Supervisor bottom-line mentality and subordinates' unethical pro-organizational behavior

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Abstract

Purpose – The multitude of high-profile corporate scandals has prompted the need for more nuanced understanding of factors within organizations that may influence unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB). Based on the social cognitive theory, this study aims to examine the impact of supervisor bottom-line mentality (BLM) on unethical, but pro-organizational conduct by employees through moral disengagement. Additionally, this study examines the moderating role of employee mindfulness in relation of supervisor BLM and moral disengagement.

Design/methodology/approach – To test the study model, the authors collected data from 198 employees working in various Pakistani firms. This study uses PROCESS procedures for the analysis.

Findings – Analyses of time-lagged data showed that (1) supervisor BLM can lead to employee UPB through employee moral disengagement and (2) mindfulness moderated this relationship, such that high (versus low) mindfulness attenuates the link between supervisor BLM and moral disengagement.

Originality/value – This study adds to the extant research by examining how and when supervisor BLM leads to employee UPB. This is the first attempt to examine how supervisor BLM and trait mindfulness jointly determine moral disengagement, which drives UPB.

Keywords Unethical pro-organizational behavior, Supervisor bottom-line mentality, Mindfulness, Moral disengagement, Behavioral ethics

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

> I think the young people I've spoken to, former colleagues I have spoken to, are still struggling with the same issues, the same conflicts, the same pressures to achieve no matter what . . . They [bosses] have as much responsibility for what the outcomes are as those pushing the buttons. Kweku Adoboli, – the ex-rogue trader of UBS (Farrell, 2016)

Tales of recent high-profile ethical scandals highlight that unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), despite clearly violating ethical guidelines, is being promoted within the organizations. Although employees commonly engage in unethical acts consciously, with the intention to serve the interests of their employing organization (Tian and Peterson, 2016; Warren, 2003), UPB can create moral hazards for employers, external stakeholders and broader society (Cialdini *et al.*, 2004). UPB undermines public trust, damages organizational reputation and can cause substantial costs to external stakeholders (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tian and Peterson, 2016; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). Given the potential damage, behavioral ethics researchers have sought to understand the primary drivers of this type of unethical behavior (e.g. Castille *et al.*, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2016; Graham *et al.*, 2015; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). Prior research on UPB suggests that various individual-level factors such as promotion-goal orientation (Graham *et al.*, 2015), Machiavellianism (Castille *et al.*, 2018), psychological entitlement (Lee *et al.*, 2019) and certain attitudinal factors such as an employee's level of identification (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Umphress *et al.*, 2010) and attachment with their organizations (Matherne and Litchfield, 2012), which may lead to employee UPB.

Although these studies help explain why people engage in UPB, current research lacks various perspectives for understanding such behavior. To help address this lacuna, we examine whether supervisor bottom-line mentality (BLM), referred to "as one-dimensional thinking that revolves around securing bottom-line outcomes to the neglect of competing priorities" (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012, p. 344), may lead to employee UPB. As the story above suggests, employees may engage in UPB to help organizations to obtain their bottom-line goals, even if it may come at the expense of other considerations. Even in the Enron case, William C. Powers Jr. testimony blamed the executives for creating a culture centered around specific performance goals that result in one of the largest bankruptcies in US history (Trevino *et al.*, 2003). Although these specific anecdotal examples underscore the dysfunctional nature of exclusive one-dimensional thinking, research on how and when supervisor BLM leads to UPB remains poorly understood. Hence, we seek to broaden our understanding by delineating the process and buffering condition for the relation between supervisor BLM and employee UPB (Figure 1).

Drawing on the social cognitive theory, we suggest that supervisor BLM can influence employee moral disengagement, social cognitive processes by which individuals can rationalize their immoral behaviors, which in turn, can influence employees' UPB. According to the social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1999), supervisors through role-modeling processes shape or alter a subordinate's perceptions and attitudes (Bandura, 1986; Bussey and Bandura, 1999), which, ultimately, have a bearing on the subordinate's attitude-consistent behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2009). Supervisors operating with BLM disregard the fact that organizational systems are multivalent in nature, and they adopt simplistic thinking that focuses on only one relevant outcome (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012; Wolfe, 1988). Moreover, high-BLM supervisors demonstrate to subordinates that obtaining bottom-line outcomes is of utmost importance, and that rewards and accolades will be given to employees who contribute to bottom-line success (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012; Mawritz *et al.*, 2017). In this vein, we argue that a supervisor's "winning-at-all-cost" mentality may activate employee moral disengagement and subsequently UPB by increasing employees' motivation to obtain bottom-line goals "by any means necessary" (Welsh *et al.*, 2020). In other words, we propose that supervisors' one-dimensional thinking gradually erodes subordinates' ethical standards by holding them accountable for performance goals rather than the means to attain those goals, which propagate UPB. Considering moral disengagement as a key psychological mechanism to explain how supervisor BLM influences UPB willingness suggests that BLM supervisors shape the way subordinates construe moral choices, with ultimate effects on employee ethical decision-making and behaviors (Moore and Gino, 2015).

Further, our theoretical model also explains when supervisor BLM is less (or more) likely to yield employee UPB. Specifically, studies that exist give limited insight into differentiating effects of supervisor BLM. We address this gap by examining mindfulness as an important boundary condition capable of mitigating the adverse effects of supervisor BLM on employee
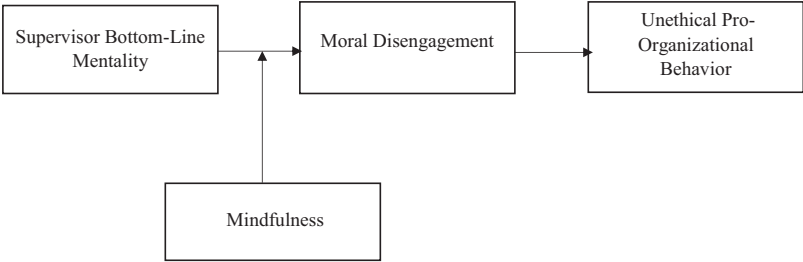

Figure 1.
The model

UPB. In particular, we examine how employee mindfulness (Brown and Ryan, 2003) may interact with supervisor BLM to predict employee propensity to morally disengage and, ultimately, UPB. Mindfulness, an individual trait, is defined as "a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experience" (Brown *et al.*, 2007, p. 212). Being mindful helps employees to regulate their emotions, thoughts and behaviors by detaching themselves from the negative event and also reduces automated interpretation of the event, which enables them to refrain from probable negative responses (Glomb *et al.*, 2011; Long and Christian, 2015). Therefore, mindfulness is an important boundary condition to consider in supervisor BLM research because mindfulness might alter the way in which subordinates process and perceive the information conveyed by high-BLM supervisors (Eisenbeiss and Knippenberg, 2015).

By integrating the abovementioned constructs into an overarching theoretical framework, our research makes multiple contributions to the existing behavioral business ethics literature. First, by demonstrating UPB as one possible outcome of supervisor BLM, this study extends the nomological network of UPB. Second, although early research suggests that BLM leads to detrimental consequences such as social undermining of fellow workers (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012), abusive supervision, (Mawritz *et al.*, 2017), unethical pro-leader behavior (Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019) and reduced performance (Quade *et al.*, 2020), to date, little is known about the effects of supervisor BLM on behaviors that are intended to promote or protect the organization, such as UPB. Recent study has demonstrated that supervisor BLM can drive subordinates to engage in unethical acts (Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019), the unethical behavior in question served to help their supervisor. Consequently, there is a need to examine the impact of supervisor BLM on employee UPB. In doing so, our study extends the limited but growing literature on BLM. Third, by exploring moral disengagement as a mediating mechanism, this study illuminates the process as regard how supervisor BLM motivates employees to engage in UPB. Empirical evidence shows that high-performance goals may lead to employee moral disengagement (Barsky, 2008; Welsh *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, studies have found that moral disengagement is associated with employee UPB (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2019). However, the link between these three constructs together remains poorly understood. This study posits that BLM supervisors, by influencing subordinates' cognitions, impair subordinates' ability to make ethical decisions. This finding is particularly important for organizations that are trying to reduce and eliminate such unethical behavior. If supervisors BLM can affect their subordinates' moral cognitions, and ultimately their conduct, organizations should be more conscious of whom they promote to encourage appropriate behavior. Finally, we find evidence that trait mindfulness is an important boundary condition that can neutralize the negative influence of supervisor BLM. Our standpoint is consistent with the view that individual unethical behavior is an outcome of the joint effects of person and context (Trevino, 1986; Hattrup and Jackson, 1996). In this research, we argue that mindfulness may mitigate the negative effects of supervisor BLM by targeting the cognitive processes that cause moral disengagement and UPB. We know of no studies that have examined the interactive effect of supervisor BLM and mindfulness on moral disengagement and UPB. By examining the moderating role of mindfulness, our work not only underlines the role of individual characteristics in comprehending the influence of supervisor BLM, but also provides novel ways for managing UPB. In summary, this study focused to examine the mediating role of moral disengagement between supervisor BLM and employee UPB. Most importantly, the present study investigated mindfulness as an important boundary condition through supervisor BLM leads to moral disengagement. Doing so, the current research advocates "person–situation interactionist" perspective of ethical decision-making (Trevino, 1986) and also broadens our understanding of how and when supervisor BLM leads to employee UPB.

The remainder of the paper has the following structure. In the next section, we introduce UPB, which is followed by the conceptual model and hypotheses. Furthermore, we describe the methodology applied to the study, which includes the sampling procedure and data collection measures. Finally, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the research along with the avenues for future research derived from our work.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

Unethical pro-organizational behavior

UPB refers to "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 and Bingham, 2011, p. 622). This definition of UPB includes two noteworthy components. First, UPB is unethical acts that are "either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community" (Jones, 1991, p. 367), violates hyper-moral standards of society. Second, UPB is carried out with the intent to benefit the employing organization or its agents (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). This motivation to help the organization differentiates UPB from other hostile and self-centered unethical behaviors, which are performed either to harm the organization or coworkers (Skarlicki and Folger, 1997; Spector and Fox 2005; Thau *et al.*, 2007) or to benefit self (Greenberg, 2002; Terpstra *et al.*, 1993). Nonetheless, Umphress *et al.* (2010) argue that UPB cannot be dissociated from other self-interested unethical behaviors, as it is possible that employees may assume that benefiting the organization also brings superior results for themselves (e.g. promotion, bonus). Furthermore, UPB can involve both acts of omission (e.g. withholding negative information to enhance or protect the organization image and reputation) and commission (e.g. deceiving customers by exaggerating the benefits of the products to accomplish the company's sales target, falsifying financial reports to attain desired level of performance).

Although employees may involve in UPB to help organizations, the end result of UPB does not reflect their *intentions* and may eventually produce unbeneficial outcomes. For instance, an employee to protect the organization might destroy incriminating documents, though it can heighten suspicions of external auditors' and expose them to lawsuits or prompt fines (Umphress and Bingham, 2011). For instance, Volkswagen employees were recently investigated because they intentionally developed software that manipulate vehicle emission systems, allow engine to generate toxins within the standards of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) when cars were performing under controlled laboratory conditions to get around vehicle emissions tests. However, under normal driving conditions, the engine generates toxins up to 40 times above what is acceptable by the EPA (Castille *et al.*, 2018). Other cases, such as Enron, Siemens and Wells Fargo, contain examples of unethical actions performed with an altruistic intent, but produces destructive outcomes for the organization in the long run.

Seminal work on UPB has relied on the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) to explain why employees might engage in UPB. For instance, Umphress *et al.* (2010) found that strong organizational identification would be positively associated to UPB when employees hold a positive reciprocity belief. Building on this theoretical model, prior research has revealed a number of contextual and dispositional factors that may lead to employee UPB (Castille *et al.*, 2018; Effelsberg *et al.*, 2014; Kong, 2016). However, social exchange and social identity perspectives may be insufficient for understanding why employees engage in UPB. Recently, Fehr *et al.* (2019) explored the antecedents and consequences of UPB through a social learning lens. To further contribute to UPB theorizing, this study aims to examine the role of supervisor BLM in predicting employee propensity to involve in UPB by adopting a social cognitive approach.

Supervisor bottom-line mentality and unethical pro-organizational behavior
Typically defined in terms of financial outcomes (such as profits or losses), BLM generally refers to whatever "is worth paying attention to while everything else is discarded" (Wolfe, 1988, p. 145). A BLM represents a nearly exclusive focus on a particular factor, and therefore, revolves around strong, desired end-state of attaining bottom-line outcomes above all else (Mawritz, *et al.*, 2017). Although, bottom-line thinking is normally considered to foster the overall vitality of the organization (Brenner and Molander, 1977; Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012), it may become problematic when people consider bottom line, the only goal to strive for (Wolfe, 1988). Supervisors operating with BLM consider the bottom-line objective, the desired-end state, as a means to enhance their personal gains (Bonner *et al.*, 2017; Wolfe, 1988). Any discrepancy between the desired-end and current state creates internal conflict, as supervisors consider the discrepancy a failure, which they believe will impact an organization and their career in an adverse manner. Therefore, instead of upholding interest in multiple objectives, high-BLM supervisors approach bottom line as a game to be won (Wolfe, 1988) and strive to achieve bottom-line results to the neglect of other organizational priorities. In the pursuit of bottom-line outcomes, they pay little attention to the ethical implications of their decisions and are willing to bend the rules to meet bottom-line productivity requirements (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012).

We draw upon the social cognitive theory to explain why supervisor BLM leads to subordinates engaging in UPB. The social cognitive theory asserts that subordinates through vicarious means learn what is expected of them (Bandura, 1977, 1986). They construct their own realities by observing the attitudes and behaviors of organizational members (such as supervisors, coworkers). Because of their legitimate position and status within the organization, supervisors, specifically, have considerable power to influence subordinates' attitudes and behaviors through this process of observational learning (Cheng *et al.*, 2019; Raven *et al.*, 1998; Yukl and Falbe, 1991). In addition, supervisors' ability to control employees' resources (e.g. promotion, rewards; Salancik and Pfeffer, 1978) and the power to give punishments (e.g. termination; Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019) increase the likelihood that subordinates will look to their immediate supervisors to acquire knowledge regarding acceptable work practices (Berscheid *et al.*, 1976).

When supervisors have BLMs, they have elevated expectations regarding their subordinates' performance level and monitor employee behaviors closely to ensure that everyone is promoting rather than hampering bottom-line success (Wolfe, 1988). High-BLM supervisors underscore bottom-line outcomes at every given opportunity and motivate their subordinates to attain them vigorously, rewarding those who fall in line and punishing others who fail to meet their supervisor's expectations (Callahan, 2004). Given such supervisors' win–lose mentality, a subordinate who does not align themselves with a high-BLM supervisor desired-end state is considered as an obstacle or deviant employee and is likely to face abusive treatment (Mawritz *et al.*, 2017) or other negative consequences such as termination and/or withholding of promotion or rewards (Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). In such situation, subordinates realize that by attaining supervisor bottom-line outcomes, they can only satisfy their supervisor; even in doing so, they have to engage in UPB. Indeed, prior research on BLM demonstrates that employees working for high-BLM supervisors may act unethically to attain supervisor's bottom-line objectives (Babalola *et al.*, 2020; Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). Based on the above argument, we hypothesize.

H1. Supervisor BLM will be positively associated with subordinates' UPB.

Mediating role of moral disengagement
The theory of moral disengagement originally conceptualized by Bandura (1986, 1990, 1991) is grounded the in social cognitive theory. According to the social cognitive theory, people

constantly monitor and regulate their actions and thoughts through moral self-regulatory processes grounded in moral standards and self-sanctions (Bandura, 1986). Theses moral standards may act as guides for good behavior and deterrents for bad behavior. Against these standards, people "anticipate," "monitor" and "judge" their actions and refrain from violating their moral standards, by exerting counteracting self-influence (Bandura, 1996; Detert et al., 2008). However, these self-regulatory processes operate only if they are operational or activated. Bandura (1999) posits that moral self-regulatory processes that ordinarily inhibit reprehensible conduct can be deactivated selectively, through a process called moral disengagement.

Bandura suggested "eight cognitive mechanisms that decouple one's internal moral standards from one's actions" (Moore, 2015, p. 199) that allow individuals to engage in immoral behaviors without feeling distress (Bandura, 1986). These mechanisms fit into three broad groups: (1) to reconstrue the conduct to increase its moral acceptability, (2) to obscures or disregard the deleterious effects of one's actions and (3) to devalue the target (Bandura et al., 1996). Briefly, cognitive restructuring of reprehensible behavior to appear less harmful occurs when people justified the conduct in ways to make it appear socially acceptable and morally justifiable, by portraying it as a mean to serve worthy cause (moral justification); when they use convoluted verbiage instead of morally charged language, making reprehensible conduct seem respectable (euphemistic labeling); and/or when an immoral conduct is compared with even more flagrant inhumanities, it makes original conduct relatively trivial and acceptable. Obscuring or disregarding personal agency occurs by attributing the harmful consequences of their actions to others (my boss wants me to do it), rather than holding oneself accountable for the undesirable behavior (displacement of responsibility); by attributing the harmful effects of reprehensible behavior to many people, based on the conception that "where everyone is responsible no one is really responsible" (diffusion of responsibility; Bandura, 1986, p. 380); and/or self-exoneration also occurs when people distort the harmful effects of their actions by minimizing, disregarding or misrepresenting the harm they have caused (distortion of consequences). Finally, vilifying the victim involves ignoring the victims' human characteristics (dehumanization); and/or self-exoneration can be achieved by blaming victim for bringing suffering on themselves (attribution of blame).

The current study seeks to explain the "moral" effect that supervisor BLM has on subordinates. We theorize that supervisor BLM encourages employees to engage in UPB by amplifying their subordinates' tendencies to morally disengage. Moral disengagement is truly an interpersonal phenomenon; an individual's internalized moral rule set that regulates one's action comprise of norms, values and standards inculcated in him/her by "developmental experiences" and "social interaction" (Johnson and Buckley, 2015). In this vein, supervisors within the organization are more likely to influence their subordinates' moral rule set and subsequent behaviors (Brown and Trevino, 2006; Schminke et al., 2005).

Moral disengagement mechanisms noted at the outset help explain how moral disengagement might mediate the effect of supervisor BLM on UPB. Firstly, supervisor BLM encourages employees to cognitively reframe UPB as acceptable work behavior to attain bottom-line outcomes. A supervisor "by any means necessary" approach increases proclivity among subordinates to commit ethical violations in the process. Supervisor BLM reconstructs UPB as an important and necessary act to circumvent larger network of consequences such as financial ruin or unemployment (Chen et al., 2016; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). Employees in such situations construe that ethical values have to be compromised for more important reasons. Moreover, high-BLM supervisors might also use euphemistic labeling to make reprehensible acts less harmful. A reprehensible act in such situations is likely to be seen as lower in magnitude (Barsky, 2011). Second, self-imposed

self-sanctions are Deactivated when personal agency for the reprehensible conduct is not very clear (Bandura, 1991). When subordinates engage in immoral acts to meet supervisor bottom-line objectives, they feel that BLM supervisors have left them with no other choice but to engage in UPB. Subordinates may disengage their moral self-censure by denying the responsibility of their actions if situation (such as dire financial straits, management orders) is beyond their control (Barsky, 2008; Greenberg, 1998). High-BLM supervisors demand absolute loyalty and obedience from their subordinates; subsequently, subordinates believe that their actions are governed by the orders of domineering supervisors rather than from themselves. Lastly, BLM supervisors can also facilitate moral disengagement by rewarding subordinates engaging in reprehensible behavior that advances organizational interests (Moore, 2007). High-BLM supervisors entail a process of depersonalization by developing a win–lose mentality among subordinates that lowers one's perceived moral and social obligation toward the outgroup (Bandura, 1999; Tajfel, 1982). These subordinates, in turn, tend to engage in any act that helps them in securing bottom line outcomes, without giving much consideration to the residual effects that may result. Thus, in pursuit of bottom-line results, the victim is ignored or dehumanized.

It has been indicated by extant empirical studies that supervisor BLM generates cognitions that may lead to dysfunctional behaviors (Babalola *et al.*, 2020; Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012; Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, empirical research also demonstrates that high-performance goals deactivate one's self-regulatory processes (Barsky, 2008; Welsh *et al.*, 2020). As a result of this deactivation, people are likely to engage in behaviors that are against their socially or morally normative standards (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2019). Chen *et al.* (2016) argued that when subordinates face ethical dilemma in which the organization's interests are at stake, moral disengagement encourages unethical behavior that serves organizational interests by eliminating self-sanctions to harmful behavior. Taken together, from the above discussion, we hypothesize:

H2. Moral disengagement will mediate the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate UPB.

Moderating role of mindfulness
Supervisors with high BLM have high expectations regarding employees' performance (Wolfe, 1988); consequently, employees feel pressurized to do whatever is necessary to meet supervisors' performance expectations. To avoid negative consequences or to gain benefits, employees solely direct their attention to goal attainment, and in the pursuit of supervisor bottom-line outcomes, they are unable to assess the moral consequences of their actions (Barsky, 2008; Sonenshein, 2007). For instance, in Sears' automotive center, a goal of making US$147 per hour causes some employees to overcharge for work they do, charge for work they did not do and conduct unnecessary repair (Barsky, 2008). Thus, high-BLM supervisors impair employee self-regulatory capabilities by disabling the cognitive link between inhumane conduct and moral self-sanctions that inhibit such acts (Bandura, 1986, 1990, 1999, 2002). Though, all subordinates are vulnerable to moral disengagement, the effects of supervisor BLM may not be uniformly profound on all subordinates, some are more susceptible than others. The salience of supervisor BLM on an employee's level of moral disengagement may vary depending on individual differences they bring to the workplace. Both situational factor and individual differences determine the extent to which subordinates are affected by supervisor BLM. In particular, employees who are high in mindfulness observe the present moment occurrences in a receptive and nonjudgmental way, thereby allowing them to recognize the impermanent nature of emotions, thought and body sensations without being affected by them (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Hence, we expect that mindful employees may have more self-control with which to stop the negative thoughts and

worries associated with securing supervisor bottom line, and as a result, should be less susceptible to moral disengagement than their low mindful counterparts.

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhist psychological traditions (Brown *et al.*, 2007). It has been defined as "a state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present," in a nonjudgmental way (Baer *et al.*, 2006; Brown and Ryan, 2003, p. 822). Mindfulness has some noteworthy characteristics (Brown *et al.*, 2007): First, it involves paying attention to internal (mental phenomena) and external (the environment) events (Baer, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2007; Dane, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Second, a mindful individual notices events without being critical about it (pre-conceptual). Third, mindfulness skillfully redirects one's attention back to current experience and away from what may happen or what has happened (Bishop *et al.*, 2004; Hülsheger *et al.*, 2014). Fourth, mindfulness varies between individuals. Mindfulness has been associated to a number of positive outcomes such as greater authenticity (Kernis and Goldman, 2006), higher level of subjective well-being (Brown *et al.*, 2007), higher self-control (Barnes *et al.*, 2007) and self-esteem (Goldin *et al.*, 2009). Organizational scholars have recently directed their attention to explore the self-regulatory benefits of mindfulness on workplace functioning (Glomb *et al.*, 2011; Good *et al.*, 2016).

In the present study, we explore how mindfulness can act as a moderator in the relationship between supervisor BLM and employee moral disengagement. Specifically, we theorized that mindfulness may weaken the relationship between supervisor BLM and employee moral disengagement. Mindfulness allows cognitive decentering that is decoupling of the self from experiences (Bishop *et al.*, 2004; Glomb *et al.*, 2011). By simply noticing of what is happening in the present moment with a nonjudgmental attitude, mindfulness helps individuals in evaluating internal thoughts and external experiences from the viewpoint of an uninvolved bystander. In this vein, we expect mindful employees are less susceptible to supervisor BLM. Subordinates working for high-BLM supervisors are in constant pressure to attain bottom-line outcomes or face substantial consequences, such as termination or probation (Gutnick *et al.*, 2012). These worries or habitual thoughts about the future or grievances of the past draws an employee's attention from the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). Mindful people are able to consciously redirect their attention away from future doubts or past negative memories and back to the present moment (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). Mindfulness helps subordinates to cope with performance demands and work stressors more effectively (Hulsheger *et al.*, 2013), thereby mindful subordinates are less likely to disengage from moral reasoning that could hamper immoral actions. Moreover, mindfulness decreases automaticity that defuses one's tendencies to respond reactively and quickly to stimuli (Glomb *et al.*, 2011). Mindfulness allows individuals to react to situational demands with adaptive reactions rather than automatic and habitual responses (Bishop *et al.*, 2004). Instead of imitating supervisor behavior, mindful employees careful observe a supervisor's behavior and consciously process information as conveyed by BLM supervisors, the less susceptible they become to supervisor BLM orientation. Together, the two core factors (1) cognitive decentering and (2) reduce automaticity associated with mindfulness will buffer the impact of supervisor BLM on employee moral disengagement. Recently, Greenbaum *et al.* (2020) examine the moderating role of mindfulness in the relation between top management BLM and supervisor empathy, suggesting that trait mindfulness might mitigate the negative effects of BLM. Thus, we hypothesize:

H3. The positive effect of supervisor BLM on employee moral disengagement will be weaker for employees high in mindfulness.

Taken together, the mediating and moderating effects explained above suggest a moderated mediation effect (Preacher *et al.*, 2007). Specifically, the supervisor BLM is negatively and indirectly related to UPB through the moral disengagement; this indirect link depends on the level of mindfulness. That is, via moral disengagement, the level of employee mindfulness

conditionally influences the strength of the indirect effect of supervisor BLM on employee UPB. In other words, the indirect effect of supervisor BLM on employee UPB through employee moral disengagement depends on the level of employee mindfulness, indirect effect to be weaker under the condition of high employee mindfulness. As we predict weak (strong) linkages between the supervisor BLM and employee moral disengagement when the employee mindfulness level is high (low), we predict the following hypothesis:

H4. Employee mindfulness moderates the indirect effect of supervisor BLM on employee UPB via moral disengagement, such that the indirect effect will be weaker (stronger) at higher (lower) levels of employee mindfulness.

Methods
Participants and procedures
Participants were a sample of job incumbents employed in a broad range of industries, including architecture, marketing, manufacturing, construction, education, technology, hospitality, finance and transportation. Job incumbents were also given assurance that their identities would remain confidential and responses will only be used for research purpose to reduce their evaluation apprehension and socially desirable responding (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). Participants were also assured that their participation was voluntary, and at any time, they can withdraw from study without penalty.

To create a proximal separation, data were collected at two points in time to minimize common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). At Time 1, participants were asked to report their perceptions of supervisor BLM, level of moral disengagement and mindfulness. They were also asked to report their basic demographic information (e.g. gender and age), and data on control variables were also collected. Six weeks later, at Time 2, those who had responded at Time 1 were asked to rate their tendency to engage in UPB. We coded both sets of survey to accurately match the employee responses. Of the total 310 employees solicited at Time 1, 234 completed the survey (response rate 75%). At Time 2, six weeks after, we asked remaining 234 employees to rate their tendency to engage in UPB. After matching the data, the final sample consisted of 198 employed adults who provided complete responses, resulting in an overall response rate of 64%.

Of the 198 respondents, 131 (66.2%) were male. Regarding educational level, 0.5% of the respondents were high-school graduates, 52.5% were college graduates, 45.5% had a university or graduate degree and 1.5% had a doctorate degree. Focal employees' respondents were 63.6% non-management, 12.6% first line management, 17.2% middle management and 6.6% senior management. The size of respondents' workplace ranged from small (0–25 employees) to large (more than 1,000 employees), with an average in the category of 101–500 employees. And, 73.2% participants had less than five years' experience, and 53% participants had age between 25 and 30 years, and most of the participants (46.5%) had worked for their supervisor for between one and two years (Table 1).

Survey and measures
Well-established scales were used to measure the study variables. The specific scales employed are summarized below.

Supervisor bottom-line mentality
Employees reported their perceptions of supervisor BLM at Time 1 using Greenbaum *et al.* (2012) four-item measure. A sample item includes "My supervisor treats the bottom-line as more important than anything else" (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree").

Variable	Frequency	%
Age		
Less than 25 years	61	30.8
25–30 years	105	53.0
31–35 years	20	10.0
36–40 years	8	4.0
51–55 years	4	2.0
Gender		
Male	131	66.2
Female	67	33.8
Degree held		
High school	1	0.5
Bachelor	104	52.5
Masters	90	45.5
Doctorate	3	1.5
Employee experience		
Less than 5 years	145	73.2
5–10 years	40	20.2
11–15 years	11	5.6
More than 15 years	2	1.0
Sample size by position		
Non-management	126	63.6
First-line management	25	12.6
Middle management	34	17.2
Senior management	13	6.6
Experience under current supervisor		
Less than a year	62	31.3
1–2 years	92	46.5
3–5 years	36	18.2
6–10 years	7	3.5
More than 10 years	1	0.5
Note(s): $N = 198$		

Table 1.
Demographic
information

Mindfulness
We assessed employee mindfulness at Time 1 using the 15-item "Mindful Attention and Awareness Scale" (MAAS; Brown and Ryan, 2003). A sample item includes "I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way" (1 = "almost always" to 6 = "almost never").

Moral disengagement
Employees reported their level of moral disengagement at Time 1 using an eight-item measure developed by Moore *et al.* (2012). Sample items include "Taking something without the owner's permission at work is ok as long as you're just borrowing it" and "People should not be held accountable for doing questionable things at work when they were just doing what an authority figure told them to do" (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree").

Unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB)
Participants rated their tendency to engage in UPB at Time 2 with Umphress *et al.* (2010) six-item measure. Sample items include "If it would help my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good" and "If it would benefit my organization, I would withhold negative information about my organization" (1 = "never" to 5 = "always").

Control variables
Prior studies indicate that certain demographic variables such as employee gender and age might be related to their propensity to engage in unethical behaviors (Kish-Gephart *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, we controlled for employee age, gender when testing our hypotheses. In addition, we also controlled for social desirability to deal with impression management bias that may arise when people rate sensitive questions (Mitchell and Ambrose, 2007). Social desirability was gauged at Time 1 with ten items using Strahan and Gerbasi's (1972) measure (1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree").

Data analysis and results
Analytical procedures
First, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with maximum likelihood estimation in AMOS to examine discriminant validity between variables. Second, we run Models 4 and 8 of Hayes' (2013) PROCESS procedure for analysis of mediation and moderated mediation effects. The PROCESS procedure is extensively used to estimate direct, indirect and conditional indirect effects with related bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs), which avoids statistical power problems that might result from asymmetric or non-normal sampling distributions of indirect relationships (Hayes, 2013; MacKinnon *et al.*, 2004). To test whether the indirect path is mediated by moral disengagement, PROCESS Model 4 was utilized. We used the bootstrapping method (5,000 resamples) that provides 95% bias-corrected CI for indirect effects. To evaluate moderation effects where mindfulness moderates the relation between supervisor BLM and employee moral disengagement (H3) and the moderated mediation where mindfulness moderates the indirect effect of supervisor BLM on employee UPB via employee moral disengagement (H4), we used Model 8 of the SPSS macro developed by Hayes (2013) and obtained mediator variable (moral disengagement) and dependent variable (UPB) models.

Measurement model
Our measurement model comprised of four factors: supervisor BLM, moral disengagement, mindfulness and UPB. Given the length of mindfulness, moral disengagement and UPB measures, we followed a partially disaggregated approach (i.e. parceling or parcel) to form indicators for latent variables to maintain favorable indicator-to-sample-size ratio (Bandalos and Finney, 2001; Coffman and MacCallum, 2005; Williams and O'Boyle, 2008). The present study used three-item parcels as indicators for mindfulness, moral disengagement and UPB (Landis *et al.*, 2000; Mackey *et al.*, 2016). Extant research suggests that parcels have more definitive rotational results and are more reliable than individual items (Cattell and Burdsal, 1975; Little *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, when the aim of the study is to understand the relation among latent variables rather than scale development or understand relation among items, a partial disaggregation model is often preferred (Williams and O'Boyle, 2008). Further, all items used in the study are drawn from previously validated one-dimensional scales; therefore, parceling in this case is especially appropriate (Little *et al.*, 2013). However, before parceling, we examine the unidimensionality of each observed variable in an exploratory factor analysis (Matsunaga, 2008). Parcels were formed using an item-to-construct balance approach, in which items were assigned to parcel groupings based on their loadings (Rogers and Schmitt, 2004).

Typically, normed chi-square value below 3 and root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) below 0.08, as well as Tucker–Lewis index (*TLI*) and comparative fit index (CFI) scores above 0.90 signify an acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The resulting four-factor solution exhibited a fairly good fit, χ^2/df = 1.643, CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.057,

and all the indicators loaded significantly in their related factors. See Table 2 for the factor loadings. On comparing, the goodness of fit of the four-factor model showed a significantly better fit than alternative series of three- and one-factor models, which indicate adequate discriminant validity and also indicate that common method bias might not be an issue (Table 2).

Then, convergent validity and reliability were tested by measures of the average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA). To establish convergent validity, values of AVE should be at above 0.50 for each construct (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) and values above 0.40 are considered acceptable (Chen *et al.*, 2018; Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Huang *et al.*, 2013). In terms of reliability, the CR values greater than threshold value of 0.60 deemed acceptable (Tseng *et al.*, 2006). Additionally, CA was used to test the reliability of observed variables in the model. According to Nunnally (1978), the measure is considered internally reliable if the value of alpha coefficient is 0.70 or higher. The results show that all the indices have achieved acceptable values (Tables 3 and 4).

Model	χ^2	df	$\Delta\chi^2$	χ^2/df	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Four-factor model	96.924[**]	59		1.643	0.057	0.95	0.96
Three-factor model[a]	262.140[***]	62	165.216[***]	4.228	0.128	0.76	0.81
Three-factor model[b]	263.877[***]	62	166.953[***]	4.526	0.129	0.76	0.81
Three-factor model[c]	215.653[***]	62	118.729[***]	3.478	0.112	0.81	0.85
Three-factor model[d]	362.882[***]	62	265.958[***]	5.853	0.157	0.64	0.72
One-factor model	645.869[***]	65	548.945[***]	9.936	0.213	0.34	0.45

Note(s): CFI "comparative fit index," RMSEA "root-mean-square error of approximation," TLI "Tucker–Lewis Index," [**] $p < 0.01$, [***] $p < 0.001$
[a] Three-factor model combines supervisor BLM and UPB
[b] Three-factor model combines supervisor BLM and moral disengagement
[c] Three-factor model combines moral disengagement and UPB
[d] Three-factor model combines moral disengagement and mindfulness

Table 2.
Measurement model comparisons

Constructs	Standardized loading	CR (>0.6)	AVE (>0.4)
Supervisor BLM		0.764	0.45
Item 1	0.71		
Item 2	0.66		
Item 3	0.72		
Item 4	0.58		
Mindfulness		0.874	0.70
Parcel 1	0.89		
Parcel 2	0.81		
Parcel 3	0.80		
Moral disengagement		0.850	0.65
Parcel 1	0.76		
Parcel 2	0.79		
Parcel 3	0.88		
UPB		0.799	0.57
Parcel 1	0.77		
Parcel 2	0.72		
Parcel 3	0.77		

Note(s): CR = "composite reliability", AVE = "average variance extracted"

Table 3.
Factor loadings from CFA

Descriptive statistics and correlations
Table 4 reports the descriptive statistics, reliability estimates and item intercorrelations among the study variables.

Hypotheses testing
H1 proposed a positive relationship between supervisor BLM and employee UPB. As Model 2 in Table 5 demonstrates, supervisor BLM positively predicted employee UPB (β = 0.16, SE = 0.07, p < 0.05). Therefore, H1 is supported. H2 proposed an indirect relationship between supervisor BLM and UPB through moral disengagement. As shown in Table 6, bootstrapped regression results (and 5,000 resamples) for the indirect effects of supervisor BLM on employee UPB through moral disengagement did not include zero (β = 0.08, SE = 0.03, 95% bias-corrected CIs = 0.03, 0.15), provide support for H2.

We then tested H3, which stated that supervisor BLM and mindfulness interactively predict employee moral disengagement. We found a significant interaction between supervisor BLM and mindfulness in predicting employee moral disengagement (β = −0.19, SE = 0.07, p < 0.01, see Table 5 Model 1). H3 is, therefore, validated. To further analyze the strengthening effect of mindfulness on supervisor BLM to employee

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Supervisor BLM	2.95	0.85	(0.76)						
2. Moral disengagement	2.36	0.69	0.33**	(0.82)					
3. Mindfulness	4.28	0.77	0.15*	−0.32**	(0.86)				
4. Employee UPB	2.47	0.81	0.28**	0.43**	−0.21**	(0.78)			
5. Social desirability bias	3.38	0.52	−0.22**	−0.40**	0.40**	−0.33**	(0.74)		
6. Age[a]	1.97	1.04	0.02	−0.04	0.09	0.07	−0.07	–	
7. Gender[b]	0.34	0.47	−0.06	0.01	−0.03	0.04	0.01	−0.22**	–

Note(s): N = 198. CAs are reported along the diagonal. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01
[a]Age was measured using an eight-point scale (where 1 = "Less than 25 years," 2 = "25–30 years of age," 3 = "31–35 years of age," 4 = "36–40 years of age," 5 = "41–45 years of age," 6 = "46–50 years of age," 7 = "51–55 years of age," 8 = "56 years or greater"), [b]0 = male, 1 = female

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations and reliability estimates

Variables	Moral disengagement Model 1			UPB Model 2		
Control	B	SE	95% CI	B	SE	95% CI
Age	−0.01	0.04	[−0.10, 0.07]	0.08	0.05	[−0.02, 0.18]
Gender[a]	0.02	0.09	[−0.15, 0.20]	0.12	0.11	[−0.10, 0.34]
Social desirability bias	−0.29**	0.09	[−0.47, −0.11]	−0.21	0.12	[−0.44, 0.02]
Supervisor BLM	0.27**	0.05	[0.17, 0.38]	0.16*	0.07	[0.02, 0.29]
Mindfulness	−0.29**	0.06	[−0.42, −0.17]	−0.10	0.08	[−0.26, 0.07]
Supervisor BLM × Mindfulness	−0.19*	0.07	[−0.33, −0.05]	−0.01	0.09	[−0.19, 0.16]
Moral disengagement				0.34**	0.09	[0.17, 0.52]
R^2		0.32			0.24	
	F (6, 191) = 14.79, p < 0.001			F (7, 190) = 8.79, p < 0.001		

Note(s): N = 198. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. BLM = "bottom-line mentality", UPB = "unethical pro-organizational behavior"; *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Table 5.
Regression results for moral disengagement and UPB

moral disengagement, we plotted this interaction at ± 1 SD of mindfulness (Figure 2). As can be seen in Figure 2, supervisor BLM to employee moral disengagement is stronger under low mindfulness (−1 SD) and becomes weaker under high mindfulness (+1 SD).

Finally, H4 predicted that employee mindfulness moderates the indirect effect of supervisor BLM on employee UPB through employee moral disengagement. To test this hypothesis, we estimated 95% bias-corrected CI based on 5,000 bootstrapped samples using Hayes's (2013) PROCESS macro for the conditional indirect effect at three levels (−1 SD, mean, +1 SD) of moderator. As shown in Table 6, the conditional indirect effect (supervisor BLM → moral disengagement → UPB) is significant (CIs do not have zero value) when followers are low (−1 SD) in mindfulness ($\beta = 0.14$ (0.05), 95% CI = 0.07, 0.25), become progressively weaker at mean ($\beta = 0.09$ (0.03), 95% CI = 0.04, 0.17) and at high (+1 SD) mindfulness ($\beta = 0.04$ (0.03), 95% CI = 0.001, 0.112). Thus, H4 is supported.

Discussion

Building upon the positive relation between supervisor BLM and UPB, our study had two main objectives. First, we examined the mediating role of moral disengagement in linking supervisor BLM and UPB. Second, we shed new light on a boundary condition for the relation between supervisor BLM and UPB – mindfulness. We empirically tested and found evidence for a moderated mediation framework in which employee moral disengagement mediated the relationship between supervisor BLM and UPB and, at the same time, mindfulness moderated this mediated relationship.

Relationship	Effect	SE	Boot LLCI	Boot UL CI
Indirect effect of supervisor BLM on UPB	0.079	0.030	0.033	0.149
Conditional indirect effect				
−1 SD (−0.77)	0.145	0.046	0.066	0.251
M (0)	0.094	0.032	0.040	0.167
+1 SD (0.77)	0.043	0.028	0.001	0.112
Note(s): $N = 198$. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. BLM = "bottom-line mentality"				

Table 6.
Results of indirect and conditional indirect effects

Figure 2.
The moderating effect of employee mindfulness on the relationship between supervisor BLM and subordinate moral disengagement
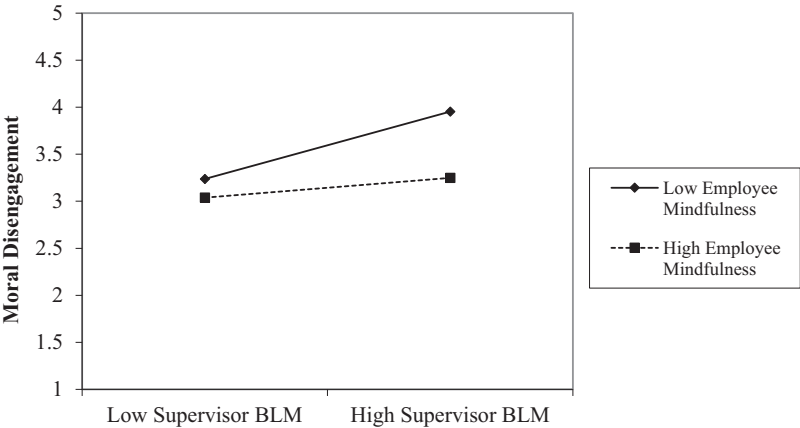
Theoretical implications
Our research has several important theoretical implications. First, emerging research on BLM has underscored the negative effects of supervisor BLM for organizations (e.g. Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012; Mawritz *et al.*, 2017). Yet, to date, little is known why BLM may lead to dysfunctional behaviors such as social undermining of fellow workers (Greenbaum *et al.*, 2012) and unethical behavior (Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). We find that high-BLM supervisors may promote UPB by activating employee moral disengagement. We draw on the social cognitive theory to integrate supervisor BLM with moral disengagement to explain the process through which supervisor BLM can motivate UPB. Through the process of moral disengagement, subordinates of BLM supervisors are more likely to commit unethical conduct for the sake of bottom-line attainments without feeling apparent guilt or remorse; (Bandura, 1999). However, so far, we have limited understanding, we have limited understanding of the cognitive mechanism through which supervisor BLM may influence employees' ethical decision-making. By considering moral disengagement as an underlying cognitive mechanism, our research explains how BLM supervisors shape the way subordinates construe moral choices, resulting in UPB.

Second, in addition to shedding light on the underlying mechanism linking supervisor BLM to UPB, our study also examined the moderating effects of mindfulness, demonstrated that mindfulness attenuates the link between supervisor BLM and employee moral disengagement. Individuals higher in mindfulness are particularly sensitive toward what is occurring in the present surroundings, rather than being occupied with sorrows, habitual thoughts, plans for future activities, such individuals are better able to face problems, failures and losses with equanimity (Brown *et al.*, 2007; Dane, 2011; Glomb *et al.*, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Liang *et al.*, 2016). Hence, mindful individuals are less susceptible to the contextual triggers, in particular their supervisor BLM. This suggests that mindful individuals working for high-BLM supervisors exhibit less tendency to morally disengage to neutralize immoral acts, with ultimate effects on their UPB. In this sense, this is one of the first study to identify a boundary condition, mindfulness, that can neutralize the adverse effects of supervisor BLM on workplace outcomes. Despite emerging theory, empirical research on mindful self-regulation at work is scarce, only few studies have acknowledged the salutary effects of mindfulness at work (Glomb *et al.*, 2011; Hafenbrack, 2017; Hülsheger *et al.*, 2013). The current work adds to this emerging line of inquiry.

Third, the findings contribute to the UPB literature by identifying unique and new supervisor characteristics that encourage this type of behaviors, BLM. By theorizing and demonstrating that supervisor BLM is positively associated to employee UPB, this study advances our understanding of how supervisor's bottom-line thinking influences UPB, and in doing so, we respond to Umphress *et al.* (2010) call to explore the antecedents of UPB. Most of the extant research on UPB focused on the social identity theory to build their theoretical framework (Effelsberg *et al.*, 2014; Graham *et al.*, 2015; Matherne and Litchfield, 2012; Miao *et al.*, 2013; Umphress and Bingham, 2011; Umphress *et al.*, 2010). Previous work demonstrates that strong identification with one's supervisor or organization is related to employees' propensity to engage in UPB (Umphress *et al.*, 2010; Umphress and Bingham, 2011). By identifying supervisor BLM as an antecedent of UPB, the current research offers an alternative plausible explanation of why employees engage in UPB.

Practical implications
Overall, several distinct managerial implications arise from the present study. Our work highlights that supervisor BLM has certain negative consequences both for the employees and organization. To curb UPB among employees, organizations should identify, select and promote supervisors who gives emphasis to ethics, morality, harmony and service as much

as they give importance to productivity (Valentine *et al.*, 2014). By employing supervisors who give consideration to the means used to attain bottom-line results, not just the ends, organizations may reduce the occurrence of UPB (Brown *et al.*, 2005). Alternatively, organizations should evaluate and reward supervisors based on the broader criteria that include morality, service and harmony rather than narrow bottom-line measures to discourage bottom-line thinking among supervisors. Additionally, strict actions should be taken against supervisors who prioritize bottom-line goals over ethical considerations (Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). Finally, organizations should also focus on investing in ethics training programs for supervisors and employees to improve their moral sensitivity and reasoning (Mele 2005, 2009; Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2020).

Our research suggests that subordinates working for high-BLM supervisors are under high pressure to relax their moral reasoning to attain bottom-line outcomes. To counterbalance the employee tendency toward moral disengagement, organizations should create a culture of social responsibility in which immoral conducts are not tolerated and ethical pro-organizational behaviors are encouraged. In this vein, top managers should integrate ethics and morality into the core organizational values, and these values should be reflected in organizational culture, mission statement and even in performance appraisal. By aligning organizational interests with ethical values, there will be little incentive for organizational members to conduct UPB (Miao *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, organizations should "encourage the use of ethical language and discourage the acceptance of euphemisms that cloud judgments" (Moore *et al.*, 2012, p. 41) that would help in shaping employee moral cognition and behavior.

Our findings underscored the critical role of high mindfulness on preempting subordinates from responding to supervisor BLM with negative work attitudes and behaviors. Hence, organizations should implement mindfulness training programs to limit the negative consequences of supervisor BLM on subordinate's ethical decision-making. Equipping subordinates with mindfulness skills improve those self-regulatory capacities that allow them to deal with emotionally upsetting situations as well as promote adaptive responses to supervisor BLM, subsequently discourages him or her to engage in UPB. Thus, we recommend organizations to offer mindfulness-based programs to equip employees with mindfulness skills.

Limitations and future directions

We acknowledge certain limitations in our research that need to be addressed by future research. Our data were cross-sectional, and thus, it is more difficult for us to determine a causal direction among variables considered. However, the causal ordering of the model was consistent with theory and substantively logical. Nevertheless, future research should provide employee longitudinal and experimental designs to strengthen causality inferences. Second, common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012) may be a concern because we collected data on all constructs from a single source, namely, employees. However, the time-lagged study allowed us to measure predictor and outcome variables at different points in time, thus partially ruling out the issue of self-source bias. Additionally, we addressed the possibility of common method variance (CMV) in our study's design and statistically. First, we assured anonymity and confidentiality to lessen any evaluation apprehension that may arise when giving response to sensitive items (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). Second, we conducted CFA to assess discriminant validity and found that our measurement model provided a better fit to the data (χ^2/df = 1.643, CFI = 0.964, TLI = 0.953, RMSEA = 0.057) than a variety of alternative statistical models. Lastly, our design and analyses include interaction, and significant interaction effects demonstrate that common method bias might not be a serious concern (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012).

In moving forward with work on supervisor BLM, we encourage future research to investigate its associations with other employee outcomes such as sabotage, incivility and aggression. For instance, supervisor win–lose mentality promotes self-regulation depletion among employees, which then elicits dysfunctional interpersonal behaviors like cheating (Christian and Ellis, 2011), deception (Welsh *et al.*, 2014) and abuse (Barnes *et al.*, 2015). Also, high-BLM supervisors monitor subordinates' performance at every given outcome and mistreat them if they fail to attain target. In such situations, employees might also engage in sabotage as a reaction to unfair treatment from BLM supervisors. Moreover, employees working for BLM supervisors might register their concerns by engaging in constructive (e.g. voice) rather than destructive resistance. Finally, BLM supervisors might create role conflicts and excessive workloads for employees, with an ultimate effect on employee burnout and work–family relationship (Crawford *et al.*, 2010; Ford *et al.*, 2007; Lee and Ashforth, 1996; Mesdaghinia *et al.*, 2019). Research in these areas warrants future studies.

Our research provides initial evidence that supervisor BLM impacts employee tendencies to engage in UPB. We did not, however, examine factors within the work environment that might trigger or dampen the negative consequences of supervisor BLM. The focus of this present research was on internal, individual-based factors (moral disengagement, mindfulness) that potentially connect supervisor BLM and UPB. However, the effects may also depend on external, organizational based factors such as ethical and fairness climates. Nevertheless, future research examining possible external factors that organizations can leverage to circumvent the likelihood that supervisor BLM lead to UPB is needed. Additionally, future research needs to explore other individual difference moderators that may also affect the strength of the indirect association between supervisor BLM and our outcome via moral disengagement. For instance, some personality traits may exacerbate the supervisor BLM effect (e.g. psychological entitlement or Machiavellianism), while other traits may dull the salience of supervisor BLM (e.g. moral identification).

By uncovering a mediating variable, moral disengagement in the association between supervisor BLM and UPB, this study shed light on the underlying cognitive processes that shape employee attitude and behaviors. Nevertheless, our partial mediating model underscores that the link between supervisor BLM and UPB is not fully mediated by moral disengagement, implying additional mediators should also be examined. In addition, our work underscored the role that supervisor BLM plays in influencing their subordinates' tendencies to morally disengage, though this remains an important question that how supervisor triggers moral disengagement at a micro level (Reynolds *et al.*, 2014). For instance, supervisor BLM might encourage subordinates to adopt attitude of unethical tolerance, subsequently effect the way subordinate construe choices with moral import, represents an interesting avenue for future research.

Conclusion

We integrate cognitive theories with the power and influence literature to explain the effect of supervisor BLM on employee unethical behaviors intended to help their organizations. Our study demonstrated that supervisor BLM could encourage UPB via moral disengagement. We argue BLM supervisors influence how their employees cognitively construe choices with moral import with detrimental behavioral consequences. We also found evidence that negative effects of supervisor BLM on their subordinates UPB likely are neutralized for subordinates whose mindfulness is high rather low. Hence, by identifying supervisor BLM as an antecedent to UPB and by uncovering the mediating and moderating role of moral disengagement and mindfulness in the relation between supervisor BLM and UPB, the present research helps organizations to take steps to limit the negative effects of supervisor

BLM. Hopefully, our new findings motivate more nuanced inquiries in this direction to further understand the possible processes and boundary conditions underlying the relationships.

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