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## Job insecurity and unethical pro-organizational behavior: The joint moderating effects of moral identity and proactive personality

Dan Wang<sup>a</sup>, Qingxiong Weng (Derek)<sup>a,\*</sup>, Ataullah Kiani<sup>b</sup>, Ahmed Ali<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, No.96, Jinzhai Road, Baohe District, Hefei, Anhui 230026, China

<sup>b</sup> School of Economics and Management, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China

<sup>c</sup> IRC for Finance and Digital Economy, KFUPM Business School, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Dhahran 31261, Saudi Arabia

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### ABSTRACT

Unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) is an increasingly prevalent workplace behavior resulting from job insecurity (JI). However, willingness to engage in UPB in the face of JI may vary because of individual differences. Intending to reveal which personal factors affect the JI–UPB link, this study uses self-regulation theory to introduce a new framework that explores the moderating effects of moral identity and proactive personality on the JI–UPB link. Upon examining two samples ( $N_{\text{sample 1}} = 481$ ,  $N_{\text{sample 2}} = 368$ ) of Chinese employees, results show that the positive JI–UPB link was weakened by moral identity but strengthened by proactive personality. Furthermore, the positive JI–UPB link was weaker for individuals with high proactive personality–high moral identity than the link for those with high proactive personality–low moral identity. Our findings have significant implications for theory and practice.

### 1. Introduction

Job insecurity (JI) refers to a sense of powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation (Hellgren et al., 1999, p. 181). It is an important antecedent of negative workplace outcomes (Lee et al., 2018). Previous studies have linked high JI to negative workplace behaviors, such as bullying (Shoss, 2017), counterproductive work behaviors (Lee et al., 2018), and unethical behaviors (Zhang et al., 2021). The negative effect of JI has been exacerbated because of the increase in JI levels resulting from the economic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic globally and the subsequent massive reduction in employment levels (Dlugosz, 2021). Although JI can be influenced by environmental factors, there are significant individual differences in the way employees respond to it (Lee et al., 2018). One of these responses is unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB). UPB refers to “actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members (e.g., leaders) and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct” (Umphress & Bingham, 2011, p. 622), such as withholding negative information about the company or its products from clients. Prior research has suggested that, as a response to JI, UPB benefits organizations in the short term and helps employees prove their value to their employer and secure their jobs (Ghosh, 2017; Lawrence &

Kacmar, 2017). However, UPB can harm the interests of the organization or stakeholders in the long run (Mishra et al., 2021).

Thus, research exploring personal factors that are likely to dampen the use of UPB as a response to JI is warranted. A review of JI literature suggests that an individual's response to JI is contingent on personal factors (Lee et al., 2018). Self-regulation theory (SRT) suggests that self-control efforts (e.g., initiating and inhibiting behaviors) determine subsequent self-regulation failure (Baumeister, 2018; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Following this theorization, the present study incorporates moral identity and proactive personality as two potential personal factors that may moderate the JI–UPB link because they affect individuals' self-regulation process of resisting UPB as a response to JI. Specifically, moral identity endows individuals with self-regulatory strength, which motivates moral actions (Aquino & Reed, 2002), whereas proactive personality may regulate personal resources toward achieving desired goals (Baumeister, 2018; Nielsen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2014). However, no research has examined their effects on the use of UPB in response to JI.

The present study tests the separate and joint moderating effects of moral identity and proactive personality on the JI–UPB link (see Fig. 1). It contributes to the current literature in the following three ways: (a) enriching JI and UPB theory by revealing the boundary conditions under

\* Corresponding author at: School of Management, University of Science and Technology of China, Hefei, Anhui 230026, China.

E-mail addresses: [wd0319@mail.ustc.edu.cn](mailto:wd0319@mail.ustc.edu.cn) (D. Wang), [wqx886@ustc.edu.cn](mailto:wqx886@ustc.edu.cn) (Q. Weng), [ataullah.kiani@sem.tsinghua.edu.cn](mailto:ataullah.kiani@sem.tsinghua.edu.cn) (A. Kiani), [ahmedali.ustc@yahoo.com](mailto:ahmedali.ustc@yahoo.com) (A. Ali).

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which individuals translate JI into UPB, (b) highlighting the “dark side” of proactive personality, and (c) providing insights into when moral identity would be effective in preventing UPB. In sum, we investigate a moderated-moderation model in which moral identity negatively moderates the JI–UPB link (*Hypothesis 1*), whereas proactive personality positively moderates the JI–UPB link (*Hypothesis 2*) and negatively moderates the buffering effect of moral identity (*Hypothesis 3*). We test these hypotheses by surveying two samples at two time points.

### 1.1. Job insecurity and unethical pro-organizational behavior

SRT suggests that “coping with stress, regulating negative affect, and resisting temptations require self-control, and after such self-control efforts, subsequent attempts at self-control are more likely to fail” (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000, p. 247), especially when the motivation to resist tempted behaviors becomes weak (Baumeister, 2018). According to the theory, one’s motivation to utilize self-control depends on the types and volume of personal regulatory resources (Baumeister, 2018). Prior research has shown that weakened self-regulation resulting from JI triggered involvement in UPB (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017). The double (“unethical” and “pro-organizational”) nature of UPB helps explain using such behaviors as a coping strategy when experiencing JI.

UPB involves unethical conduct for the benefit of the organization. It has been conceptualized as immoral and/or illegal pro-organizational behaviors (Umphress et al., 2010; Umphress & Bingham, 2011). Although such pro-organizational behaviors are discretionary and not specified in reward systems (Mishra et al., 2021), “individuals may perceive that benefiting the organization also benefits themselves” (Umphress et al., 2010, p.770). Previous research has pointed out two possible explanations for why job-insecure individuals engage in UPB. First, they are motivated to commit, rather than resist, UPB for its pro-organizational nature despite its inherently unethical nature. For instance, job-insecure employees may engage in UPB as part of a job preservation strategy designed to safeguard their job (Guo et al., 2020; Shoss, 2017). Second, job-insecure individuals involve in UPB because of diminished regulatory resources resulting from self-regulatory endeavors to combat JI (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017; Lee et al., 2018). For example, exhausted job-insecure employees may choose to commit UPB for resource depletion (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017).

### 1.2. Moderating effect of moral identity

Not all individuals experiencing JI fail to make decisions regarding the use of UPB because their responses to JI are contingent on personal factors (Lee et al., 2018). One factor that may affect the JI–UPB link is moral identity, which refers to “self-conception organized around a set of moral traits” (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1424). It serves as a self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral behaviors and inhibits

unethical acts (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Rua et al., 2017). Several studies have highlighted the mitigating role of moral identity in translating antecedents into UPB. For instance, individuals who are high (versus low) in moral identity are less likely to commit UPB in a mutual investment employee–organization relationship (Mishra et al., 2021) and under a benevolent leadership (Shaw & Liao, 2021). This study argues that moral identity reduces the utilization of UPB and elucidates why individuals with high (low) moral identity are less (more) likely to engage in UPB as a response to JI.

Individuals high in moral identity are motivated to behave ethically to align their self-concept with their behavior in terms of morality (Aquino & Reed, 2002). In response to JI, they are unlikely to commit UPB because UPB would create a discrepancy between one’s moral self-concept and behavior (Ward & King, 2018). Furthermore, the internalized moral standards held by individuals high in moral identity enable them to recognize and resist unethical behavior under diminished self-regulation resources (Rua et al., 2017). However, individuals low in moral identity are less motivated to act ethically and less capable of resisting tempting unethical behavior, such as UPB (Baumeister, 2018; Rua et al., 2017). As a result, individuals with high moral identity are more likely to resist UPB than those with low moral identity in response to JI.

**Hypothesis 1.** Moral identity moderates the positive JI–UPB link, such that this relationship is weaker (stronger) at high (low) moral identity.

### 1.3. Moderating effect of proactive personality

Another personal factor that may affect the JI–UPB link is proactive personality, which refers to a disposition to take the initiative in changing one’s environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Such a disposition motivates individuals to monitor actively and regulate their goal-directed behaviors (Jonason & O’Connor, 2017; Zhao & Guo, 2019) to overcome obstacles until meaningful change occurs (Nielsen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2014). Such initiatives may function as personal resources to overcome hindrances (Loi et al., 2016; Schmitt et al., 2015). However, consecutive regulatory efforts to overcome JI may also exacerbate strain. Parker and Sprigg (1999) found that, under the condition of low job control, employees with high proactive personality traits felt more strain. Several other scholars also indicated that proactive people become frustrated when they face obstinate problems but have no opportunity to solve the problem (Harvey et al., 2006; Nielsen et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2014). Given that JI, as an obstinate hindrance, demands high regulatory efforts, we believe that proactive individuals would avoid their frustration caused by JI by initiating goal-directed efforts to increase job security. In the present study, we argue that UPB could be goal-directed actions of proactive individuals as a response to JI.

Research has documented that employees may adopt UPB as a coping

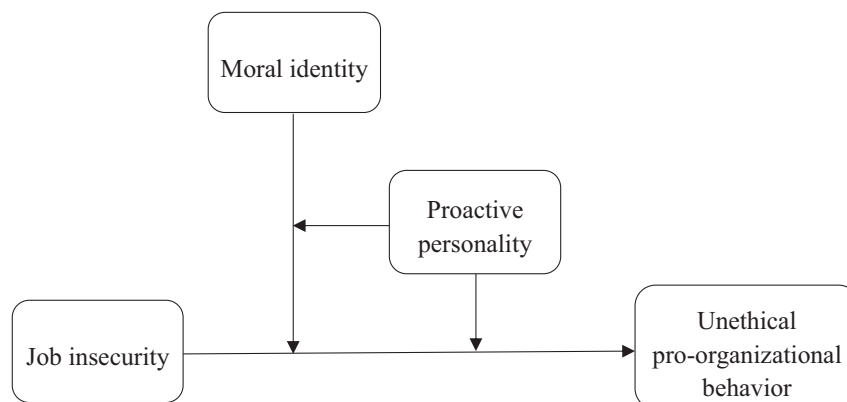


Fig. 1. The proposed theoretical model.

strategy to safeguard their jobs under the excuse of benefiting the organization (Guo et al., 2020), determining JI as one of the important antecedents of UPB (Ghosh, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021). The likely reason for demonstrating UPB is the pro-organizational nature of UPB, which enables individuals to contribute to the attainment of the organizational goals faster (Guo et al., 2020; Thau et al., 2015), be seen as efficient by their superiors (Umphress et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2021), and obtain a high performance evaluation from a moral decoupling superior (Mishra et al., 2021). Consistent with this line of inquiry, we suspect that high proactivity motivates individuals to regulate their goal-directed behaviors actively to overcome obstacles and hindrances quickly for meaningful change in their job status. In this regard, such individuals may see UPB as a quick action of changing the state of being insecure despite the potential unethical character of these actions because it would help them prove their value to the organization (Ghosh, 2017; Guo et al., 2020).

**Hypothesis 2.** Proactive personality moderates the positive JI–UPB link, such that this relationship is stronger (weaker) at high (low) proactive personality.

#### 1.4. Joint moderating effects of moral identity and proactive personality

The main argument underlying the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link is that moral identity motivates and enables individuals to resist unethical behavior using self-regulatory resources. However, drawing upon SRT (Baumeister, 2018; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), such a positive effect on moral identity would be contingent on personal factors that affect motivation to resist UPB. As discussed earlier, proactive personality may motivate job-insecure employees to engage in UPB. Thus, we argue that the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link is a function of proactive personality.

Specifically, a high proactive personality may mitigate the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link, especially for individuals low in moral identity. That is, proactive people with low moral identity are the most likely to commit UPB because their motivation to take UPB as a quick action to change the state of being unsafe predominates over the motivation to resist it (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Baumeister, 2018). Furthermore, we expect that proactive people with high moral identity are less likely to engage in UPB than those who are proactive but have a low moral identity. The motivational conflict between accepting and resisting the UPB of individuals with high proactive personality and high moral identity may weaken the effect of JI on UPB (Rua et al., 2017).

In comparison, a low proactive personality may intensify the buffering effect of moral identity on JI–UPB link, especially for individuals high in moral identity. We argue that passive people with high moral identity are the least likely to commit UPB because they are less motivated to be involved in risky initiatives that require extensive efforts (Harvey et al., 2006; Nielsen et al., 2022; Zhao & Guo, 2019), which determines that their motivation to resist UPB predominates over the motivation to accept UPB as an opportunity to change the state of being unsafe (Baumeister, 2018; Nielsen et al., 2022; Zhao & Guo, 2019). Finally, we speculate that the motivation to engage in UPB of job-insecure passive people with low moral identity may remain uncertain. They may have a low resistance to engaging in UPB because of their low moral identity, but their passive traits may restrict them from taking risky activities like UPB. Based on the arguments above, we propose the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 3.** Proactive personality moderates the moderating effect of moral identity on the positive JI–UPB link, such that the negative moderating effect of moral identity is weaker (stronger) for employees high (low) in proactive personality.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants and procedures

We recruited 481 participants (68.71% response rate, 284 females) for sample 1 from the service industry (e.g., finance, catering, and retail) and 368 participants (71.46% response rate, 240 females) for sample 2 from a retail company at two time points with an interval of four weeks to procedurally reduce common method bias (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017). Sample demographic information about gender, age, and tenure can be found in Table 1.

Participants provided informed consent, reported their JI, proactive personality, moral identity, and all the control variables at Time 1. They reported their UPB and received US\$ 0.46 as a reward at Time 2. More details about the participants and procedures (e.g., data collection and sample representativeness) are available in the supplementary materials.

### 2.2. Measures

#### 2.2.1. Job insecurity

JI ( $\alpha_{\text{sample1}} = 0.82$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{sample2}} = 0.89$ ) was assessed using a seven-item scale (Hellgren et al., 1999). Participants rated each item on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). One sample item is “I feel uneasy about losing my job in the near future.”

#### 2.2.2. Moral identity

Moral identity ( $\alpha_{\text{sample1}} = 0.89$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{sample2}} = 0.92$ ) was measured by a 10-item scale (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Participants rated all 10 items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). One sample item is “Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am.”

#### 2.2.3. Proactive personality

Proactive personality ( $\alpha_{\text{sample1}} = 0.84$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{sample2}} = 0.91$ ) was measured using a 10-item scale (Bateman & Crant, 1993) using a 7-point response scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). One sample item is “If I see something I don't like, I fix it.”

#### 2.2.4. Unethical pro-organizational behavior

UPB ( $\alpha_{\text{sample1}} = 0.85$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{sample2}} = 0.88$ ) was measured using a six-item scale (Umphress et al., 2010). Participants rated the items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). One sample item is “If it would help my organization, I would exaggerate the truth about my company's products or services to customers and clients.”

#### 2.2.5. Control variables

Demographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, tenure, and social desirability) were controlled because these characteristics could affect the use of UPB (Umphress et al., 2010). We measured the social desirability bias ( $\alpha_{\text{sample1}} = 0.75$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{sample2}} = 0.88$ ) using a 10-item scale (Steenkamp et al., 2010), with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), for potential bias arising from sensitive UPB items.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Confirmatory factor analysis

The results from AMOS 24 indicated that the four-factor model fit the data well (sample 1:  $\chi^2[489] = 640.12$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , comparative fit index [CFI] = 0.97, Tucker-Lewis index [TLI] = 0.97, and root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = 0.03; sample 2:  $\chi^2[489] = 680.40$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.03). This model's fit was significantly better than alternative models, and all indicators loaded significantly on their respective latent

**Table 1**

Means, standard deviation, and correlations of variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	M	SD
1. Gender	-	-0.18**	-0.27**	0.03	0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.14**	0.59	0.49
2. Age	-0.26**	-	0.69**	0.15**	-0.05	-0.06	0.02	-0.07	31.34	9.24
3. Tenure	-0.19**	0.65**	-	0.18**	-0.04	-0.03	0.07	-0.09	5.86	4.22
4. Sod	-0.04	0.08	0.15**	-	-0.02	0.07	0.26**	0.05	3.12	0.73
5. JI	-0.02	-0.05	0.00	0.01	-	0.02	0.07	0.42**	3.09	0.85
6. MI	-0.08	-0.03	-0.04	0.18**	0.04	-	0.09*	-0.32**	3.38	0.86
7. PP	-0.04	0.06	0.02	0.27**	-0.03	0.12*	-	0.41**	4.93	0.85
8. UPB	-0.05	0.04	0.14**	0.16**	0.39**	-0.20**	0.34**	-	2.87	0.53
M	0.65	32.54	6.64	3.79	3.07	3.34	4.71	3.39		
SD	0.48	7.30	2.91	0.63	0.85	0.62	0.76	0.63		

Note. Correlations are shown above the diagonal for sample 1 and below sample 2.  $N_{\text{sample1}} = 481$ ,  $N_{\text{sample2}} = 368$ . Gender was coded: Male = 0, Female = 1. Sod = social desirability, JI = job insecurity, MI = moral identity, PP = proactive personality, UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

factors (see Tables S2–S5 in supplementary materials).

### 3.2. Primary analysis

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and correlations between the variables calculated by SPSS 22. JI is positively related to UPB. Moral identity is negatively related to UPB. Furthermore, proactive personality is positively associated with UPB.

### 3.3. Hypotheses testing

We posited the negative moderating effect of moral identity (Hypothesis 1), the positive moderating effect of proactive personality (Hypothesis 2), and the joint moderating effects of moral identity and proactive personality on the JI–UPB link (Hypothesis 3). We tested Hypotheses 1 and 2 using the PROCESS macro Model 1 and Hypothesis 3 using the PROCESS macro Model 3, with 5000 bootstrap samples and a 95% confidence interval (Hayes, 2017). Results of the hypotheses testing with and without control variables are consistent (see Tables S6–S11 in supplementary materials).

The results of moderation analysis show that the interaction between JI and moral identity on UPB is significantly negative ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = -0.11$ ,  $t = -3.98$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = -0.15$ ,  $t = -3.79$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Following previous research (Zhao & Guo, 2019), we plotted all interactions in this study using 1 SD above and below the mean. As illustrated in Fig. 2a (sample 1) and Fig. 2b (sample 2), the positive effect of JI on UPB is

weaker when moral identity is high ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.17$ ,  $t = 5.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.13$ ,  $t = 4.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) than when it is low ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.36$ ,  $t = 10.99$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.32$ ,  $t = 8.51$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The results of moderation analysis indicate that the interaction between JI and proactive personality on UPB is significantly positive ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.15$ ,  $t = 6.68$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.15$ ,  $t = 5.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). As illustrated in Fig. 3a (sample 1) and Fig. 3b (sample 2), the positive effect of JI on UPB is stronger when proactive personality is high ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.38$ ,  $t = 12.69$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.30$ ,  $t = 10.53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) compared with when it is low ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.12$ ,  $t = 4.09$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.08$ ,  $t = 2.43$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

The results of moderation analysis demonstrate that the interaction among JI, moral identity, and proactive personality on UPB is significantly negative ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = -0.05$ ,  $t = -2.18$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = -0.13$ ,  $t = -3.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that proactive personality negatively moderates the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link.

Specifically, as depicted in Fig. 4a (sample 1) and Fig. 4b (sample 2), for individuals high in moral identity, the JI–UPB link is weaker when proactive personality is low ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.03$ ,  $t = 0.93$ ,  $p = 0.35$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.23$ ,  $p = 0.22$ ) than when it is high ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.25$ ,  $t = 7.40$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.17$ ,  $t = 4.41$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). For individuals low in moral identity, the JI–UPB link is stronger when proactive personality is high ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.55$ ,  $t = 15.02$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}} = 0.52$ ,  $t = 10.84$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) than when it is low ( $B_{\text{sample1}} = 0.18$ ,  $t = 5.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $B_{\text{sample2}}$

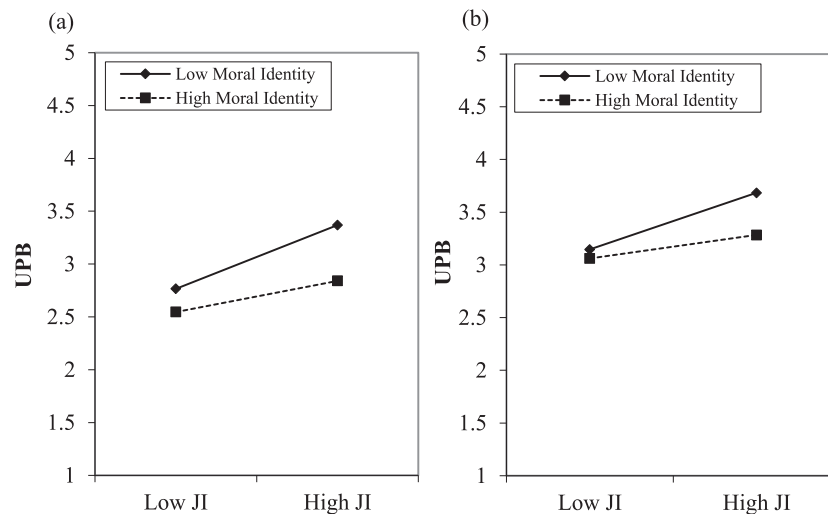
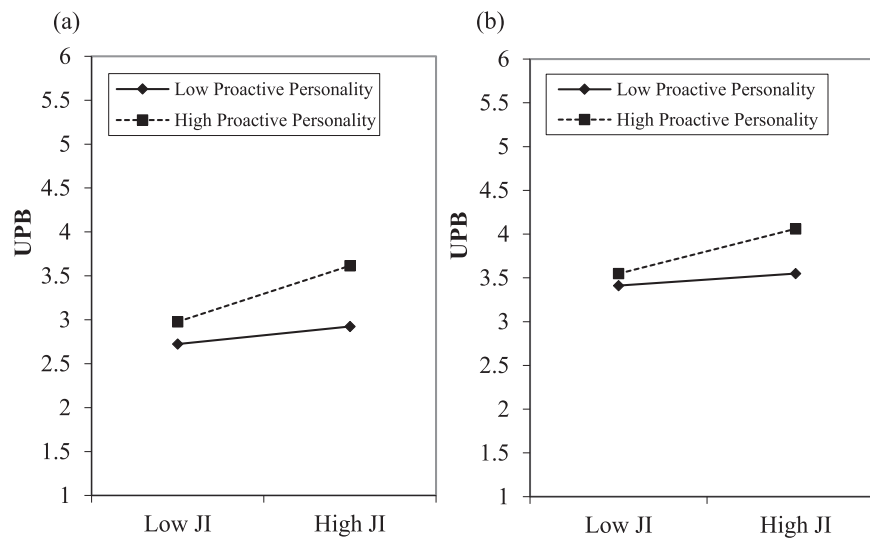
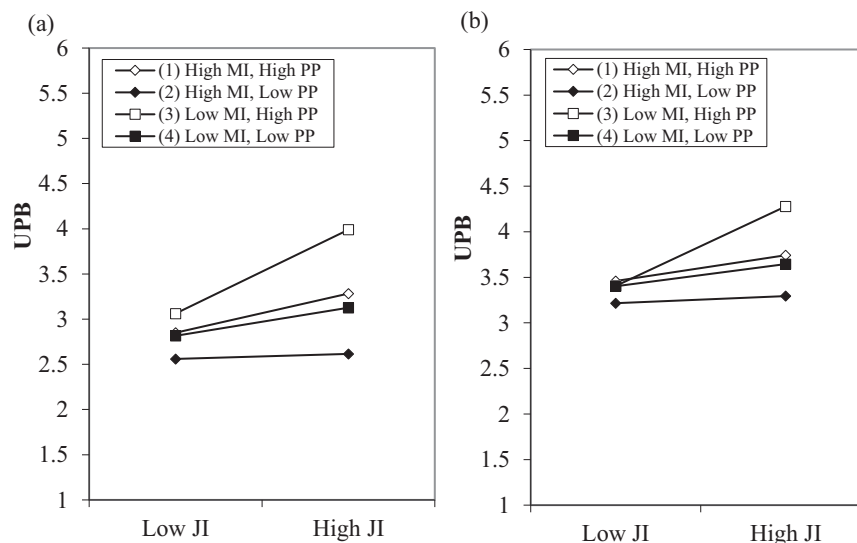


Fig. 2. Interaction between job insecurity and moral identity on unethical pro-organizational behavior. Note. UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, JI = job insecurity.



**Fig. 3.** Interaction between job insecurity and proactive personality on unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Note.* UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, JI = job insecurity.



**Fig. 4.** Interaction among job insecurity, moral identity, and proactive personality on unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Note.* UPB = unethical pro-organizational behavior, JI = job insecurity, MI = Moral identity, PP = proactive personality.

= 0.14,  $t = 3.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These results indicate that the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link is intensified by low proactive personality but mitigated by high proactive personality. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

#### 4. Discussion

This study explores the understudied boundary conditions of the JI–UPB link based on SRT, which account for the variance in UPB resulting from JI. This study's theoretical and practical implications based on our results are discussed below.

First, we identified moral identity as a buffer that significantly weakens the positive JI–UPB link, suggesting that employees with high (low) moral identity are more (less) likely to resist UPB in response to JI. This finding is important because prior studies have failed to explain how moral identity acts as a protective factor for UPB in response to JI (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017). Furthermore, this finding extends Lawrence and Kacmar's (2017) theoretical prediction that moral identity

may serve as a self-regulation mechanism for UPB by substantiating that moral identity decreases UPB among job-insecure employees. This is because moral individuals are capable of and are highly motivated to resist unethical behaviors with diminished regulatory resources (Ruah et al., 2017).

Second, we revealed that proactive personality is another personal factor that significantly strengthens the positive JI–UPB link, suggesting that employees with high (low) proactive personality are more (less) likely to commit UPB in response to JI. This finding is intriguing because it adds to the viewpoint that proactive personality functions as a personal resource and buffers negative outcomes (e.g., Loi et al., 2016; Schmitt et al., 2015). This study substantiates the “dark side” of the proactive personality by showing how proactive people are motivated to use UPB as a response to JI, which responds to researchers' call for research exploration when proactivity may trigger negative consequences (e.g., Nielsen et al., 2022). This finding is consistent with previous findings of UPB that individuals are motivated to adopt UPB as a coping strategy to improve their inclusionary status against the risk of



exclusion from the organization (Ghosh, 2017; Thau et al., 2015).

Third, we demonstrated that the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link is negatively moderated by proactive personality. Moral identity dampens job-insecure employees' willingness to commit UPB but only for those low in proactive personality. This crucial finding suggests that moral identity is not necessarily effective in preventing UPB. Our study addresses this problem by investigating how proactive personality moderates the buffering effect of moral identity on the JI–UPB link. Our finding also substantiates the notion that a high proactive personality mitigates the buffering effect of moral identity on translating JI into UPB, whereas a low proactive personality intensifies it. This finding is consistent with SRT, which suggests that factors associated with self-control and motivation jointly determine self-regulation processes (Baumeister, 2018).

This study offers new insights into the early intervention of UPB. We recommend that organizations provide job-insecure employees with personalized guidance to prevent UPB. For example, guiding (e.g., creating ethical guidelines) proactive employees to prove their value by ethical means may be helpful, but a moral course may be effective in training those low in moral identity and proactive personality to resist UPB. Furthermore, we encourage managers to provide regular mental health training to educate employees on properly coping with JI and relevant symptoms, thereby reducing resource depletion that may promote self-regulation failure on UPB (Lawrence & Kacmar, 2017).

This study has some limitations that provide avenues for future research. First, findings based on participants from a single culture (i.e., collectivism) may not apply to other cultures. The reason is that the characteristics of other cultures (e.g., individualism) could shape individuals' willingness to commit UPB (Guo et al., 2020). Therefore, future research should consider cultural factors when exploring the underlying mechanisms of the JI–UPB link. Second, UPB was anonymously measured by self-report because supervisors or colleagues are unlikely to know an employee's willingness to engage in UPB. Although such a measure is reasonable, according to Umphress et al. (2010), future research could use simulated measurements to assess UPB to reduce social desirability bias.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explores the separate and joint moderating effects of personal factors (i.e., moral identity and proactive personality) on the JI–UPB link. Our results suggest that the positive JI–UPB link is weakened by moral identity and strengthened by proactive personality. The buffering effect of moral identity is mitigated by a high proactive personality and intensified by a low proactive personality. Thus, our findings provide new insights on when employees tend to commit UPB in response to JI and how managers should prevent it.

## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in *osf.io* at [https://osf.io/fpj6a/?view\\_only=48de493938164c6eaae7662235ec7fe6](https://osf.io/fpj6a/?view_only=48de493938164c6eaae7662235ec7fe6).

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Dan Wang** conceptualized the study, organized the data collection, conducted the statistical analysis, and wrote the (re-)wrote the manuscript.

**Qingxiong (Derek) Weng** secured the funding, supervised and (re-) wrote parts of the manuscript.

**Ataullah Kiani** (re-) wrote parts of the manuscript.

**Ahmed Ali** (re-) wrote parts of the manuscript.

**Dan Wang, Qingxiong (Derek) Weng, Ataullah Kiani, and Ahmed Ali** reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission.

## Declaration of competing interest

None.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111685>.

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