



Workplace Spirituality and Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior: The Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding about the mechanism that underlies the detrimental effects of workplace spirituality (WPS) dimensions on employee unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), directly as well as indirectly, through job satisfaction. Using a sample consisting of 458 employees in various organizations in China, this study reveals that two dimensions of WPS are positively associated with UPB. Also the results of this paper show that each of the three dimensions of WPS has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. Furthermore, this study successfully confirms the mediating effect of job satisfaction in the relationship between WPS dimensions and UPB. Finally, theoretical and practical implications, future research directions and limitations of this study are discussed at the end of this research article.

Keywords Workplace spirituality · Job satisfaction · Unethical pro-organizational behavior · Social exchange theory

Introduction

In recent years, cases of malfeasance occurred frequently in organizations. This malfeasance confirms that unethical acts are being conducted and are sometimes flourishing even within organizations. Unethical behavior is both common and costly in work organizations (Vardi 2001; Umphress and Bingham 2011). With that, it is not surprising then that scholarly research has focused to some degree on the antecedents of such potentially detrimental behavior. In the twenty-first century, an important trend in business is a focus on employee spirituality in the workplace (Shellenbarger 2000; Krishnakumar and Neck 2002). Cavanaugh (1999) argued that spirituality could potentially improve the understanding of business ethics. A theme that has been emerging in the management literature is that workplace spirituality (WPS) and business ethics are related (Corner 2009). The theoretical connection between spirituality and ethics in the workplace has been advanced by a number of researchers (Furnham 1995; Gunther 2001; Jackson 1999; Giacalone and Jurkiewicz 2003a; Beekun and Westerman

2012; Ayoun et al. 2015; McGhee and Grant 2017). Furnham (1996) offered further support, stating that spirituality was a key component of ethical behavior, as did Victor and Cullen (1988) in establishing a typological link between spirituality and business ethics behaviors. Moreover, Lowery et al. (2014) found that spirituality was associated with perceptions of workplace ethics. Additionally, based on a critical realist methodology, McGhee and Grant (2017) investigated how spirituality influenced ethical behavior in a variety of work contexts. This growing body of literature on WPS and business ethics advocates that the development of spirituality in workplace can restrain unethical behavior and promote ethical behavior in the organizations.

However, recent high-profile events in the public sphere have highlighted the need for a greater understanding of different form of unethical behaviors: acts that seek to benefit the organization, rather than cause harm, known as unethical pro-organizational behaviors (Umphress et al. 2010). These unethical pro-organizational behaviors can be seen as positive and/or desirable and such behaviors may benefit the organization even though in turn they may violate some overarching social norm (Cullinan et al. 2008; Warren 2003). However, to the best of this author's knowledge, empirical research how an employees' workplace spirituality relates to their unethical pro-organizational behaviors and the process by which the relationship occurs remains poorly understood. Therefore,

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further empirical investigations may contribute to an understanding of the association between the two domains. Accordingly, this study seeks to fill this gap by evaluating the effect of WPS on UPB.

This study contributes to the literature in a number of ways. First, although several studies have investigated possible antecedents to UPB, such as organizational identification and positive reciprocity beliefs (Umphress et al. 2010), the limited empirical research on UPB that is currently available suggests that further the greater insight into the individual factors and situational conditions that shape the emergence of UPB is needed in order to better explain ethically questionable events and behavior in organizations, as well as to inform organizational policies and practices geared toward preventing such behavior from occurring (i.e., Umphress et al. 2010). By empirically examining the relationship between WPS and UPB, this study extends previous UPB research. Second, organizational science is witnessing a substantial change by considering WPS as an organizational variable that affects employee behavior and organizational performance (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). WPS has been found to be positively associated with employee work attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee's well-being (e.g., Milliman et al. 2003; Pawar 2009, 2016). Research has also found WPS has a positive impact on employee behaviors such as innovative behaviors and knowledge sharing behavior (Afsar and Rehman 2015; Williams et al. 2016; Rahman et al. 2015). While some new insights about WPS have continued to be offered in the management literature, there is a general lack of critical analysis and studies to examine its negative impact. Research needs to consider potential negative aspects of WPS (Milliman et al. 2003). This study answers this call to investigate how WPS positively impacts UPB and adds to the theoretical and empirical work regarding workplace spirituality. Third, this study extends previous work in this area by proposing a novel, integrated model of employee behaviors in the workplace, shown in Fig. 1, to examine job satisfaction as a mediator between workplace spirituality and unethical pro-organizational behaviors. Finally, the practical implication of this contribution is to give some suggestions to organizational leaders and managers regarding how to prevent UPB by policy, incentives, and organizational culture when the organization seems to benefit from these behaviors. Also the findings of this study should enable some people to inform organizations how best to train their managerial-level employees in regulating UPB of subordinates.

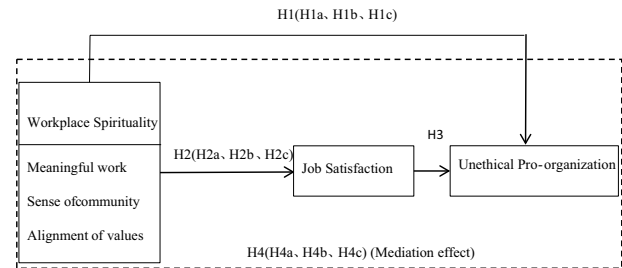


Fig. 1 Hn represents Hypothesis as a whole. Hna represents the Hypothesis about the relationship between meaningful work dimension with a variable. Hnb represents the Hypothesis about the relationship between sense of community dimension with a variable. Hnc represents the Hypothesis about the relationship between alignment of values dimension with a variable

Literature Review and Hypotheses

WPS and UPB

Although spirituality is a relatively new idea in the workplace, it is certainly not a new idea elsewhere in general human experience (Ashmos and Duchon 2000). WPS is not about religion, rather, about employees who understand themselves as spiritual beings whose souls need nourishment at work. Thus, this paper focuses on WPS not from religious connotation nor conversion, nor even accepting particular belief system but on a set of human values experienced as a sense of belonging and connection to others and to workplace. There are numerous definitions because of the highly personal and abstract nature of WPS concept (Milliman et al. 2003). For instance, Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003, p. 129) indicated that workplace spirituality is “a framework of organizational values evidenced in the culture that promote employees’ experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected to others in a way that provides feelings of completeness and joy.” Nevertheless, as Lowery et al. (2014) pointed out, the Ashmos and Duchon (2000) accompanying definition of WPS is the most widely accepted and actually used conceptualization of the construct. Ashmos and Duchon (2000, p. 137) defined workplace spirituality as “the recognition that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes place in the context of community.” According to this definition, Milliman et al. (2003) adopted only meaning in work and sense of community and excluded the transcendent or the inner life aspect (Pawar 2009). Keeping in line with the research of Milliman et al. (2003), this study adopts the definition of WPS by Kurt et al. (2016, p. 486) as “the effort to find one’s ultimate purpose in life, to develop a strong connection to

co-workers and other people associated with work, and to have consistency (or alignment) between one's core beliefs and the values of their organization."

Milliman et al. (2003) stated that WPS is a complex and multi-faceted construct. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) developed and validated a measurement instrument for three levels of analysis: individual, work team, and organization. More recently, however, a number of scholars (e.g., Karakas 2010; Chawla and Guda 2013; Benefiel et al. 2014; Gupta et al. 2014) have noted that a common definition of WPS has emerged around the three primary dimensions of the inner life: meaningful and purposeful work, and a sense of community and connectedness. These three dimensions, originally conceptualized by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), are included within the Krishnakumar and Neck's (2002) perspectives. Researchers have suggested some additional dimensions for the WPS construct including organizational values and compassion (Gupta et al. 2014), transcendence and mindfulness (Petchsawang and Duchon 2009). Consistent with Milliman et al. (2003), this study focuses on three levels of WPS namely, meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of values, which is a little different from the three dimensions mentioned above. However, it is important to note that this study empirically assesses these dimensions at the individual level of analysis.

The aspect of meaningful work refers to the sense of what is purposeful, significant, and joyful in work (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Milliman et al. 2003; Ghadi et al. 2015). It is the most connected to the concepts such as the search for meaning in what individuals are doing at the workplace. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) indicated that the lack of a meaning in our daily work can lead to existential sickness and separation/alienation from oneself. Individuals with high meaningful sense will understand what gives their work personal meaning and will know when their spirit is energized by their work. Employees like this look forward to coming to work. As for sense of community, the second dimension of WPS, it refers to the level of connection and interaction that employees articulate with co-workers (Milliman et al. 2003; Duchon and Plowman 2005). Sense of community is based on the belief that people see themselves as connected to each other and that there is some type of relationship between one's inner self and the inner self of other people (Maynard 1992; Miller 1992; Milliman et al. 2003). Neal and Bennett (2000) noted that this level of spirituality involves the mental, emotional, and spiritual (e.g., "esprit de corps") connections among employees in organizations. The essence of community is that it involves a deeper sense of connection among people (Milliman et al. 2003). Alignment of values in this study is conceptualized in terms of the view of Milliman et al. (2003), who identified alignment as individuals experiencing a strong sense of congruency between their personal values and their organization's

mission and purpose. Also Milliman et al. (2003) indicated that this dimension involves a belief that the organization is ethical and of high integrity.

However, a complex definition of WPS may involve broader and potentially vertical (divine or other spiritual) dimensions. Consensus is growing among scholars that one should distinguish workplace spirituality between individual spirituality and organizational spirituality. Krishnakumar and Neck (2002) advanced the framework of the organization-centered/individual-centered dichotomy to implementation of workplace spirituality. According to Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003b), spirituality can be viewed on the individual level and the organizational level in the context of the work environment. Kolodinsky et al. (2008) concluded that individual workplace spirituality refers to the extent to which individuals bring their personal spiritual values to workplace while organizational spirituality indicates the perceptions of individuals regarding the presence of spiritual values in their organizations. In a similar investigation, Pawer (2009) also concluded that individual personal spirituality and WPS are quite different constructs. The concept of WPS in this study reflects an individual's perception of the spiritual values within an organizational setting. Therefore, it differs from the individual spirituality which presumes that an individual brings the totality of personal spiritual values to the workplace and that one's personal spiritual values have an effect on worker behavior as well as interpretations of, and responses to, work-related events (Kolodinsky et al. 2008).

Umphress and Bingham (2011) defined unethical pro-organizational behaviors as actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members (e.g., leaders) while violating core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct. The two components of this definition are (1) that UPB is *unethical behavior* (Jones 1991), and then (2) that UPB is *pro-organizational behavior*, meaning that it is intended to benefit the organization, its members, or both (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Matherne and Litchfield 2012; Knoll and Dick 2013). False accounting, bribery, concealment of product defects, destroying incriminating files to protect an organization's reputation, disclosing false or exaggerated information to the public and environmental pollution might help to increase company profits and be, therefore, considered pro-organization, yet the unethical nature of these activities is undeniable. Chinese traditional culture and leadership make UPB very popular in the organizations. For instance, Chinese accounting systems have historically been characterized by opacity and a culture of secrecy that provide Chinese firms with the opportunity to camouflage fraudulent activity (Xue and Zan 2012). Hence, Chinese accountants will be more willing than their counterparts from countries with different culture to engage in ethically questionable accounting practices for the benefit of their firms. Also Chinese authoritarian

leadership, benevolent leadership, and moral leadership had a significant interaction on UPB (Zhang et al. 2017) and differential leadership in Chinese context has a positive effect on insiders' and outsiders' UPB (Lin and Cheng 2017).

When individuals experience meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of values in their workplace, they may show a strong loyalty or attachment to the organization (Rego and Pina and Cunha 2008), engagement and organizational commitment (Milliman et al. 2003; Pawar 2009; Farahnaz Kazemipour et al. 2012; Gatling et al. 2016), and an emotional and psychological "contract" with the organization (Dehler and Welsh 1994). According to social exchange theory, if one party provides a benefit, the other party is motivated to reciprocate by providing a benefit in return (e.g., Blau 1964; Emerson 1976; Gouldner 1960). Research on social exchange theory suggested that employees with positive social exchange relationships are less likely to engage in unethical acts that may harm the organization, such as stealing (e.g., Townsend et al. 2000; Greenberg 2002). Accordingly, Umphress and Bingham (2011) indicated that employees may reciprocate positive exchange relationships with their employers by engaging in UPB. Extending this logic, employees who are enjoying spirituality in workplace may view UPB, such as protecting the organization by lying to customers or clients, failing to issue refunds to customers and clients, or selling an unsafe product, as a way to reciprocate positive social exchange relationships with their employer (Umphress and Bingham 2011).

Also the research of social identification theory suggested that individuals' development of social identity (Tajfel 1982) is based on their organizational membership and internalization of their organization's successes and failures as their own (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Mael and Ashforth 1995). Employees who strongly identify with their organization behave in ways that are consistent with organizational expectations and ways to benefit the organization, such as through higher loyalty, increasing extra-role behaviors and job performance, decreasing turnover intentions (Mael and Ashforth 1995; Van et al. 2000; Wan-Huggins et al. 1998), and even promoting unethical pro-organizational behaviors (Umphress et al. 2010; Kong 2016). Individuals with strongly perceived WPS are more likely to take organizational values and work-related practices as more salient to them and enhance their identification with their organization (Dehler and Welsh 1994). Therefore, the downside of WPS might be that individuals may pursue organizational goals and maximize the benefits for their organization by engaging in unethical acts such as exaggerating the truth about their company's products or services to customers and clients.

In addition, from the perspective of Confucianism, people from China tend to define themselves in the context of collectivism and an interdependent self (Markus and Kitayama

1991). Social relationships and group membership are linked to the motivation in order to adjust to the demands of others and to maintain harmony within one's group (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Jia and Krettenauer 2017). WPS dimensions in Chinese business organizations can help to socialize individuals by encouraging them to emphasize collective-centered actions. If successful, it is more likely that individuals will look away when they or others use unethical behavior to promote the interests of their organization without feeling guilty or remorseful, and therefore, can promote UPB.

According to Milliman et al. (2003), alignment of values dimension of WPS includes not just an alignment of values with the organization, but a belief that the organization is ethical and of high integrity. At first sight, it seems that this characteristic of WPS appears to directly conflict with the UPB concept. However, individuals with higher alignment have a strong conscience, and are concerned about ethics and their organization's reputation for integrity. As soon as the organization faces some challenges (e.g., law suits against the organization, stringent regulatory policies, intense industrial competition), higher alignment employees are more likely to perceive a threat to the status of their organization's reputation and increase their willingness to engage in pro-organizational, but unethical, behavior for the benefit of their organization.

Coupling the observations mentioned above, this study presents the following hypotheses:

H1 Workplace spirituality dimensions would be positively associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior, and in particular:

H1a Meaningful work would be positively associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior.

H1b Sense of community would be positively associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior.

H1c Alignment of values would be positively associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior.

Mediation Effect of Job Satisfaction

WPS and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke 1976, p. 1300). The motivator-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al. 1959) suggested that intrinsic job satisfaction is intrinsic and internal to the employees and is also quite stable (i.e., work itself or 'type of work') (Jurgensen 1978). Intrinsic job satisfaction involves an individual's attitudes toward elements related to work such as achievement,

responsibility, advancement, and growth (Herzberg et al. 1959). Intrinsic job satisfaction stems from the work itself and positive engagement in tasks. The job characteristics model indicates that experienced meaningfulness of work has great potential for the employee to perceive work to be intrinsically motivating (Hackman and Oldham 1976). This finding was also supported by subsequent research (Fried and Ferris 1987). Trott (1996) stated that those who are open to meaningful and purposeful relationships, which are key aspects of community, are more likely to grow, learn, and achieve at work and less likely to experience job burnout. According to postulations of self-determination theory, employees become intrinsically satisfied when they experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their work activities (Edward and Richard 2000). Ryan and Deci (2006) indicated that if employees perceive the task as fun, interesting or meaningful, they are likely to engage in it with a sense of volition and psychological freedom resulting into improved intrinsic job satisfaction. The research of self-determination theory suggests that providing a meaningful rationale even for uninteresting tasks may endorse them and further incorporate them in their value systems which facilitate the internalization of behaviors (Edward and Richard 2000) resulting in improved intrinsic task motivation (Lips-Wiersma and Wright 2012; Hackman and Oldham 1976; Fried and Ferris 1987; Deci et al. 1994; Reeve et al. 2002). Meaningful work characteristic of WPS manifests itself in meaningful work, joy and energized action. Ghadi et al. (2015) suggested that meaningful work refers to the sense of what is purposeful, significant, and joyful in work. And Milliman et al. (2003) found a positive correlation between a meaningful work dimension and an employee's intrinsic job satisfaction. Therefore, the meaningful work dimension may induce intrinsic job satisfaction. In addition, Walton et al. (2012) indicated that people acquire interests from others, especially others to whom they feel socially connected, suggesting that motivation is highly sensitive to social relationships. When employees experience feelings of connectedness with their colleagues, their need of belongingness is satisfied which may result in intrinsic task motivation (Marques 2006). According to Ashmos and Duchon (2000), the sense of community dimension of WPS involves having a deep connection to, or relationship with, others. Milliman et al. (2003) also found a positive correlation between this dimension and an employee's intrinsic job satisfaction. Therefore, the sense of community of WPS may induce intrinsic job satisfaction. Moreover, some theoretical work has explored the idea that there is a significantly positive relationship between the alignment of values dimension and intrinsic job satisfaction (Milliman et al. 2003; Riasudeen and Prabavath 2011; Gupta et al. 2014).

Hence, on the basis of the theoretical arguments mentioned above and previous literature demonstrating links

between the dimensions of WPS and intrinsic job satisfaction, this research suggests the following hypotheses:

H2 Workplace spirituality dimensions would be positively associated with job satisfaction, in particular:

H2a Meaningful work would be positively associated with job satisfaction.

H2b Sense of community would be positively associated with job satisfaction.

H2c Alignment of values would be positively associated with job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and UPB

Job satisfaction is a variable that has often been used in research. The relationship between job satisfaction and workplace behaviors has garnered scholarly attention since the early history of organizational psychology (Wright et al. 2007). Research on job satisfaction suggests that the strength of employees' satisfaction influences productive work behavior, such as increased extra-role, creative, productive behaviors, and job performance, while decreased workplace deviance, withdraw, turnover intentions, and unethical behaviors (e.g., Motowidlo 1984; Knoop 1994; Viswesvaran et al. 1998; Kish-Gephart et al. 2010; Judge et al. 2006). Research also shows that job satisfaction has a strong relationship with constructs such as organizational commitment (e.g., Meyer et al. 2002) and perceived organizational support (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). Therefore, satisfied individuals generally identify more strongly with their organization and have more commitment to their work unit. They wish to avoid causing harm to the organization. Accordingly, Matherne and Litchfield (2012) showed that individuals with high levels of affective organizational commitment are more likely to engage in UPB. Umphress and Bingham (2011) also indicated that individuals who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to engage in UPB when they hold strong positive reciprocity beliefs. Simply put, satisfied individuals may pursue organizational goals and maximize the benefits for their organization, at the expense of ethical standards and external stakeholders' interests. Likely, based on social exchange theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell 2005), the principle of reciprocity (Blau 1964; Emerson 1976; Gouldner 1960) and social identity theory (Tajfel 1982), employees regulate their behavior to satisfy their positive association and membership with their organization (Hogg et al. 1995), and they behave in ways intended to maintain or enhance the positive self-image of being affiliated with their organization. Therefore, satisfied employees may view unethical pro-organizational behaviors,

such as protecting the organization by lying to customers or clients and selling an unsafe product, as a way to reciprocate positive social exchange relationships with their organization and employer (Umphress and Bingham 2011; Wildschut et al. 2002; Leavitt and Sluss 2015; Fiske 2002; Balliet et al. 2014). Thus, this research suggests the following hypothesis:

H3 There would be a positive relationship between job satisfaction and unethical pro-organizational behavior.

The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

Decades of research on job satisfaction have resulted in a sound understanding of how independent variables affect employees' level of job satisfaction and how job satisfaction, in turn, influences a variety of important workplace behaviors. Job satisfaction is thus positioned either as a determinant of workplace behavior or as a desirable outcome in its own right. The research of social exchange theory suggested that job satisfaction functions as a mediator of the relationship between various antecedent variables and volitional workplace behaviors (Crede et al. 2007). The present study posits that job satisfaction plays a mediating role in the relationships between the dimensions of WPS and UPB. To the best of author's knowledge, these mechanisms have seldom been explicitly articulated in the organizational literature. They are however consistent with social-exchange theory (Thibaut and Kelley 1961), the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner 1960), perceived organizational support (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002), and theories of psychological contracts (e.g., Rousseau 1989).

These theories, when applied to the employee-employer relationship, predict that employees respond to perceived favorable working conditions by behaving in ways that benefit the organization and/or other employees. According to Milliman et al. (2003), the meaningful work of WPS includes not just work meant to be interesting or challenging, but that it is about things such as searching for deeper meaning and purpose, living one's dream, expressing one's inner life needs by seeking meaningful work, and contributing to others. Individuals who experience highly meaningful work will feel that their organization provides opportunities for their significant, joyful, and meaningful work, and furthermore they feel respected and appreciated as valuable emotional, intellectual, and spiritual beings (Kim and Mauborgne 1998; Pawar 2016), and not merely as "resources." Perceiving that the organization cares for their well-being, an employee likely experiences higher levels of inner job satisfaction. Just as mentioned above, the two dimensions of WPS, namely, sense of community, and alignment of values, can easily cultivate individuals' high identification and connection with their organization, especially for highly satisfied employees. In response,

satisfied employees, on the one hand, tend to reciprocate with more cooperative and supportive actions, and with greater loyalty, affective commitment, enthusiasm, work effort, and productivity (Cameron et al. 2004; Eisenberger et al. 2001; Gavin and Mason 2004; Settoon et al. 1996; Wright and Cropanzano 2004), while on the other hand, they ignore the plight of their victims and focus on reaffirming or protecting the identity of the organization by taking all means necessary, including committing UPB. Sense of community and alignment of values of WPS occur at the group and organizational levels of human behavior and concern interactions between employees and their co-workers/organization. Employees with a high sense of community and alignment of values are easily able to look at the organization as a place that supports their advancement and then tend to be more obligated and willing to respond by building strong bonds with the organizational needs and then easily commit UPB, not because they "want to" but because they "need to" or feel they are "supposed to." Moreover, collectivist and *guanxi* cultures may encourage such behaviors in employees more easily. China was found to be the most collectivist country (Hui and Harry 1988). Hotstede (1980) indicated that collectivist societies are where people are born into extended families or kinship systems which protect them in exchange for loyalty. The sense of "we-ness" is salient. A person's identity is derived from the social system rather than from individual attributes. There is an emphasis on membership in organizations, as well as emotional dependence on them. Friendships in collectivist societies are non-specific and predetermined by stable social relationships. Hui and Triandis (1986) also argued that collectivism is a syndrome of feelings, emotions, beliefs, ideology, and actions related to interpersonal concern. In China, interpersonal connections are called *guanxi* which has the sense of "social connections" involving dyadic relationships that are based implicitly (rather than explicitly) on mutual interest and benefit (Yang 1994). Therefore, job-satisfied individuals in a Chinese workplace, who are motivated by a perceived high sense of community and alignment of values, never want to harm the organization which offers them the opportunity for advancement. Most of time, they choose to conduct UPB, thereby benefiting their organization in expensive social interesting.

Building on the above discussion, it is plausible to think that three dimensions of WPS might be considered as a source for increasing UPB through intrinsic job satisfaction. Altogether, the argument leads to the following hypotheses:

H4 Job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between workplace spirituality dimensions and unethical pro-organizational behavior, and in particular:

H4a Job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between meaningful work and unethical pro-organizational behavior.

H4b Job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between sense of community and unethical pro-organizational behavior.

H4c Job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between alignment of values and unethical pro-organizational behavior.

Method

Sample and Procedure

The sample for this research consisted of professional individuals with different demographic backgrounds in four segments of the Chinese workforce including employees in private sectors from an asset evaluation company in Beijing, a HRM consultant firm in Beijing, the middle managers who attended training classes on management from branches of state-owned enterprise-Power Construction Company in Shanxi province, and MBA students studying in Shanxi University.

Before distribution of the survey instrument, it was translated from English to Chinese and back-translated to check the accuracy of the translation. The back-translation corresponded well with the original version of the questionnaire. After excluding missing data, 458 of the 476 respondents were included in the sample for analysis. The average age of the participants was 33.74 ($SD=8.29$) and had an average of 8.68 years of tenure ($SD=8.49$). Among them, 52.00% were male, and 83.59% of them had earned their bachelor's degrees and above.

Measures

All substantive variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

WPS

The WPS scale developed by Milliman et al. (2003) was used for this study. The scale contains three dimensions which include meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment with an organization's values. *Meaningful work* includes six items. The coefficient alpha was 0.88. Sample items: "looks forward to coming to work"; "Understand what gives my work personal meaning." *Sense of community* includes five items from Milliman et al. (2003). Two items "Working cooperatively with others is valued" and

"Feel part of a community" did not fall into three dimensions of WPS in a principal component factor analysis. Therefore, this study did not include the two items. Sample items included: "feels there is a sense of being a part of a family"; "Believe people support each other." The coefficient alpha was 0.86. *Alignment of values* includes eight items. Samples included: "feels connected with the mission of the organization"; "Organization is concerned about health of employees." The coefficient alpha was 0.92.

The original measure had 21 items, but only 19 items were used in this paper. The overall coefficient alpha was 0.94.

UPB

UPB was assessed based on the 6-item scale developed by Umphress et al. (2010). A sample items included: "If it would help my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good" and "If needed, I would conceal information from the public that could be damaging to my organization." The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.90.

Intrinsic Job Satisfaction

This scale was based on the satisfiers or motivators from the motivation hygiene theory (Herzberg et al. 1959). This scale includes three items based on satisfaction with advancement and career opportunities and one item based on satisfaction with the nature of work from Nathan et al. (1991). Sample items included "Satisfied with career opportunities" and "Satisfied with nature of work." The coefficient alpha for this scale was 0.88.

Control Variables

Spector and Brannick (2011) and Atinc et al. (2012) discussed the appropriate use (and potential misuse) of control variables in non-experimental research. They recommended that before using any extraneous control variables, previous findings and theory should be considered. Therefore, this study controlled for employee age (in years) and gender (0 = female, 1 = male; Kish-Gephart et al. 2010; Umphress et al. 2010; Thau et al. 2015), job position (0 = non-management, 1 = management; Aquino et al. 2001; Umphress et al. 2010) and organizational tenure (in years; Kong 2016), as prior research suggests that these variables may affect employees' willingness to engage in unethical behavior at work.

Data Analysis

Before verifying the hypotheses, two validity tests were conducted. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS22 to test convergent and discriminant validity. This study compared the hypothesized five-factor model to a three-factor model where the three dimensions of WPS were combined (three-factor Model A), to a three-factor model where job satisfaction and UPB variables were combined and meanwhile sense of community and meaningful work dimensions of WPS were combined (three-factor Model B), and to a single latent factor model. Models were compared using the chi-squared difference test (Bentler and Bonett 1980); results were displayed in Table 1. Overall, the results indicated the proposed five-factor model provided an acceptable fit which is better than alternative measurement models.

Further, this study arranged the survey data in random order and then performed Harman's one-factor test to avoid common method bias. According to Podsakoff and Organ (1986), common method bias can occur when a single factor explains > 50% of the total variance. All the variables were tested using a principal component factor analysis. Based on the results, the first factor accounted for 30.52% of the total variability, out of five distinct factors. This implied the same source bias of this study was not very serious. Based on the above verification results, this

study performed hierarchical regression analyses in SPSS 21 by entering the control variables, independent variables (meaningful work, sense of community, and alignment of values), and mediator variable (job satisfaction) on separate steps to test the hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Inter-correlations

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations. As expected, WPS was strongly related to job satisfaction. In particular, overall WPS ($r = 0.773$, $p < 0.001$), meaningful work ($r = 0.648$, $p < 0.001$), the sense of community ($r = 0.630$, $p < 0.001$), and alignment of values ($r = 0.742$, $p < 0.001$) were all positively correlated with job satisfaction. WPS showed modest correlations with UPB. In particular, overall WPS ($r = 0.13$, $p < 0.01$), sense of community ($r = 0.135$, $p < 0.01$), and alignment of values ($r = 0.117$, $p < 0.05$) were significantly and positively correlated with UPB while meaningful work ($r = 0.089$, $p > 0.05$) was not significantly correlated with UPB. Job satisfaction also showed modest correlations with UPB ($r = 0.193$, $p < 0.001$). The implications for this are presented in the "Discussion" section.

Table 1 Confirmatory factor analysis and model comparison

Model test	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Five-factor (Hypothesized model)	1136.795*	367	3.098	0.912	0.902	0.912	0.068
Three-factor A	1827.204*	374	4.886	0.834	0.819	0.834	0.092
Three-factor B	2960.052*	374	7.915	0.705	0.678	0.704	0.123
One-factor (All combined model)	3552.533*	377	9.423	0.637	0.608	0.636	0.136

* $p < 0.001$

Table 2 Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Workplace spirituality	3.623	0.646	–									
Meaningful work	3.625	0.717	0.848 ^a	–								
Sense of community	3.614	0.719	0.862 ^a	0.619 ^a	–							
Alignment of values	3.627	0.747	0.926 ^a	0.648 ^a	0.726 ^a	–						
Job satisfaction	3.460	0.832	0.773 ^a	0.648 ^a	0.630 ^a	0.742 ^a	–					
UPB	2.553	0.875	0.130 ^b	0.089	0.135 ^b	0.117 ^c	0.193 ^a	–				
Gender	0.52	0.50	0.021	0.034	–0.031	0.034	0.059	0.212 ^a	–			
Age	33.74	8.29	0.067	0.084	–0.056	0.100 ^b	0.048	–0.011	0.129 ^b	–		
Position	0.47	0.50	0.167 ^a	0.153 ^a	0.078	0.176 ^a	0.165 ^a	0.063	0.144 ^b	0.204 ^a	–	
Organization tenure	8.68	8.49	0.037	0.121 ^b	–0.050	–0.023	–0.026	0.009	0.119 ^b	0.311 ^a	0.329 ^a	–

$N = 458$ (two tailed), UPB unethical pro-organizational behaviors

^a $p < .001$, ^b $p < .01$, ^c $p < .05$

Hypothesis tests

Table 3 presents the results of hierarchical regression analyses. Hypothesis 1 predicts a positive relationship between the dimensions of WPS and UPB. In Model 4, meaningful work was not significantly related to UPB ($\beta=0.097$, $p>0.05$), and thus this result did not provide support for Hypothesis 1a. In Model 5 and Model 6, sense of community ($\beta=0.171$, $p<0.01$) and alignment of values ($\beta=0.133$, $p<0.05$) were positively and significantly related to UPB, thus supporting Hypothesis 1b, 1c. In Model 1, 2, 3, meaningful work ($\beta=0.510$, $p<0.001$), the sense of community ($\beta=0.590$, $p<0.001$), and alignment of values ($\beta=0.412$, $p<0.001$) were positively and significantly related to job satisfaction, respectively, supporting Hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c. In Model 7, job satisfaction ($\beta=0.190$, $p<0.001$) was positively and significantly related to UPB, supporting Hypothesis 3. Thus, H1 was partially supported while H2 and H3 were completely supported. In the Model 8, 9, the effect of sense of community ($\beta=0.053$, $p>0.05$) as well as the effect of alignment of values ($\beta=-0.086$, $p>0.05$) on UPB was no longer significant when controlling for job satisfaction, respectively. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), job satisfaction was found to fully mediate the influence of sense of community on UPB ($\beta=0.161$, $p<0.05$), as shown in Fig. 2a, and the influence of alignment of values on UPB ($\beta=0.239$, $p<0.001$), as shown in Fig. 2b. Moreover, the results of the bootstrapping analysis also showed that the indirect effect of sense of community dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.1457, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0523, 0.2426]) as well as the effect of alignment of values dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.1526, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0651, 0.2442]) was statistically significant, respectively. As a result, job satisfaction fully

mediated the relationship between two aspects of WPS and UPB, supporting H4b and H4c.

Supplemental Analyses

To provide further insight into the paradoxical relationship between the theoretical constructs shown above, especially the relationship of organizational alignment to UPB, this study conducted supplemental analyses. Since the sample varied with demographic variables, it would be helpful and potentially insightful to know if any differences were observed between the sampled groups in terms of reported measures or especially, in the WPS relationships to job satisfaction or UPB. First, this study selected two pairs of sub-groups from gross samples in terms of tenure and gender. By tenure, one group has its members' tenure exceeding 3 years and the other group no more than 3 years. By gender, one group's members were male and the other female. Secondly, this study performed correlations analyses in four groups, respectively. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are shown in Table 4. As indicated in Table 4, significantly positive correlations between WPS dimensions and job satisfaction were observed in four sub-groups. Table 4 also shows that UPB had significantly positive correlations with both WPS dimensions and job satisfaction both in the tenure exceeding 3 years sub-group and male sub-group while no such relationships in the tenure no more than 3 years sub-group and the female sub-group. As with the study in part four (see "Hypothesis tests" section), Baron and Kenny's (1986) suggestion to test the mediation effect of job satisfaction between WPS dimensions and UPB was used to test the hypothesized relationships. As indicated in Table 5, significant associations between WPS dimensions and UPB were observed in two sub-groups, namely, the tenure exceeding 3 years group and the male group. And significant

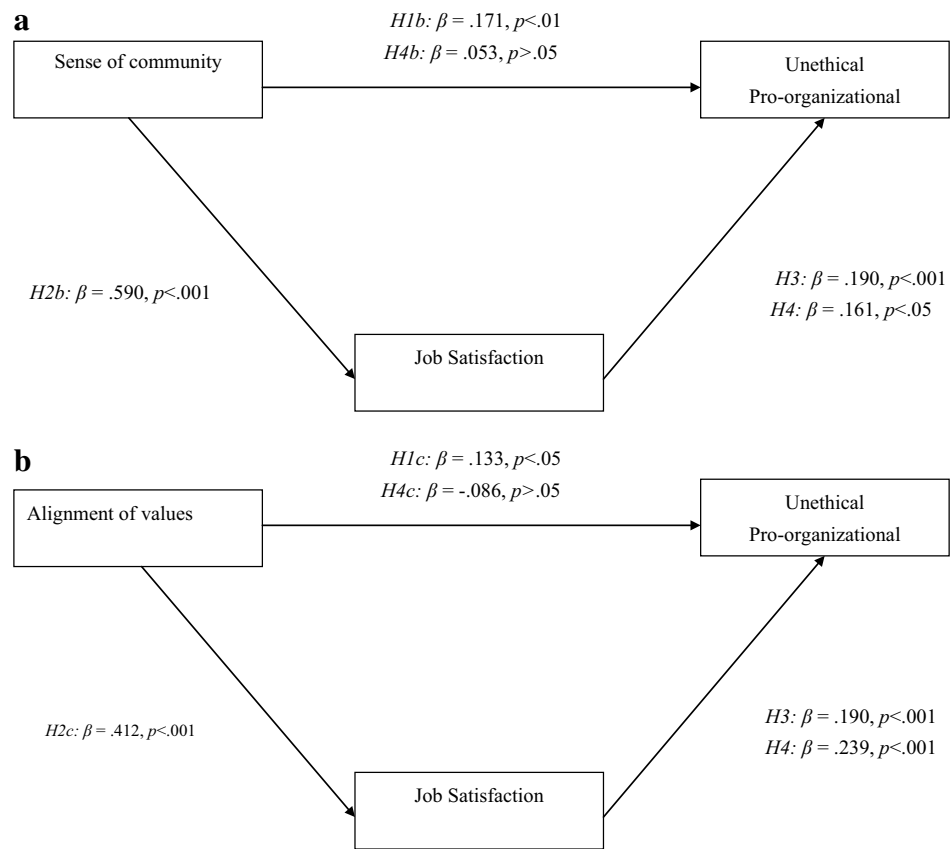
Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis

Variable	DV = Job satisfaction			DV = UPB					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Gender	0.348	0.492 ^c	0.255	0.379 ^a	0.388 ^a	0.376 ^a	0.363 ^a	0.367 ^a	0.359 ^a
Age	0.003	0.029	-0.010	-0.004	-0.003	-0.005	-0.004	-0.004	-0.004
Position	0.626 ^c	0.710 ^b	0.350	0.090	0.079	0.074	0.052	0.051	0.054
Tenure	-0.054 ^b	-0.024	-0.021	-0.004	-0.003	-0.003	-0.002	-0.002	-0.001
Meaningful work	0.510 ^a			0.097					
Sense of community		0.590 ^a			0.171 ^b			0.053	
Alignment of values			0.412 ^a			0.133 ^c			-0.086
Job satisfaction							0.190 ^a	0.161 ^c	0.239 ^a
R ²	0.456	0.435	0.571	0.059	0.072	0.065	0.085	0.086	0.088
F	71.526 ^a	65.873 ^a	113.572 ^a	5.369 ^a	6.697 ^a	5.997 ^a	7.947 ^a	6.702 ^a	6.841 ^a

N=458, DV dependent variable, UPB unethical pro-organizational behaviors

^a $p < .001$, ^b $p < .01$, ^c $p < .05$

Fig. 2 **a** The mediation effect of job satisfaction between the sense of community dimension of WPS and UPB. **b** The mediation effect of job satisfaction between the alignment of values dimension of WPS and UPB



associations between WPS dimensions and job satisfaction were observed in four sub-groups. A significant association between job satisfaction and UPB was observed in the two sub-groups. Table 5 also indicates that job satisfaction fully mediated the influence of three dimensions of WPS on UPB in the two sub-groups, namely, the tenure exceeding 3 years group and the male group. Bootstrap confidence interval analyses indicated the presence of mediating effects as predicted in Hypothesis 4 in the two sub-groups. In the tenure exceeding 3 years sub-group, the results of the bootstrapping analysis showed that the indirect effect of the meaningful work dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.2391, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.1147, 0.3815]), the indirect effect of the sense of commitment dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.1906, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0673, 0.3292]), and the indirect effect of the alignment of values dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.2624, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.1309, 0.4071]) were statistically significant, respectively. And in the male sub-group, the results of the bootstrapping analysis showed that the indirect effect of the meaningful work dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.2404, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0884, 0.4137]), the indirect effect of the sense of commitment dimension of WPS on UPB (indirect effect = 0.1703, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0309, 0.3310]) and the indirect effect of alignment of values dimension of WPS on

UPB (indirect effect = 0.2639, 95% bias-corrected, CI [0.0915, 0.4517]) were statistically significant, respectively.

In a word, these results in the two sub-groups, namely, tenure exceeding 3 years group and the male group, generally mirrored those observed in the study of part four (see “Hypothesis tests” section). The primary difference between these results of the two sub-groups and those observed in the study of part four (see “Hypothesis tests” section) is that the meaningful work of WPS had a significant association with UPB, which was totally mediated by job satisfaction in the study of two sub-groups, but the association and the significant mediation effect were not found in part four (see “Hypothesis tests” section). On the other hand, Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 3, and Hypothesis 4 were rejected in the other two sub-groups, namely, the tenure no more than 3 years group and the female group. Additionally, Hypothesis 2 was supported in four sub-groups.

Discussion

This study explored the relation between workplace spirituality and employees’ willingness to engage in pro-organizational but unethical behavior (UPB). This study furthermore focused on a potential underlying mechanism, predicting that employees’ job satisfaction would mediate this relation.

Table 4 Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Workplace spirituality	3.587	0.646	–					
Meaningful work	3.617	0.713	0.837 ^a	–				
Sense of community	3.540	0.714	0.856 ^a	0.599 ^a	–			
Alignment of values	3.593	0.761	0.926 ^a	0.634 ^a	0.718 ^a	–		
Job satisfaction	3.418	0.838	0.765 ^a	0.641 ^a	0.642 ^a	0.716 ^a	–	
UPB	2.556	0.856	0.163 ^b	0.119 ^c	0.177 ^b	0.141 ^c	0.259 ^a	–
<i>N</i> = 280 (two-tailed) a sub-group of members' tenure > 3 years								
Workplace spirituality	3.680	0.647	–					
Meaningful work	3.637	0.727	0.867 ^a	–				
Sense of community	3.730	0.716	0.872 ^a	0.661 ^a	–			
Alignment of values	3.682	0.727	0.926 ^a	0.674 ^a	0.731 ^a	–		
Job satisfaction	3.528	0.823	0.780 ^a	0.660 ^a	0.603 ^a	0.780 ^a	–	
UPB	2.548	0.908	0.077	0.047	0.068	0.086	0.096	–
<i>N</i> = 178 (two-tailed) a sub-group of members' tenure ≤ 3 years								
Workplace spirituality	3.635	0.705	–					
Meaningful work	3.648	0.760	0.868 ^a	–				
Sense of community	3.591	0.779	0.878 ^a	0.657 ^a	–			
Alignment of values	3.653	0.802	0.939 ^a	0.704 ^a	0.759 ^a	–		
Job satisfaction	3.506	0.882	0.812 ^a	0.717 ^a	0.687 ^a	0.769 ^a	–	
UPB	2.733	0.926	0.201 ^b	0.169 ^b	0.210 ^b	0.173 ^b	0.255 ^a	–
<i>N</i> = 238 (two-tailed) a sub-group of male								
Workplace spirituality	3.610	0.577	–					
Meaningful work	3.601	0.669	0.818 ^a	–				
Sense of community	3.640	0.649	0.840 ^a	0.569 ^a	–			
Alignment of values	3.599	0.683	0.906 ^a	0.567 ^a	0.672 ^a	–		
Job satisfaction	3.410	0.772	0.713 ^a	0.549 ^a	0.550 ^a	0.701 ^a	–	
UPB	2.359	0.772	0.009	–0.039	0.037	0.023	0.084	–
<i>N</i> = 220 (two-tailed) a sub-group of female								

UPB unethical pro-organizational behaviors

^a*p* < .001, ^b*p* < .01, ^c*p* < .05

As expected, significant positive relationships were found between WPS dimensions and job satisfaction. Although these relationships were all very strong (shown in Tables 2, 4), alignment of values affected the job satisfaction level of employees more than did meaningful work and sense of community. The reason for this may be that employees with strong alignment of values perceive their organization as a wonderful place in which to work because their organization is concerned not only about their health, but also their spirit. Individuals may feel proud of their organization for its good deeds such as caring about all its employees and the poor, having a conscience, and so on. Hence, they are reasonably satisfied with their organization. Also, as partially expected each of the relationships, either between two dimensions of WPS and UPB or between job satisfaction and UPB was significant and positive, yet modest (shown in Tables 2, 4). One of the interesting results is that alignment of values affected the level of employees' willingness to engage in UPB less than sense of community and job satisfaction did.

The possible explanation for this may be that individuals with strong alignment of values find it is very difficult to justify their behavior and protect themselves from self-blame when they commit UPB for the benefit of their organization. It is important to note that the relationship between the meaningful work dimension of WPS and UPB was significant and positive, yet also modest in two sub-groups, namely, the tenure exceeding 3 years group and the male group (shown in Table 4). And meaningful work affected the level of employees' willingness to engage in UPB less than the alignment of values dimension did. It is plausible that it is because the meaning one gets is from working rather than the organizational environment. Therefore, individuals with high meaningful work of WPS did not provide enough impetus for engaging in UPB. Table 5 also indicates that no such relationships were found between WPS dimensions and UPB or between job satisfaction and UPB in other two sub-groups, namely, the tenure no more than 3 years group and the female group. The possible explanation might be

Table 5 Hierarchical regression analysis

Variable	DV = Job Satisfaction			DV = UPB						
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Gender	0.077	0.112	0.054	0.349 ^b	0.360 ^b	0.343 ^b	0.329 ^b	0.325 ^a	0.334 ^b	0.327 ^b
Age	−0.013 ^c	0.000	−0.011 ^c	−0.021 ^b	−0.018 ^b	−0.021 ^b	−0.018 ^b	−0.017 ^c	−0.018 ^b	−0.017 ^b
Position	0.254 ^b	0.245 ^c	0.175 ^c	0.118	0.100	0.097	0.042	0.041	0.042	0.045
Meaningful work	0.759 ^a			0.161 ^b				−0.069		
Sense of community		0.736 ^a			0.223 ^b				0.049	
Alignment of values			0.780 ^a			0.179 ^c				−0.056
Job satisfaction							0.266 ^a	0.304 ^a	0.239 ^b	0.301 ^b
R^2	0.456	0.443	0.529	0.081	0.098	0.088	0.127	0.129	0.128	0.128
F	55.705 ^a	52.825 ^a	74.689 ^a	5.897 ^a	7.240 ^a	6.407 ^a	9.702 ^a	7.858 ^a	7.799 ^a	7.812 ^a
<i>N</i> = 280 a sub-group of members' tenure > 3 years										
Age	0.001	0.008	0.000	−0.008	−0.006	−0.008	−0.008	−0.008	−0.008	−0.008
Position	0.154	0.167	0.115	−0.086	−0.093	−0.096	−0.135	−0.135	−0.135	−0.134
Tenure	−0.017 ^b	−0.008	−0.010	−0.002	0.001	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003
Meaningful work	0.877 ^a		0.858	0.258 ^b				−0.021		
Sense of community		0.795 ^a			0.286 ^a				0.088	
A alignment of values			0.858 ^a			0.246 ^b				−0.040
Job satisfaction							0.305 ^a	0.318 ^b	0.250 ^c	0.333 ^b
R^2	0.574	0.515	0.627	0.048	0.062	0.050	0.087	0.087	0.090	0.088
F	72.690 ^a	57.231 ^a	90.741 ^a	2.713 ^a	3.577 ^a	2.821 ^a	5.150 ^a	4.107 ^a	4.240 ^a	4.124 ^a
<i>N</i> = 238 a sub-group of male										
Gender	0.089	0.134	0.098	0.487 ^a	0.490 ^a	0.487 ^a	0.482 ^a			
Age	0.011 ^c	0.013 ^c	0.006	0.015	0.016	0.015	0.014			
Position	−0.079	0.000	−0.087	0.056	0.046	0.045	0.059			
Meaningful work	0.775 ^a			0.041						
Sense of community		0.732 ^a			0.105					
Alignment of values			0.916 ^a			0.090				
Job satisfaction							0.059			
R^2	0.471	0.421	0.671	0.095	0.101	0.099	0.097			
F	35.416 ^a	28.09 ^a	80.675 ^a	4.165 ^b	4.459 ^b	4.377 ^b	4.253 ^b			
<i>N</i> = 178 a sub-group of members' tenure ≤ 3 years										
Age	0.001	0.006	−0.004	−0.001	−0.001	−0.001	−0.002			
Position	0.178	0.190	0.078	0.263 ^c	0.241 ^c	0.252 ^c	0.231			
Tenure	−0.010	−0.005	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002	−0.002			
Meaningful work	0.616 ^a			−0.113						
Sense of community		0.641 ^a			0.001					
Alignment of values			0.785 ^a			−0.038				
Job satisfaction							0.034			
R^2	0.315	0.323	0.495	0.033	0.023	0.025	0.025			
F	24.038 ^a	24.880 ^a	51.303 ^a	1.789	1.252	1.313	0.034			
<i>N</i> = 220 a sub-group of female										

DV dependent variable, WPS workplace spirituality, UPB unethical pro-organizational behaviors

^a $p < .001$, ^b $p < .01$, ^c $p < .05$

that individuals with tenure no more than 3 years may not have developed high identification with their organization, which prevents them from being willing to commit UPB. And females who highly perceived the characteristics of WPS or felt very satisfied in their Chinese organization are

expected to assume a greater role in household affairs, particularly raising a child, and they may have less induction to commit UPB.

To test the hypotheses suggested above, this study performed hierarchical regression analyses. Table 3 summarizes

the regression results. Results from these analyses nearly replicated those of correlation analyses. The results found that the H1a, mentioned above, the meaningful work dimension did not prove to be positively associated with UPB. However, supplemental analyses indicated that this dimension of WPS was positively associated with UPB in two subgroups, namely, tenure exceeding 3 years group and the male group, respectively (shown in Table 5). In other words, H1a was supported in supplemental analyses. It is plausible that demographic variables such as tenure and gender might be moderators between meaningful work and UPB. However, sense of community and alignment of values dimensions of WPS were positively and significantly correlated with UPB, supporting H1b, H1c. The results indicated that individuals who strongly perceived a sense of community and alignment of values might be particularly prone to engage in unethical behavior for the benefit of the organization. This finding was not consistent with some extant studies which suggested that WPS was a potential counter to unethical business practice and claimed that a spiritual individual was more ethical and therefore, of significant value to the long-term viability of organizations and ultimately society (Cavanagh 1999; Garcia-Zamor 2010; Beekun and Westerman 2012; Ayoun et al. 2015; McGhee and Grant 2017). It seems that there are contradictions in the literature that WPS was positively related to ethical behavior on the one hand and WPS was positively related to UPB on the other hand in this study. The possible explanation will be given as follows: WPS as defined for this study uses the limited, community-related concept only, and it is more of a group-based emotional concept related to belongingness and social exchange or social-identity related constructs. Specifically, two aspects of WPS are more related to social-exchange rather than divine or non-work connectedness concepts of spirituality. However, WPS as used in the extant studies mentioned above is related to individual personal spirituality. For instance, McGhee and Grant (2017) applied the WPS scale developed by Howden's (1992) for their study. This scale includes four dimensions namely, meaning and purpose in life, inner resources, unifying interconnectedness, and transcendence. It involves broader and potentially vertical (divine or other spiritual) dimensions. Pawar (2009) included both individual personal spirituality and WPS in a study and found that WPS and individual personal spirituality were quite different definitions. Moreover, Milliman et al. (2003, p. 428) emphasized that "we do not focus on the transcendent aspect of workplace spirituality because we believe it is more likely to impact an individual's personal life." Nevertheless, there is no sufficient evidence to prove that the positive relationship between WPS and UPB in this study can then be generalized to other contexts. The Chinese cultural context could affect this finding. Therefore, in order to understand this finding, it is imperative to have a close

examination of Chinese-specific culture and core values. In the following section, this study presents some core values of Chinese culture for further exploration. Firstly, China is a collectivist culture. As for individuals in Chinese organizations, the "self" is often defined in terms of relationships with organizations. In most cases, individuals should strive to perpetuate and strengthen the organization's interests. No individual interests are independent of the organization interests. The individuals who strongly perceive a sense of community or an alignment of values with the organizations are particularly pleased by the fact that they are a part of their organizations. The interests and goals of such individuals are to be fulfilled only through the fulfillment of goals and interests of the organizations to which they belong. Even the realization of their well-being can only rely upon that of the organizations. Logically, such individuals are especially prone to engage in that morally questionable behavior only if it benefits the organizations. Secondly, in terms of Chinese values, reciprocity is the idea that people who have received a favor should be grateful and return the favor whenever called upon. Individuals with high WPS would be likely to have a strong sense that they have received favors from their organization, and they would like to take on a reciprocal obligation which must be repaid because they would never want to be deemed ungrateful and thus estranged by others of the organization. Then, such individuals would do whatever to help the organization. For example, they would exaggerate the truth about their company's products or services to customers and clients. Thirdly, Chinese enterprises often try to create a family atmosphere amongst their employees. Individuals who strongly perceive a sense of community or an alignment of values with the organizations especially have a sense of being a part of a family in the organizations, and they have been taken care of by the organizations. Loyalty and responsibility are the two important moralities binding the familial relationship. Therefore, such individuals must maintain loyalty to their organizations, specifically, obedience to their managers. Also, as members of the "family," the greatest responsibility of such individuals should be to serve the "family" and contribute to "family" development. If their "family" needs them, they will do whatever to help their "family." Fourthly, at the core of Chinese culture is a concern for harmony orientation. Harmony itself is a highly cherished goal for organizations. Individuals with high WPS should be in good alignment with organization to achieve and maintain harmony. If needed, they would modify or abandon their interests, values, and goals to protect and maintain the interests and goals of the organizations. Sometimes, they even take selfish measures to protect their organizations while causing unwanted risks to society. For instance, it is possible that they would conceal information from the public that could be damaging to the organization. Finally, the ethical judgments of the Chinese employees

seemed to be more affected by the pressure from a superior or group norm than by their personal attitudes. Individuals who strongly perceive a sense of community or an alignment of values with the organization may readily adopt their personal ethical beliefs. However, such individuals may be confronted with pressure from their management or group norms to engage in UPB that conflicts with their personal ethical beliefs. In order to relieve the stress induced by an ethical conflict, such individuals may modify their beliefs, adopt the ethical standards of their employers or group, and simply consider morally questionable behaviors as a necessary part of their job. Sometimes they even tend to view morally questionable behaviors as “not wrong.” In a word, the unique Chinese cultural context undoubtedly has a great influence on the positive relationship between WPS and UPB.

Fully supporting Hypothesis 2, in particular, this current study found three dimensions of WPS to have significant positive relationships with job satisfaction, therefore H2a, H2b, and H2c all were supported (shown in Tables 3, 5). The results replicated several researcher’s findings (i.e., Milliman et al. 2003; Riasudeen and Prabavath 2011; Gupta et al. 2014). However, the finding about the relationship between meaningful work dimension of WPS and job satisfaction in this paper was a little different from that in Pawar (2009), who explored that this direction does not have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. The possible explanations might be given that the conception of job satisfaction in Pawar (2009) was different from that in this paper. Pawar (2009) identified job satisfaction by one item, which read, “considering all aspects of my job, I would say that I am very satisfied with my job,” but job satisfaction in this study was narrowed in intrinsic motivation, which was directly induced by the meaningful work of WPS.

Fully supporting Hypothesis 3, the results of this study also revealed that job satisfaction had a significant positive association with UPB. Individuals with high job satisfaction find it easier to engage in unethical behaviors for benefit of their organization. It is plausible that employees with high level of job satisfaction reciprocate the support and fairness shown to them by the organizations by paying back in the form of pro-organization behavior, no matter ethical or unethical.

Furthermore, as indicated in Table 3, Hypothesis 4 was only partially supported. The primary reason is that Hypothesis 1a, that meaningful work would be positively associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior, was not confirmed, and then H4a, that job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between meaningful work and unethical pro-organizational behavior, did not need to be tested. As for the Hypothesis 4b and Hypothesis 4c, the results showed that job satisfaction mediated the relationship between the other two dimensions of WPS and UPB, respectively. In

other words, by facilitating and enhancing employees’ job satisfaction, individuals who have high sense of community in the organization and strong alignment with organizational values seem to increase the probability of unethical yet pro-organizational behavior. The positive effects of two aspects of WPS on UPB, respectively, may be reduced for employees who do not feel satisfied with their organization. An individual with low level of perceived intrinsic job satisfaction is unable to identify with their organization and is less likely to place the interests of his/her organization above the interests of himself/herself to engage in pro-organization but unethical behaviors. Such employees feel bored with the deadening routine tasks and find it hard to search for meaning in their work. Therefore, the two main positive effects in this study with such employees decrease. The mediating role suggests that job satisfaction could be considered a key sensor for explaining how two aspects of WPS induce UPB. By verifying these mediation effects, job satisfaction turns out to be an important driver for UPB. Also, either the sense of community dimension or the alignment of values dimension induces UPB fully through job satisfaction. This downside of job satisfaction changing employees’ identification with the organization leads us to conclude that WPS should be complemented by an explicit ethical mission. It needs to be noted that job satisfaction totally mediated the relationship between the three dimensions of WPS and UPB respectively in the two sub-groups, namely, tenure exceeding 3 years group and male group, in supplemental analyses (shown in Table 5).

Theoretical Implications

This research makes several theoretical contributions. First and foremost, as emphasized previously, the literature lacks research addressing how WPS influences ethical considerations (Gotsis and Kortezi 2008). Researchers have only recently begun to investigate this possible consequence. Additional research will be necessary to determine the existence, strength, and differential effects of this relationship across industries (Houghton et al. 2016). In order to respond to this clearly identified research gap, this study imported WPS dimensions into the research context and investigated their relationships with UPB. Previous studies in the spiritual field have investigated the relationship between WPS and ethics behaviors, few researchers have given attention to the relationship between WPS and unethical behaviors. On the other hand, prior research in the business ethics field has focused overwhelmingly on unethical behaviors motivated by self-interest (Greenberg 2002; Kish-Gephart et al. 2010; Reynolds 2006; Thau et al. 2015), empirical research on unethical behaviors motivated by benefiting the organization or its members is limited. Combining these two domains, this study demonstrates two dimensions of WPS

can likewise be a powerful motivator of UPB. That is, individuals who strongly perceived their sense of community and alignment of values will be prone to commit UPB.

Secondly, the present study contributes to the existing literature by answering the call of researchers to explore the antecedents of UPB (Umphress et al. 2010). By focusing on the relationship between WPS dimensions and UPB, this study is able to examine, in greater detail, the antecedents of unethical behavior that is conducted with the aim of benefiting the organization. The results of this study indicated that two WPS dimensions, namely, sense of community and alignment of values, have positive impacts on UPB, as does intrinsic job satisfaction. Therefore, this study extends previous UPB empirical research.

Thirdly, this study significantly contributes to research job satisfaction and UPB. Few previous researchers have studied the relationship between job satisfaction and UPB in both directions; this research proves that job satisfaction is the source of UPB. As discussed earlier, the idea that job satisfaction is positively related to UPB is based upon social exchange theory (Cropanzano et al. 1997) and the principle of reciprocity (Cialdini 2001; Gouldner 1960). Nevertheless, in view of the growing influence of work organizations in people's lives and of their well-being, it is important to explore how intrinsic job satisfaction with an organization can lead to negative consequences.

Additionally, the current study advances the growing literature on WPS. While prior research has shown WPS and its dimensions to be a powerful predictor of organizational attitudes and behaviors, their potential impacts on unethical behavior in the workplace have thus far received little empirical attention. The present research is the first to investigate the dark side effects of WPS dimensions. By exploring the relationships between WPS dimensions and UPB, this study answers calls to examine the potential direct or indirect negative consequences of WPS (Milliman et al. 2003).

Finally, this research also sheds light on the specific psychological mechanism through which the dimensions of WPS relate to UPB. Establishing the mediating mechanism is important, as it helps explain the paradoxical phenomenon of benign intentions leading to unethical conduct. This research shows that it is not the dimensions of WPS, *per se*, but job satisfaction that is associated with UPB when employees face dilemmas between advancing their company's interests and adhering to societal moral standards.

Practical Implications

The findings of the present study bear important implications for management practice, which are addressed below.

UPB is unethical actions carried out under a "pro-organizational" facade. Consequently, it is possible that organizational decision makers give little attention to monitoring

such acts or addressing them. However, UPB is dangerous because it may easily cause great harm to the organization's reputation and legal standing in the long term, especially if it involves bribery, lying to customers, and falsifying documents. For practitioners, understanding what motivates employees to engage in UPB is important for reducing and eliminating them. Although the findings of this paper suggest that the dimensions of WPS and job satisfaction may be important precursors to UPB, it is impossible to believe that employers should refrain from encouraging and promoting these beliefs among their employees. However, organizational leaders and managers can still do a number of things if they are serious about preventing their employees from willingly engaging in unethical behavior for the benefit of the organization. First, top managers should be careful to form a culture in which unethical acts are not tolerated and ethical behaviors are encouraged. An organization's culture consists of the shared organizational values. These values reflect what the organization stands for and against and in what it believes. If a culture is strong and supports high ethical standards, it has a powerful and positive influence on the decision to act ethically or unethically. Secondly, because WPS through job satisfaction may influence unethical behavior, managers should also be aware of the critical role of the evaluation and rewarding system. Management should take a special interest in goal setting by ensuring that there is a good balance between financial gains and ethical standards. If ethical employees commit any kinds of unethical behaviors, their performance reviews and salary raises should be adversely affected. Then UPB might decrease. On the other hand, when an employee is rewarded for achievement in an ethically questionable manner, it will send a strong signal to others that those ways are acceptable. Then, UPB will be encouraged in organization. Thirdly, organization leaders and managers can set up seminars, workshops, and similar ethics training programs to discourage pro-organization but unethical behaviors. To some extent, ethics training might increase awareness of issues of UPB in business. After all, understanding that such behaviors can exist in organizations is a necessary first step heightening awareness of and diminishing them. Fourthly, organization practitioners should establish protective mechanisms which encourage employees to do what's right without fear of reprimand when they face ethical dilemmas. For instance, organization might designate ethical counselors to help employees not to engage in UPB. Finally, top managers are the ones who uphold the shared values and set the cultural tone. Therefore, doing business ethically requires a commitment from top managers. If top managers, for example, tell lies in public, inflate their expense account, or make false claims about the feature for a product to help make a sale, they imply that such behavior is acceptable for all employees. Additionally, top managers set the tone by their reward and punishment

practices. When subordinates have to choose between ethics or business-benefiting actions, they will select what is perceived to be most valued by leaders.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the study made the above outlined contributions to the existing literature, it also has some limitations. First, one limitation in this study is from common method bias. Although two validity tests were conducted before verifying the hypotheses, all data were from the same respondents and collected at a single point in time, which could still lead to common method biases. Common methods bias was presented as an inflated correlation between two variables due to the fact that they were measured using the same method (Podsakoff et al. 2003). For controlling common methods bias, two aspects may be noted. One is about self-reporting. Self-reporting measures may inflate the relationships among variables when they were used to test the hypotheses. However, the nature of variables in this study seems to make the use of same source of self-reports from the respondents become necessary because this necessity is reflected in Spector (2006), who has indicated that for the assessment of perceptions, emotions, and attitudes, the use of self-report measures is inevitable. Nonetheless, future research should still be conducted with precautions. For instance, in order to control common methods bias, further research needs to validate the model presented in this study by including the demographic characteristics presented in Table 2 as moderators. In other words, future researchers are encouraged to examine the role of gender, age, position, and tenure as moderators in respondents and test the direction and strength of influence of these characteristics on the model. The other aspect is about all data collected at a single time point, which hindered the investigation of possibility of reverse causality between dimensions of WPS and job satisfaction and between job satisfaction and UPB. Future research should investigate longitudinal relationships to explicitly test the claimed causality.

Second, this study did not assess actual UPB, but rather people's willingness to engage in UPB. However, intentions do appear to translate into actual unethical behavior. Nonetheless, future research should consider capturing actual occurrences of UPB using multisource designs. Also future research is needed to further understand the inherent complexities of UPB. Along these lines, this research encourages researchers to pay careful attention to employees' behavioral intentions and to explore other antecedents and potential consequences.

Third, there have been a number of definitions of WPS. This study only used and measured the limited, more of a group-based emotional concept related to belongingness and social exchange concept, and then the conclusions

drawn were more related to social-exchange rather than divine or non-work connectedness concepts of spirituality. Therefore, future study should use a concept of WPS which involves broader and potentially vertical (divine or other spiritual) dimensions to investigate the relationship between WPS and UPB.

Finally, more efforts should be made to explore mediators or moderators between WPS and ethical issues since the relationship is complex. The present study investigated job satisfaction as a mediator. However, other factors, such as personal well-being, and organization identification, could mediate the relationship between WPS and UPB. Also there might be some factors such as spiritual leadership, organization culture, and even work ethics which could moderate the strength of the effects of WPS on UPB.

Conclusion

This paper provides an empirical investigation of unethical behavior intended to benefit the organization (UPB), and thus it demonstrates the potentially destructive effects of strong perceived sense of community and alignment of values of WPS through high job satisfaction. Previous research suggests that these variables positively influence behaviors that are important and valuable for organizational functioning (Ashmos and Duchon 2000; Kolodinsky et al. 2008; Milliman et al. 2003; Rego et al. 2008; Duchon and Plowman 2005; Afsar and Rehman 2015; Pawar 2016; Khari and Sinha 2017). Substantiating the dark side of WPS, this paper found that can encourage UPB through job satisfaction. In so doing, this paper also maintains that decision makers should be aware of the potential unethical consequences of these often constructive variables (Umphress et al. 2010).

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest Suchuan Zhang declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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