity.

Supervisors Bottom Line Mentality

Supervisor BLM was assessed with Greenbaum et al.'s (2012) 4-item measure. A sample item is “My direct supervisor is solely concerned with meeting the bottom line” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Supervisory Power

We used Hinkin and Schriesheim's (1989) 8-item scale to measure supervisors' coercive and reward power. A sample item is “My supervisor can influence my getting a promotion” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Job Insecurity

Job insecurity was assessed using Caplan et al.'s (1975) 4-item scale. A sample item is “How certain are you about the opportunities for promotion and advancement that will exist in the next few years?” (1 = very uncertain, 5 = very

certain). Each item was reverse coded to indicate job insecurity (Wang et al., 2015).

Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior

UPB was assessed using Umphress et al.'s (2010) 6-item scale. An example item is “If it would help my organization, I would exaggerate the truth about my company's products or services to customers and clients” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

In this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to evaluate the discriminant validity of the key study measures. We used Mplus version 7.0 to analyze our research models. All the interaction variables were mean-centered before analysis (Aiken & West, 1994).

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

To establish the discrimination of key variables (supervisor BLM, job insecurity, UPB, supervisory power), a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted. A four-factor model provided a good fit to the data (χ^2 (203) = 255.96, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.04) than the other models (see Table 1), confirming that our four key variables were empirically distinct. In addition, the CFA results indicated that a one-factor model was not suitable for the data (χ^2 (209) = 1381.17, CFI = 0.42, TLI = 0.36, RMSEA = 0.16), showing that common method variance was not a serious concern in this study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Descriptive Statistics

As shown in Table 2, supervisor BLM was positively correlated with subordinate job insecurity ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$) and subordinate UPB ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.01$). Furthermore, subordinate job insecurity was positively correlated with subordinate UPB ($r = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variable ^a	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age	2.61	1.40								
2. Tenure	2.48	1.44	.74**							
3. Education	2.69	0.69	-.12	-.12						
4. Gender ^b	0.52	0.50	.13	.19**	-.11					
5. SBLM	2.99	1.17	.02	.01	.02	-.02	(.90)			
6. SP	2.86	0.89	-.02	-.01	-.03	.07	.23**	(.89)		
7. JI	3.08	0.73	-.11	-.06	.06	.01	.15*	.12	(.78)	
8. UPB	2.86	0.93	.00	.00	.00	.04	.27**	.11	.15*	(.83)

Notes: *N* = 215. Coefficient alphas are given in parentheses on the diagonal

^a SBLM = supervisor bottom-line mentality, SP = supervisory power, JI = job insecurity, UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior,

^b Females were coded as 0, and males were coded as 1

** *p* < .01

* *p* < .05

Table 3 Regression Results

Variable ^a	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	JI		UPB		UPB		UPB		JI	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Dummy1	0.22	0.16	-0.12	0.21	-0.04	0.20	-0.07	0.20	0.21	0.15
Dummy2	0.31*	0.15	-0.06	0.20	0.04	0.19	-0.00	0.19	0.25	0.15
Dummy3	0.01	0.15	0.02	0.19	0.05	0.19	-0.05	0.19	0.01	0.14
Dummy4	0.26	0.16	-0.10	0.21	-0.05	0.20	-0.09	0.20	0.20	0.15
Age	-0.07	0.05	0.02	0.07	-0.00	0.07	0.01	0.07	-0.03	0.05
Tenure	0.02	0.05	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	0.06	-0.01	0.06	-0.00	0.05
Education	0.04	0.07	-0.00	0.09	-0.00	0.09	-0.01	0.09	0.04	0.07
Gender ^b	0.00	0.10	0.08	0.13	0.09	0.13	0.09	0.13	-0.02	0.10
SBLM	0.10*	0.04			0.22**	0.05	0.20**	0.05	0.13*	0.04
JI			0.20*	0.09			0.15	0.09		
SP									0.07	0.05
SBLM×SP									0.16**	0.05
χ ²	15.67	17.63			5.94		20.57		28.03	
<i>df</i>	9	9			9		10		11	
AIC	477.43	580.10			591.79		579.16		469.07	
BIC	514.50	617.18			628.87		619.61		512.89	
Sample-size adjusted BIC	479.65	582.32			594.01		581.58		471.69	
R ²	0.07*	0.08*			0.08*		0.09*		0.12**	

Notes: *N* = 215

^a SBLM = supervisor bottom-line mentality, JI = job insecurity, UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, SP = supervisory power

^b Females were coded as 0, and males were coded as 1

** *p* < .01

* *p* < .05

Mediation Hypothesis Testing

As shown in Table 3, Hypothesis 1 was supported (*B* = 0.10, *SE* = 0.04, *p* < 0.05; Model 1). We used a previously

described method that parameter-based bootstrapping with 5,000 repetitions (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) to test Hypothesis 2. As shown in Table 4, the indirect effects of supervisor BLM on UPB through job insecurity (indirect

Table 4 Results of Indirect and Conditional Indirect Relationships

Relationships	B	SE	95% bias-corrected CI
Indirect effect of SBLM on UPB	0.02	0.01	[0.00, 0.06]
Conditional indirect effect of SBLM on UPB			
High SP	0.04	0.02	[0.00, 0.10]
Low SP	0.00	0.01	[-0.02, 0.03]
Difference between groups	0.04	0.02	[0.00, 0.10]

Notes: $N=215$. SBLM=supervisor bottom-line mentality, SP=supervisory power, UPB=unethical pro-organizational behavior; CI=confidence interval. The indirect effect and conditional indirect effect tests were based on 5,000 bootstrapping resamples

effect = 0.02, $SE = 0.01$, 95% $CI = [0.00, 0.06]$) are positive and significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Moderation Hypothesis Testing

As shown in Table 3, supervisor BLM and supervisory power interacted to predict job insecurity ($B = 0.16$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.01$, see Table 3 Model 5). We plotted the simple slopes of the relationship between supervisor BLM and job insecurity at high (+ 1 SD) and low (- 1 SD) values of supervisory power. As shown in Fig. 2, under a high level of supervisory power, supervisor BLM was positively related to subordinate job insecurity ($B = 0.24$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$); under a low level of supervisory power, the relationship between supervisor BLM and job insecurity was not significant ($B = 0.01$, $SE = 0.05$, n.s.). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Moderated Mediation Hypothesis Testing

The results from Table 4 showed that the indirect effect was significant when supervisory power was higher (conditional indirect effect = 0.04, $SE = 0.02$, 95% $CI [0.00, 0.10]$) while the indirect effect was not significant when supervisory power was lower (conditional indirect effect = 0.00, $SE = 0.01$, 95% $CI = [-0.02, 0.03]$). The difference between these two groups was significant ($B_{diff} = 0.04$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% $CI [0.00, 0.10]$). Thus, these results supported Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

Drawing on the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), we tested the influence of how and when supervisor BLM affects on subordinate UPB from a new perspective. Our analysis of data which collected from a three-wave survey found that supervisor BLM was positively related to subordinate job insecurity, which in turn

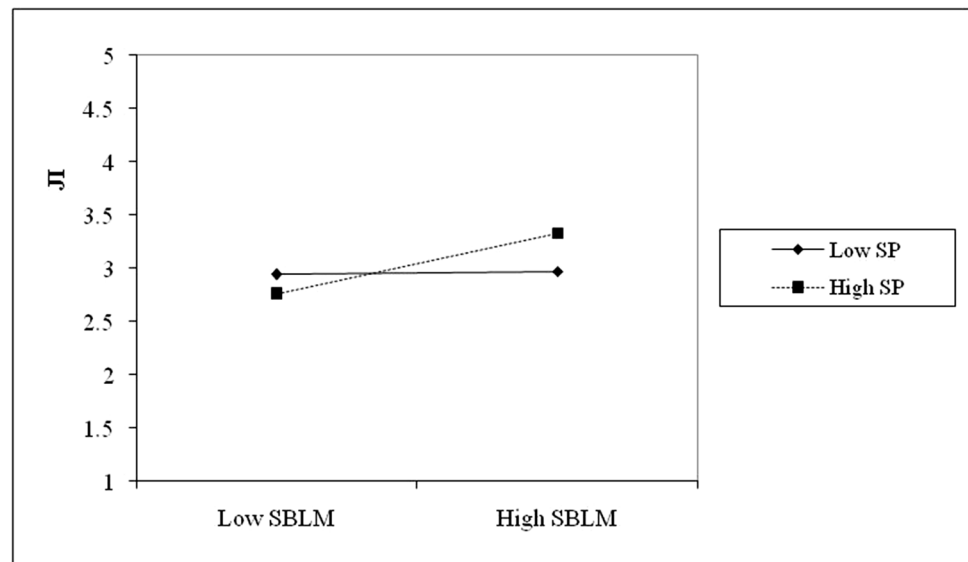
increased the likelihood of subordinates' engagement in UPB. Furthermore, supervisory power was shown to moderate the indirect relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB via subordinate job insecurity such that the indirect effects were strengthened when supervisory power was higher.

Theoretical Implications

Our study contributes to present literature in a number of ways. First, as noted above, previous studies on the impacts of supervisor BLM on subordinates' unethical behaviors have mostly focused on subordinates' model learning of supervisor BLM (Farasat & Azam, 2020; Zhang et al., 2020). Implicitly assuming that subordinates' pursuit of bottom-line goals is their motivation to engage in unethical behavior. However, the present work, based on the transactional model of stress and coping (Farasat & Azam, 2020), demonstrates that supervisor BLM acts as a source of stress that induces subordinates to appraise and recognize this source of hindrance stress and then cope with it by engaging in UPB. Given that stress studies have extensively established that excessive performance requirements are hindrance stressors for individuals (Chen & Liang, 2017; Shah et al., 2002), it is not surprising that supervisor BLM is evaluated as a hindrance stressor. Nevertheless, given that supervisor BLM has been considered beneficial to organizational goals in the past (Wolfe, 1988), it is very important to explore how supervisor BLM may become a source of work stress for subordinates and lead them to engage in unethical behavior.

Second, our study reveals the psychological mechanism between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB. Based on the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), individuals experience psychological changes when faced with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Therefore, it is important to identify a mediating mechanism that explains the paradox of how moral supervisors lead subordinates to engage in unethical behavior. Our study shows that subordinate job insecurity is associated with subordinate UPB when subordinates face a dilemma between losing their jobs because they cannot achieve their supervisors' excessive goals and adhering to social moral standards. Job insecurity provides a new rationale for explaining the unethical behavior of subordinates caused by supervisor BLM; that is, they neglect the high standards of society to offset their anxiety and worries. Our study provides an important supplement to the existing literature on supervisor BLM. Furthermore, our literature review on job insecurity shows that the existing research on the antecedents of individual job insecurity focuses on organizational and leadership factors (Lee et al.,

Fig. 2 Interaction between SBLM and SP on JI. *Note:* SBLM=supervisor bottom-line mentality, SP=supervisory power, JI=job insecurity



2018; Shoss, 2017). This study is among the first to propose that supervisor BLM may be an important situational factor that induces subordinate job insecurity; thus, it represents an important supplement to the research on job insecurity.

Third, our results extend prior works, as Farmer and Aguinis (2005) suggested that higher levels of supervisory power may be associated with increased leader-member exchange and decreased turnover because subordinates perceive their supervisors' intention to offer identity-supporting resources. However, it remains unclear how supervisory power might affect subordinates' interpretations of stress and how subordinates counter their appraisals. It is possible that supervisors have the ability to affect their subordinates' consciousness of their surroundings through rewards or punishment (e.g., Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Supervisory power could allow subordinates to foresee the negative results of hindrance stressors (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), which could consequently enhance their appraisals of and responses to hindrance stressors. Therefore, our research shows that supervisory power is a key factor that influences subordinates in their evaluations of the stressors exerted by supervisors. In addition, our study integrates the power literature with the transactional model of stress and coping literature by examining the role of supervisory power in the relationship between supervisors' mentality and subordinates' behavior, which expands the existing literature in both fields. By introducing supervisory power into the current understanding of the process of subordinates' stress assessments and responses, our study can help researchers deeply understand the role that supervisory power plays in inducing subordinates to engage in unethical behaviors when facing hindrance stressors. Although previous studies have suggested that supervisors with a BLM strengthen bottom-line goals through rewards and punishments (Greenbaum et al., 2012), no empirical research has supported this statement.

Our research shows that a high level of supervisory power strengthens the influence of supervisor BLM on subordinate UPB via subordinate job insecurity, which provides empirical evidence for the previous literature.

Practical Implications

Our study has several implications for organizations. First, the primary practical implication is that supervisor BLM may be viewed as a hindrance stressor by subordinates. This kind of pressure can make subordinates feel insecure at work, which in turn leads to their engagement in unethical behavior. Therefore, organizations should be cautious about supervisor BLM and consider the possibility that it can cause extreme stress to subordinates' thinking and behavior. Organizations should encourage supervisors to formulate reasonable goals and incentives and guide subordinates to work reasonably and legally towards organizational goals.

Second, the results show that job insecurity causes individuals to engage in unethical behaviors to alleviate the anxiety and worry caused by job insecurity. Organizations need to evaluate the factors in their organizational environments that may induce job insecurity for employees and do their best to care for their employees. Supervisors need to give their subordinates more support and encouragement to reduce their job insecurity.

Third, supervisory power has a significant impact on subordinates' evaluations of their supervisors' attitudes and behaviors and their adoption of coping strategies. Organizations should carefully consider their delegation of supervisory power and adopt a principle of proportionality. Organizations also need to train supervisors regarding the use of power so that they can use their power to benefit their organizations.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study has several limitations. First, although we use multi-stage data, we cannot prove a causal relationship; thus, a multi-wave cross-lagged design is needed for future research. Moreover, experimental methods can be used in future research, which can test causality. Second, similar to previous studies, this study uses only self-report measures, which may raise concerns about the effect of common method variance (CMV). Although our results indicate that CMV was not a serious concern in this study, future research could use multiple-sources data to reduce the impact of CMV, such as more objective measures of UPB. Third, with regard to stress, we consider the influence of supervisor BLM on subordinate UPB through subordinate job insecurity, exploring the mediating mechanism of job insecurity. Future research can explore the mechanisms of other possible mediators (e.g., negative mood) in this relationship to better understand the nature of these phenomena.

Conclusion

Our study widens the existing literature by explaining how and when supervisor BLM arouses subordinates' UPB. Our results suggest that supervisor BLM becomes a hindrance stressor that has a positive impact on subordinate job insecurity. To cope with psychological anxiety and work pressure, such subordinates are likely to engage in UPB, which can produce additional benefits for their supervisors. Organizations and managers should realize that an excessive pursuit of bottom-line goals has negative effects on employees and organizations. While pursuing economic benefits, organizations and managers must also pay attention to social and moral responsibilities.

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Data Availability The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the insti-

tutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Oral informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflicts of Interest All authors declare no conflicts of interest with respect to the authorship or the publication of this article.

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