

## **Are Unethical Pro-organizational Behaviors Contagious within the Team?**

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**ABSTRACT:** Drawing on social learning theory and relative deprivation theory, with social responsibility human resource management as a moderator, we construct a model of colleagues unethical pro-organizational behavior for employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior, we construct a theoretical model, which will be a contagion effects: colleagues unethical pro-organizational behavior will influence employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior, social responsibility human resource management moderates the relationships between colleagues unethical pro-organizational behavior and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior

**KEY WORD:** Unethical Pro-organizational behavior; Social Responsibility Human Resource Management; Social learning Theory; Relative Deprivation Theory

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The continuous exposure of Sanlu's "poisoned milk powder" incident has made corporate ethical issues increasingly concerned by the society at home and abroad. In recent years, academic research has shifted from unethical behaviors of employee self-interest (such as seeking personal gain, hurting colleagues, retaliation organizations, etc.) (Trevino et al, 2014) to the unethical behavior of the pro-organizational behavior. This unethical behavior that benefits organizations or members but harms the interests of stakeholders and violates social ethics or legal norms is called Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior (Umphress et al, 2010). For example, exaggerating (concealing) the advantages (disadvantages) of the company's products, and destroying financial data that is unfavorable to the company.

The existing research literature on unethical pro-organizational behavior tends to explore its antecedent variables from the individual level and the leadership level. However, in the "relational orientation" of Chinese cultural context, people not only pay attention to the relationship with the leadership, but also pay attention to their colleagues. Employees have the closest and most frequent relationship with colleagues, while existing research has less explored the impact of internal team interactions on employee unethical behavior. At present, the organizational structure of enterprises has gradually evolved from a hierarchical to a flat, and the structure of a borderless organizational structure is increasingly common in a team-based manner (Qin, 2017). Individuals tend to rely on teams, and enterprises tend to assign tasks in teams (Wang, 2017). Team members get along with each other, and high-frequency, long-term member interactions make it easier for teams to become a breeding ground for relationships, circles, and relationships.

Existing research shows that colleagues play a very important role in influencing employees in making ethical decisions. Observing the more frequent unethical behaviors of colleagues, the more likely employees are to behave consistently (Beams et al, 2003; McCabe And Trevino, 1993; Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly, 1998), that is, employees' unethical behavior can spread or spread within the team. However, unlike unethical behaviors that are self-interested, unethical pro-organizational behaviors are easily ignored, defaulted, or even supported by leaders or organizations because of the special nature of their pro-organization. If colleagues make certain benefits because of unethical behavior (such as better subordinate relationships, positive career development, etc.), then the psychological response of employees who observe this behavior may vary. Therefore, is there any difference between the infection mechanism of unethical behavior of colleagues and the infection mechanism of unethical behaviors? This paper argues that it is necessary to explore the impact of internal team interaction mechanisms on unethical pro-organizational behaviors to help us more accurately understand employee workplace behavior.

Unethical pro-organizational behavior is still unethical in nature. Although it can make the organization or member obtain short-term effectiveness, it will ultimately endanger the long-term development of the organization. Therefore, how to suppress the unethical behavior of pro-organization is one of the important challenges faced by enterprises in management practice. Most of the existing research on unethical behaviors of pro-organizations focuses on how such behaviors are produced, and there are few studies on how to suppress such behaviors. Most of the existing inhibitory factors focus on the individual traits of employees such as

excessive organizational identity or reciprocity, and the ethical level of employees, and less research at the organizational level. Recently, the practice of socially responsible human resource management has arisen, emphasizing that the concept of focusing on internal and external stakeholders is very different from the unethical pro-organizational behavior at the expense of external stakeholders. However, the relationship between the two is rarely studied. Therefore, this paper aims to explore whether the social responsibility human resource management, practices at the organizational level can inhibit the infection mechanism of unethical behaviors within the team from the perspective of human resource management.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 Literature Review

Umphress Bingham (2011) pointed out that unethical pro-organizational behavior is a deliberate behavior that aims to promote the effective operation of an organization or the effective work of its members, but violates social values, moral standards and legal norms. The theoretical basis is social exchange theory, and some scholars have discussed it from the perspectives of social identity theory and social learning theory. Superior-subordinate guanxi, leader-member exchange, differential leadership, organizational support and so on lead to employees' return psychology, fuzzy ethical standards, and promote the generation of employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviors. Organizational identification and supervisor identification, internalize the organization or supervisor as part of themselves, and promote the generation of employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviors; Ethical leadership stimulates employees' moral behaviors through demonstration and inhibits employees' unethical pro-organizational behaviors. At present, scholars still discuss the anterior-dependent variables from the aspects of high performance pressure, workplace rejection, leadership bottom-line mentality and other leadership styles. However, scholars seldom start from the perspective of the team, and the influence of colleagues on employees' cognitive behaviors plays a crucial role in their work life. Therefore, from the perspective of the team, this study explores whether the unethical pro-organizational behaviors of colleagues are contagious within the team.

Social Responsibility Human Resource Management (SRHRM) means that in order to promote the implementation of corporate social responsibility, the company adopts human resource management practices that influence the concept and behavior of employees' social responsibility (Newman et al, 2016). Employees participate in corporate social responsibility (Ardichvili, 2011) and see it as a communicator and recipient of corporate social responsibility practices (Kundu & Gahlawat, 2015). Previous studies have shown that social responsibility human resource management practices, fulfilling corporate social responsibility through human resource management activities, are conducive to coordinating the interests of internal and external stakeholders, promoting the institutionalization of corporate social responsibility (Ardichvili, 2011), and improving organizational performance. Gino et al. (2009) pointed out through three experiments that compared with the absence of an external observer, when an external observer is present, the unethical behavioral contagion effect of the team members will be weakened by the employee's guilt.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

Based on the Social Learning Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory, this paper explores the contagious mechanism of unethical pro-organizational behaviors of colleagues and employees, and discusses the inhibitory effect of socially responsible human resource management practices on the internal infection mechanism of unethical pro-organizational behaviors of colleagues.

## III. HYPOTHESIS AND MODEL

**Colleagues unethical pro-organizational behavior and employees' unethical pro-organizational behavior:** According to Social Learning Theory, individuals observe and imitate the behavior of others (Bandura, 1971). Team members working in a common social environment will get social clues about what behaviors are acceptable or unacceptable, and individuals will analyze their work environment and adjust their behavior (Robinson and Kelly, 1998). If an individual employee observes that someone else has implemented an unethical pro-organizational behavior in the work environment, especially within a highly socially interactive team (Tan, 2011, Wen, 2016), his moral judgment on this behavior may change, dilute pro-organization of the unethical behavior of unethical behavior, more emphasis on its short-term effectiveness to the organization or members, that unethical pro-organizational behavior is a normal, acceptable behavior, thus reducing the implementation of unethical behavior. Judging the possibility of punishment (Wen, 2016), recalculating the costs and benefits of implementing unethical pro-organizational behavior, then he is likely to imitate learning and make the same behavior (Gino, et al, 2009; McCabe and Trevino, 1993; Robinson and Kelly, 1998, Gino et al, 2013).

According to Relative Deprivation Theory, individuals will compare with others. If they feel that they are at a disadvantage, there is a gap between what they get and what they expect, and that the gap is due to

external injustice, then he will produce a relative sense of deprivation and induce effects on the psychology and behavior of individuals and groups (Walker, 2002). Studies have confirmed that relative deprivation can lead to negative psychological emotions (Walker, 2002), positively affecting employees' unethical behavior (Michael, 2011), turnover rate (Survey, 2015), negative impact on organizations or departmental loyalty, etc. (Osborne et al., 2012). When a colleague implements a pro-organizational unethical behavior, because of its "pro-organizational" nature, it can improve organizational benefits in a short period of time, and it is easy to obtain affirmation or approval in the organization, establish a higher quality exchange relationship with the superior, and its future occupation. Development has a positive impact (Wang, 2018). If colleagues in the team receive these rewards or benefits for engaging in unethical behaviors, employees who do not take unethical behavior and do not have access to these additional development opportunities will feel unfair and have a relative sense of deprivation, causing embarrassment, etc. Negative emotions (Michael, 2012), the negative sentiment brought about by injustice at this time may cause employees to weaken the conflict cognition of abandoning ethical principles and implementing unethical behaviors, leaving the consequences behind, and rebuilding the balance, employees also tend to follow the behavior of colleagues (Donald, 2008; Kulik, O'Fallon & Salimath, 2008) to promote the unethical behavior of employees' pro-organization. This unfair perception is more pronounced in the presence of conflicts of interest (Moore, Tetlock & Bazeman, 2006). Therefore, this study proposes the hypothesis:

**H1: Colleague unethical pro-organizational behavior has a positive impact on employee unethical pro-organizational behavior, that is, there is an infectious effect.**

**The moderator role of social responsibility human resource management (SRHRM).** The adoption of social responsibility human resource management practices will affect employees' attitudes and behaviors toward corporate social responsibility. On the one hand, social responsibility human resource management will emphasize the social responsibility values such as the rights of internal and external stakeholders into the organizational system (Shen & Zhang, 2017), through a series of human resource management practices, such as training, performance appraisal, salary, etc., to convey the organizational signals that attach importance to corporate social responsibility to employees to improve their perception of corporate ethics (Orlitzky et al., 2003; Orlitzky & Swanson, 2006; Shen and Benson, 2016). Combining corporate social responsibility with human resource management practices will help employees support corporate social responsibility behaviors for internal and external stakeholders (Shen & Zhang, 2017), enabling employees to focus on external stakeholders. Benefits are beneficial for employees to incorporate behaviors that are consistent with corporate social responsibility values into their daily lives (Shen & Zhang, 2017). On the other hand, by implementing social responsibility human resource management, the ethical characteristics of the company's fairness, trust, and stakeholder interests can help establish an ethical atmosphere at the organizational level (Lin, 2016). A positive ethical atmosphere negatively affects the unethical behavior of employees (Cullen et al., 1993; Victor & Cullen, 1988), which in turn greatly mitigates the disruption of the subjective norms of individual UPB by individual members of the team.

Unethical pro-organizational behavior is an organizationally unethical behavior that is carried out in the context of harming the interests of external stakeholders. This is in stark contrast to the emphasis on external stakeholders' emphasis on social responsibility human resource management. The level of implementation of social responsibility human resource management is different. The influence of team colleagues on organizing unethical behaviors on the unethical behavior of individual employees may also be different. In the high-level social responsibility human resource management practice, employees receive the "signal" that the organization attaches to the importance of corporate social responsibility, pay attention to the rights of external stakeholders, weaken team colleagues and organize unethical behaviors on UPB subjective norms and employees. The positive impact of individual pro-organizational unethical behavior. In the low-level social responsibility management practice, employees pay little attention to the interests of external stakeholders, tend to focus on the pro-organization of behavior, and pay more attention to the professional development brought by colleagues to implement unethical behaviors. I hope that I can benefit from the same behavior, ignore the moral problems of the behavior, and strengthen the positive influence of the unethical behavior of colleagues on the subjective norms of UPB and the unethical behavior of employees. Therefore, this paper proposes the following assumptions:

**H2: Social responsibility human resource management negatively moderates the contagious mechanism of unethical pro-organizational behavior within the Team**

The research model of this paper is shown in figure 1:

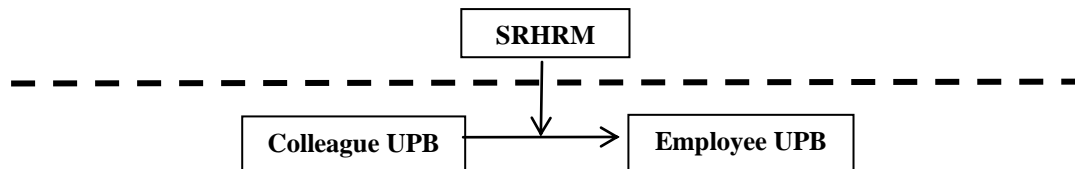


Figure 1. Hypothetical Model

#### IV. SUMMARY AND SIGNIFICANCE

Through social learning theory and relative deprivation, this paper established a contagion effect model of the unethical pro-organizational behaviors of the team, and added organizational moderating variable, namely social responsibility human resource management, to explore the boundary conditions for the occurrence of such contagion effect.

The significance of this article lies in:

First, this paper studies unethical pro-organizational behavior from the contagion effect within the team, which to some extent broadens the research scope of this field. Most studies on unethical pro-organizational behaviors are based on social exchange theory. This paper, based on social learning theory and relative deprivation theory, enriches the theoretical explanation of employees' implementation of unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

Second, from the perspective of the influence of the unethical pro-organizational behavior of colleagues on the unethical pro-organizational behavior of employees, the outcome variable of the behavior and the antecedent variable that triggers the behavior are enriched.

Thirdly, from the perspective of human resource management practice, it is of practical significance to inhibit the spread of unethical pro-organizational behaviors of teams or individual employees.

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