

Consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour
a structured literature review

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Abstract

Researchers have shown a growing interest in unethical pro-organisational behaviour, but most studies have focused on its causes rather than its effects. This study aims to summarise existing research on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at three levels: individual, interpersonal, and organisational. It identifies the consequences, the theories that explain these outcomes, and their impact at each level.

A structured literature review approach was adopted, and an inductive content analysis was conducted to identify patterns and themes related to the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour across multidisciplinary fields. The findings show that unethical behaviour that benefits an organisation can lead to varied and mixed results at different levels, highlighting the complex nature of the behaviour. The results emphasise people's roles in the workplace, both as active participants and observers. They also reveal the connections, interactions, and influences among coworkers, regardless of their position in the organisation. The findings reveal a wide range of key theoretical underpinnings of the consequences and the effects of the behaviour for individuals, colleagues, the organisation, and external stakeholders.

The review contributes by providing a comprehensive overview of the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour, the impact of the behaviour, and theories to explain these outcomes. Additionally, the review suggests future research directions to enhance understanding of this topic.

Keywords: unethical pro-organisational behaviour, UPB, consequence, impact, structured literature review, benefits

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Evidence Based Management at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

11 November 2024

Date

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List of abbreviations

ABDC.....	Australian Business Deans Council
AJG.....	Academic Journal Guide
GIBS.....	Gordon Institute of Business Science
OCB.....	Organisation Citizenship Behaviour
SJR.....	Scimago Journal & Country Rank
SLR.....	Structured Literature Review
UPB.....	Unethical Pro-Organisational Behaviour

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Extensive research continues to explore and explain why unethical behaviour exists in organisations (Kaptein, 2023). This is shown by the increasing number of corporate scandals that continue to expose improper behaviour by organisations or employees that negatively impact all stakeholders (Omarova, 2017). Over the years, research findings have acknowledged that employees would act unethically to help their employers (Umphress et al., 2010). With increased curiosity in the literature on this behaviour within organisations, Umphress and Bingham (2011) presented and defined a construct, unethical pro-organisational behaviour (UPB), to explore potential motivations behind unethical behaviour that benefits the organisation or its members. Unethical pro-organisational behaviour is described as “actions that are intended to promote the effective functioning of the organization or its members (e.g., leaders) and violate core societal values, mores, laws, or standards of proper conduct” (Umphress & Bingham, 2011, p. 622).

Corporate scandals that benefit organisations have been widely covered in the media for many years; in the same vein, research topics on these scandals have increased (Cole et al., 2021). The prevalence of unethical pro-organisational behaviour across organisations, industries, and nationalities (Sheedy, 2021) is emphasised by numerous publicised scandals. Scandals have impacted various industries, notably the motor industry, with incidents like Volkswagen’s toxic emissions scandal (Hosain, 2019) and Ford’s delays in recalling the unsafe Pinto (Lian et al., 2020). Similarly, the airline sector has faced scrutiny due to ongoing incidents involving Boeing jets. A major travel agency in China reportedly advised customers against requesting invoices to facilitate tax evasion (Wang et al., 2021).

The food industry has faced several significant scandals in recent years. Whole Foods was found to have overcharged customers by inaccurately stating the weight of prepackaged products (Baker et al., 2019). Coca-Cola was involved in securities fraud (Lian et al., 2020). Meanwhile, Luckin Coffee, a rapidly growing Chinese beverage retailer, was exposed for fraudulently inflating its sales figures by over \$310 million in 2019 (Zhang, 2023). Additionally, food safety issues arose with a scandal involving a Chinese Hotpot restaurant that reused leftover broth and the Sanlu company, which sold dairy products contaminated with melamine, posing a significant health risk to consumers (Chen & Zhang, 2024). These incidents highlight the ongoing challenges and ethical dilemmas within the food industry.

The telecommunication industry has faced its own issues, such as WorldCom’s accounting fraud, AT&T’s consumer fraud (Lian et al., 2020), and bribery cases at Samsung and Siemens

(Schuh et al., 2021). The 2008 global financial crisis revealed issues in the financial sector, and unethical practices continue. Notable examples include accounting fraud by Bank of America (Lian et al., 2020), Wirecard inflating profits through fake sales (Nguyen et al., 2021), and Wells Fargo agents opening unauthorised accounts (Liu et al., 2022). Scandals like the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica breach, Enron's fraud (Lian et al., 2020), and CBC's sale of contaminated vaccines (Schuh et al., 2021) reveal issues in social media, energy, and healthcare industries.

South Africa, too, has had its share of headline scandals. The Steinhoff scandal involved accounting irregularities that benefitted the organisation by maintaining investor confidence and market value (Daily Investor, 2022). The VBS mutual bank scandal illegally attracted deposits from municipalities and misappropriated funds, leading to the bank's liquidation (Ploticsweb, 2018).

1.2. Definition of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

Unethical pro-organisational behaviour describes actions that aim to help the organisation or its members but go against fundamental societal norms (Umphress & Bingham). There are two distinct characteristics of the construct: first, it is unethical as the actions are illegal and violate the moral standards of society, and second, this behaviour intends to benefit the organisation (Lian et al., 2020). The intent of unethical pro-organisational behaviour undermines ethics for organisational success (Umphress & Bingham, 2011), often at the cost of external stakeholders (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). Therefore, employees often prioritise immediate organisational benefits over stakeholders, leading to harmful outcomes for the organisation and stakeholders (Pierce & Aguinis, 2015). Recent studies suggest that the business landscape has become increasingly competitive and unpredictable, and UPB provides the needed competitive edge (Shin et al., 2024).

When the definition was constructed, the suggestion was that unethical pro-organisational behaviour is voluntary, where employees choose to engage in such behaviour without coercion and not included in the job description (Umphress & Bingham, 2011). This behaviour was included under detrimental citizenship behaviours, aimed at benefiting the organisation while potentially harming stakeholders (Pierce & Aguinis, 2015). Recent empirical studies have also classified the behaviour as voluntary and discretionary (Liao, 2024; Zhang, 2023). However, in recent years there has been a brewing debate with another school of thought suggesting that unethical pro-organisational behaviour is compulsory (Wang et al., 2022). Research suggests that employees may engage in unethical pro-organisation behaviour when they are confronted with pressure from various sources, and applying the self-determination theory, this then gives credence to the view that the behaviour is compulsory (Wang et al.,

2021b). The concept of compulsory behaviour in the workplace appears appealing, but more research is needed to support it. It is important to distinguish between two different constructs: voluntary UPB occurs when employees willingly engage in unethical actions to benefit their organisation, driven by their own motivation and free will. On the other hand, compulsory UPB happens when employees feel pressured or obligated to act unethically due to organisational environment or directives (Wang et al., 2021b). Therefore, for this structured literature review, the definition that will be applied is the one set forth by Umphress and Bingham (2011), where unethical pro-organisational behaviour is regarded as voluntary.

In summary, one agrees with Hosain (2019) that unethical pro-organisational behaviour has three elements: first, the behaviour is unethical; second, the behaviour intends to benefit the organisation; and last, the behaviour is voluntary. This observation confirms why unethical pro-organisational behaviour falls under a group of prosocial behaviours described as behaviours conducted by members of the organisation voluntarily and directed at and intending to benefit an individual, group, or organisation (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). Although prosocial behaviours are closely connected, each construct is distinct, with intended benefits towards coworkers, customers, teams, stakeholders, or the organisation (Bolino & Grant, 2016). Furthermore, there is consensus on the definition and the distinct characterisations of UPB in other studies, as set forth by Umphress and Bingham (2011).

Widespread unethical pro-organisational behaviour can be categorised into several groups: accounting scandals (Umphress et al., 2010; Umphress & Bingham, 2011; Liu et al., 2021) and misrepresentation of financial data to improve the organisations' reputation (Chen et al., 2022b; Liao, 2024; Shu, 2015; Zhang, 2023; Zhang & Du, 2023). Another group involves lying to customers about company products or services (Alqhaiwi, 2024; Chen et al., 2022b; Fehr et al., 2019; Hosain, 2019; Jiang, 2016; Liao, 2024; Liu et al., 2021; Shu, 2015; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang, 2023). The final group includes commercial bribery (Shu, 2015; Zhang et al., 2018) and destroying incriminating documents to protect the organisation (Liu et al., 2021).

Organisational behaviour significantly influences a company's growth (Xia et al., 2021); however, a concerning trend has emerged in today's workplaces, where some employees resort to unethical practices under the mistaken belief that these actions will ultimately benefit their organisations, as noted by Xai et al. (2023). In recent years, organisations have faced increased competition for survival and profitability, coinciding with a rise in business scandals (Hosain, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated these issues, highlighting unethical behaviours linked to organisational interests (Khawaja et al., 2023). This persistent problem has garnered significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike (Zhang & Du, 2023), and it invariably comes at a cost (Xia et al., 2021).

1.3. Problem statement

The prevalence of unethical pro-organisational behaviour across various organisations, industries, and cultures (Chen et al., 2022; Sheedy, 2021) has seen an increase in research (Chen et al., 2022). Despite its unethical characteristics, the benefits have allowed UPB to be positively perceived in certain circumstances (Fehr et al., 2019). A notable example is Volkswagen made profits by avoiding costs for vehicle emission controls before the misconduct was exposed (Lian et al., 2020). However, unethical pro-organisational behaviour inherently creates tension between organisational performance and ethical principles (Fehr et al., 2019); it incurs significant long-term costs for the business term (Zhang et al., 2018), and there have been severe consequences whereby some companies have experienced significant financial and reputational losses (Mishra et al., 2021).

This confirms Umphress and Bingham's (2011) observation that employees see benefits for the organisation, though other expected outcomes might be detrimental. Volkswagen faced over \$49 billion in global fines, recalls, and refits (Hao et al., 2023), alongside prior legal and reputational losses (Nguyen et al., 2021). Pfizer was fined \$60 million for bribing foreign officials (Wang et al., 2021). Enron's collapse (Hosain, 2019) and Luckin Coffee's 75% stock decline leading to delisting (Zhang, 2023) highlight severe consequences. In the Wells Fargo Bank case, employees who engaged in the unethical act suffered the consequences, with over 5,300 fired for opening unauthorised accounts (Hao et al., 2023).

Despite this, the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour have been less studied than its antecedents (Fehr et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021). Cognisant of the fact that the antecedents of unethical pro-organisational behaviour are at individual, interpersonal, and organisational levels (Mo et al., 2022), an overview of the consequence of UPB at these different levels would provide a comprehensive view of the current state of literature and understand the limited focus on these outcomes. There is currently no known comprehensive review in the literature on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour to take stock of what has been investigated, examined, or explored.

1.4. Prior literature reviews

Different reviews and discussion papers have been written on unethical pro-organisational behaviour at different phases of the phenomenon, as highlighted in Table 1. Bolino and Grant (2016) reviewed prosociality in organisations, with prosocial behaviours as one of the emerging themes. Hosain (2019) outlined the motives and consequences of UPB.

The literature reviews by Mishra et al. (2021) and Mo et al. (2022) are the first relevant reviews conducted for unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Mishra et al. (2021) presented a theory-based view of the antecedents and consequences of UPB. Mo et al. (2022) reviewed the

antecedents and consequences of unethical prosocial behaviours at the individual, interpersonal, and organisational levels from a theoretical perspective. Mukherjee (2024) focused on providing thorough theoretical, contextual, and methodological insights. Jiang and Xie (2024) developed a framework through a meta-analytic review focusing on the differences between UPB actors' and observers' responses to the behaviour. Lastly, Ahmad et al. (2024) focused on leadership and UPB.

Table 1: Summary of prior reviews

Date	Authors	Type of review	Purpose of the review	Review Period	Number of articles
2016	(Bolino and Grant, 2016)	Literature review	Overview of literature on prosocial motives, behaviours, and impacts in organisations.	1985 - 2015	Not available
2019	(Hosain, 2019)	Theoretical	The article discussed the motives and consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour using then existing literature	2010 - 2018	Not available
2021	(Mishra et al., 2021)	Literature review	The review presented a theory-based view of the antecedents and consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour.	2010 - 2020	33
2022	(Mo et al., 2022)	Literature review	The review examined the causes and consequences of unethical prosocial behaviour, including all unethical work behaviour conducted to benefit other stakeholders such as the organisation, i.e., unethical pro-organisational behaviour	2010 - 2021	111
2024	(Ahmad et al., 2024)	Systematic Literature review	The review examines explores how leadership affects employees' tendency to engage in unethical pro-organisational behaviour.	2010 - 2023	63
2024	(Jiang & Xie, 2024)	Meta analytic review	The review developed a framework highlighting how actors and observers respond to unethical pro-organisational behaviour.	2010 - March 2024	53
2024	(Mukherjee, 2024).	Systematic Literature review	The review focused on the theory and characteristics of the antecedents and consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour, as well as the research setting and methodology.	2010 - 2023	43

Source: Author

1.5. Study rationale

This structured literature review aims to heed the call by Mishra et al. (2021) and Mo et al. (2022) to provide a holistic view of the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at the individual, interpersonal, and organisational levels. The existing reviews, as outlined in Table 1, do not encompass this holistic perspective, or are limited.

The structured literature review makes the following contributions to the field of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. First, the paradoxical nature of unethical pro-organisational behaviour presents a complex dilemma, as it leads to both positive and negative outcomes, as it encompasses features that are simultaneously unethical and beneficial (Mo et al., 2022). Understanding these outcomes is crucial because as much as the behaviour can be advantageous in the short term, these actions may lead to harmful long-term consequences

(Mishra et al., 2021) for both the organisation and its stakeholders (Mo et al., 2021). Second, the review discusses the impact of various consequences across the different levels of analysis. Although the intention is to benefit the organisation or its members, it is important to acknowledge that organisations often face financial and reputational challenges (Mishra et al., 2021), and this represents a significant reality for many organisations. Third, the review discusses various theories that explain the outcomes of unethical pro-organisational behaviour across different levels of analysis. Unlike previous reviews, which concentrated on specific theories, this one adopts a comprehensive approach to provide a broader understanding of the topic.

Last, the review will offer theoretical and practical insights to emphasise the gaps in the existing literature on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Furthermore, it will help practitioners better understand the behaviour and offer a way to use evidence to inform their decision-making (Tranfield et al., 2003).

1.6. Review questions

The aim of this structured literature review is to understand what is known in the literature about the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at an individual, interpersonal, and organisational level. The review will be expanding on the approach by Mo et al. (2022) of analysing the outcomes of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at different levels and to achieve the objectives outlined above, the review aims to address the following:

- a) What are the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at an individual, interpersonal, and organisational level?
- b) What is the impact of unethical pro-organisational behaviour outcomes at an individual, interpersonal, and organisational level?
- c) What theories underpin the existing theoretical explanations of the outcomes of unethical pro-organisational behaviour at an individual, interpersonal, and organisational level?

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Chapter 2 details the research methodology employed to source, analyse, and structure the appropriate academic papers, providing a rationale for the chosen approach. In Chapter 3, the findings are presented in relation to the identified need for a structured literature review. Chapter 4 offers a critical discussion of the evidence gathered, synthesising the results to highlight gaps in the existing research and raising questions that remain unanswered. Chapter 5 identifies areas for future research stemming from the gaps highlighted in the literature review.

2. Method and Analysis (8)

The objective of this review is to examine the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour, their impact, and the underpinning theories that explain the outcomes. A structured literature review is an appropriate strategy to fulfil the aim of the study as it identifies all relevant articles that meet the specified criteria to address the review purpose and questions (Snyder, 2019). Unethical pro-organisational behaviour is a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary construct and integrating insights from different fields will lead to a comprehensive understanding of the consequences of the behaviour (Mukherjee, 2024). A structured literature review helps to provide an overview of interdisciplinary research; thus, only relevant research on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour from the different fields is included in the review (Snyder, 2019). In addition, a structured literature review “follows an objective, scientific, replicable, and transparent process that is exhaustive and minimizes bias” (Mishra et al., 2021, p.66).

A structured literature review was conducted instead of a systematic review that uses meta-analysis to integrate the results of the articles included in the review, whilst an integrative review is not descriptive or historical and is used to generate new theories (Snyder, 2019).

2.1. Research strategy

Before the actual review, a proposal stage was conducted, which included identifying existing literature reviews to assess the most recent focus, strategy, and methodology (Snyder, 2019). The assessment identified the gaps in the current literature and was able to define the review purpose, questions, and approach and identify initial search keywords. In addition, this allowed me to explore the relevance, debates, and size of the literature on the topic (Tranfield et al., 2003). The primary revelation in prior literature reviews was the focus on antecedents of unethical pro-organisational behaviour and the limited and nuanced research on the consequences of the behaviour (Mishra et al., 2021; Mo et al., 2022). A test phase for the review process and protocol to identify articles was conducted, and this was critical to setting review boundaries and room to make any necessary adjustments before selecting the final sample (Snyder, 2019).

The final sample of articles was searched using the keywords "unethical pro-organizational behavior" OR "unethical pro-organisational behaviour" OR "unethical pro-organizational behaviour" OR "unethical proorganizational behavior" OR "pro organizational unethical behavior". The keywords resulted from the test phase and assessment of prior literature reviews (Mishra et al., 2021; Mo et al., 2022; Mukherjee, 2024). In addition, the keywords were used as a filter to exclude other constructs under the unethical prosocial behaviour collection

(Mishra et al., 2021; Mo et al., 2022). Furthermore, this excluded other workplace misconduct, such as workplace deviance and prosocial rule-breaking, as they examine unethical behaviour that does not benefit the organisation (Sheedy, 2021). More articles were sought by applying backwards and forward citation searches in the identified articles to ensure that relevant literature on unethical pro-organisational behaviour was not overlooked in the previous search (Mishra et al., 2021), as highlighted in **Appendix A**.

Referencing previous literature reviews (Mishra et al., 2021; Mukherjee, 2024), I conducted a comprehensive search across several databases, including EBSCOhost, Springer, Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Wiley, to ensure the identification of relevant articles. It is important to note that Web of Science and Scopus are the only databases that perform thorough due diligence, while the others serve primarily as aggregators. However, searching across multiple platforms minimises the bias associated with relying on a single database. Additionally, I excluded Google Scholar from the keyword search because it lacks the refined search capabilities found in other databases and tends to produce irrelevant articles. However, if a relevant article was inaccessible through the other databases, Google Scholar was used to locate and retrieve the article.

2.2. Research scope

The articles included in this literature review are from 2011 to September 2024. This time frame ensured the review covers relevant articles as per the review objectives (Tranfield et al., 2003) that satisfy the definition of unethical pro-organisational behaviour set forth by Umphress and Bingham (2011).

2.3. Sample selection

The search strategy resulted in 1080 research articles across the different academic databases. The following screening process was done to get relevant articles and an appropriate sample size. First, the article titles were compared, and duplicates were removed after identifying those found in more than one database. Second, reading all the remaining articles would have been time-consuming; therefore, to minimise the delay, I screened the remaining articles by reading the abstract and, if unclear, the findings (Snyder, 2019) to ensure the study was about the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. The screening excluded some more articles, and last, as suggested by Snyder (2019), before finalising the sample, the full text of each article was screened to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. After removing articles that met the exclusion criteria, 63 relevant articles remained. Figure 1 illustrates the process of identifying and selecting the sample articles.

2.3.1. Inclusion criteria

It was important to establish an inclusion criterion that identified pertinent articles to address the review aim and questions (Snyder, 2019). The criterion entailed the following inclusion: First, based on the quality of articles, those with an AJG (academic journal guide) 2021 journal ranking of 3, 4, or 4* or an ABDC (Australian Business Deans Council) 2019 journal ranking of A or A*. In cases where a journal ranking was not readily available through the established guidelines, the journal name was checked on Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR). An article was then considered for inclusion if the journal's performance indicator is marked in green for the year of publication and the following year.

Second, relevance was considered. As highlighted earlier, unethical pro-organisational behaviour is multidisciplinary. While the focus may be on highly rated journals, the behaviour is found in organisations operating in developing countries, as displayed in the introduction, that tend to publish in low-rated journals but produce relevant studies. The sentiment is supported by the evidence presented in the abstraction section. Therefore, articles were included based on their relevance rather than the ratings of the journals in which they were published. However, citation counts of these articles served as supplementary information because citing these articles shows a strong interest among scholars, including those in highly rated journals, in citing these articles (Dumay et al., 2016). The review sample includes articles with low or no ranking; however, articles published before 2022 must have at least one citation count, as **Appendix B** shows. The year 2022 was used as a base due to the time lag in submission and publishing issues, and there is more interest in scholars citing the latest articles (Dumay et al., 2016). Other authors advise that their literature review findings would have been better by drawing insights from low or no-ranking journals (Adam et al., 2017).

Third, empirical studies, conceptual studies offering further perspectives and direction for addressing the review question (Atewologun et al., 2017; Snyder, 2019; Veetikazhi et al., 2022), and prior literature reviews. Last, "peer-reviewed papers presented at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting and made available by their authors in the online proceedings" (Mo et al., 2022, p.336). The review includes eight articles presented between 2018 and 2024, as detailed in **Appendix C**. These papers have yet to be published and are only available in the Academy of Management proceedings. Their inclusion underscores a growing interest in the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour, with one of the articles already cited in relevant discussions.

2.3.2. Exclusion criteria

The review is limited to articles written in English; the exclusion criteria are non-English peer-reviewed articles. The exclusion saved research time as English articles are more accessible, and considering my limited proficiency in other languages, this could raise concerns about the credibility of the review findings. Another exclusion is empirical studies published before 2011, as discussed earlier. The last exclusion applies to studies that mention unethical pro-organisational behaviour but do not investigate, examine, explore, or discuss the consequences. Most research studies focus on the antecedents, and some authors mention the potential consequences and recommend that future research investigate the outcomes.

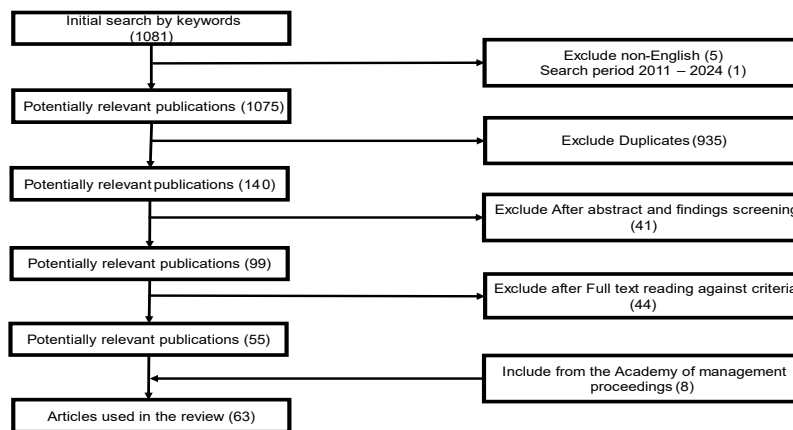


Figure 1: Article search and selection process.

Source: Author

2.4. Data abstraction

After finalising the review sample, data abstraction was conducted to extract pertinent details from each article, ensuring the information aligns with the purpose of the review and answers the questions (Snyder, 2019). I created an Excel spreadsheet, and after full-text reading, descriptive data for each of the 63 articles in the sample was catalogued. The information included the author's name, journal title, research topic, publication year, journal rank, research setting and continent, research methodology highlighting methods, data analysis techniques, and findings. Theoretical underpinning and citation count were also recorded. The information allowed me to critique each article and summarise the findings reported as tables and figures.

Figure 2 depicts the number of articles on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour between January 2011 and September 2024. There has been an upward trend in articles discussing the outcomes of the behaviour. The conceptual article was published in 2011, with follow-up discussions on the consequences in 2015. From 2015 to 2020, there was low single-digit article output per year, but there was a notable increase from 2021. By

September 2024, 18 articles had been published, with another four presented at the Academy of Management Journal Proceedings awaiting publication, confirming an increased interest in the topic. 2023 and 2024 account for 51% (total 101- rounding off) of the articles in the review.

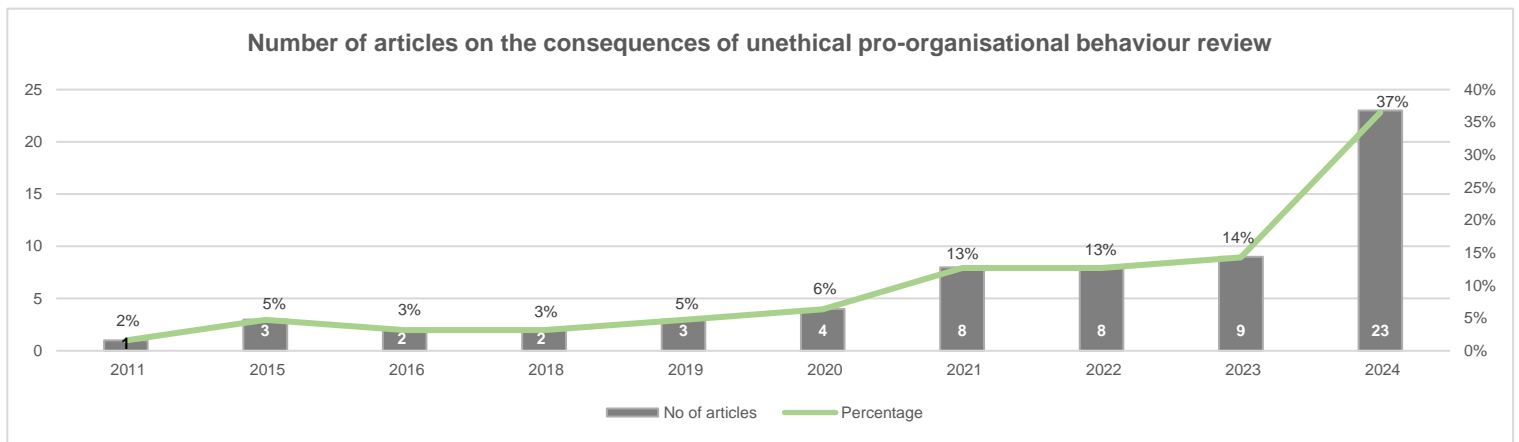


Figure 2: Trend of annual output for UPB outcomes articles.

Source: Author

2.5. Descriptive analysis

Most studies are empirical and use quantitative research methodology. The qualitative studies include previous literature reviews, conceptual, and theoretical studies. Conceptual articles were published in the early stages of construction development. Only one research study has utilised a mixed methods approach, as shown in Figure 3. The methodology slopes more toward the quantitative research design, conducting surveys, field, and laboratory experiments as in **Appendix D**.

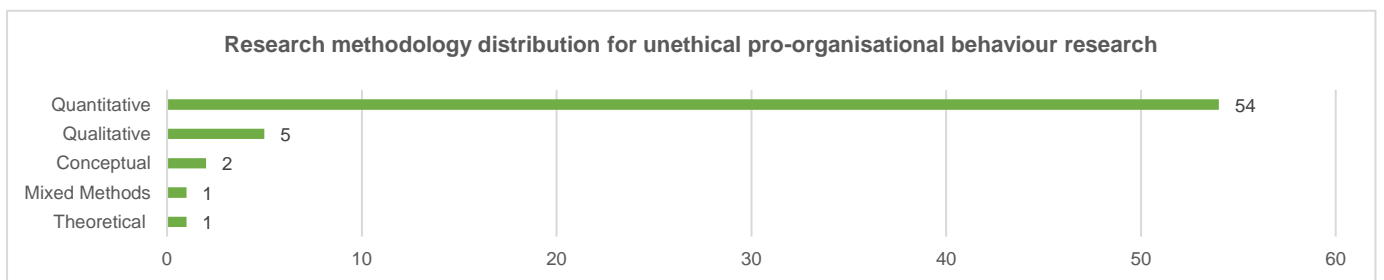


Figure 3: Research methodology distribution for UPB research.

Source: Author

Figure 4 depicts the research setting of the review articles on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. The studies are saturated in Asia, with 67% of the articles. It is important to note that multi-continental studies mainly include a combination of countries in Asia, Oceania, North America, and Europe. Therefore, this confirms that the Asia setting dominates, as illustrated in **Appendix E**. This underscores the urgent need for more research on the consequences of UPB from other continents, mainly Africa and South America.

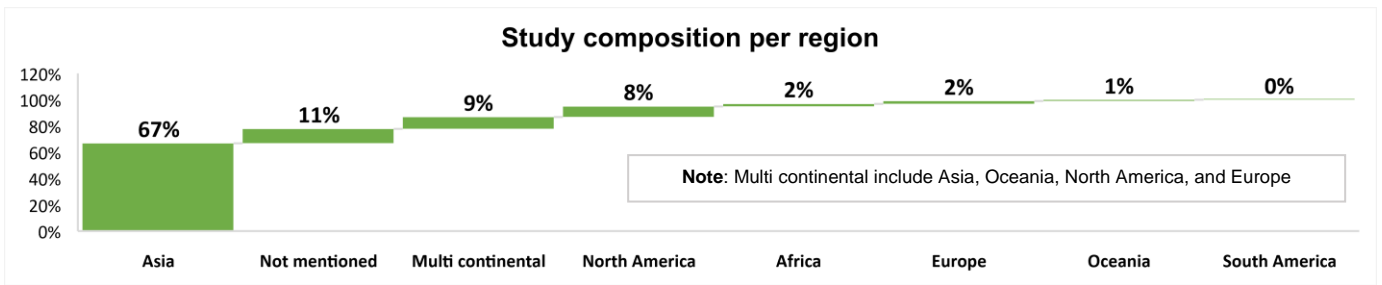


Figure 4: Study composition per region.

Source: Author

The 63 articles in the review were published in 29 different journals, as shown in Table 6, between 2011 and September 2024. Studies with rankings of 3, 4, 4*, A, A* and Scimago green, as discussed in the inclusion criteria, are grouped under High-ranking journals, accounting for 63% (40) of the articles. The remaining are 14% (9) low-ranking journals, with 22% (14) articles having no ranking assigned. In summary, 78% of articles in the review are assigned a ranking, as highlighted in **Appendix F**. Articles from the Academy of Management Proceedings are biasedly assigned High ranking journal status because if compared to the other Academy of Management journals, the lowest journal ranking is 3 or A, as shown in **Appendix G**. Only 10% of submitted papers are accepted for the proceedings program (Academy of Management Proceedings, 2024). Interestingly, these articles are yet to be published, with four of the eight presented in 2024 indicating a growing interest in the topic.

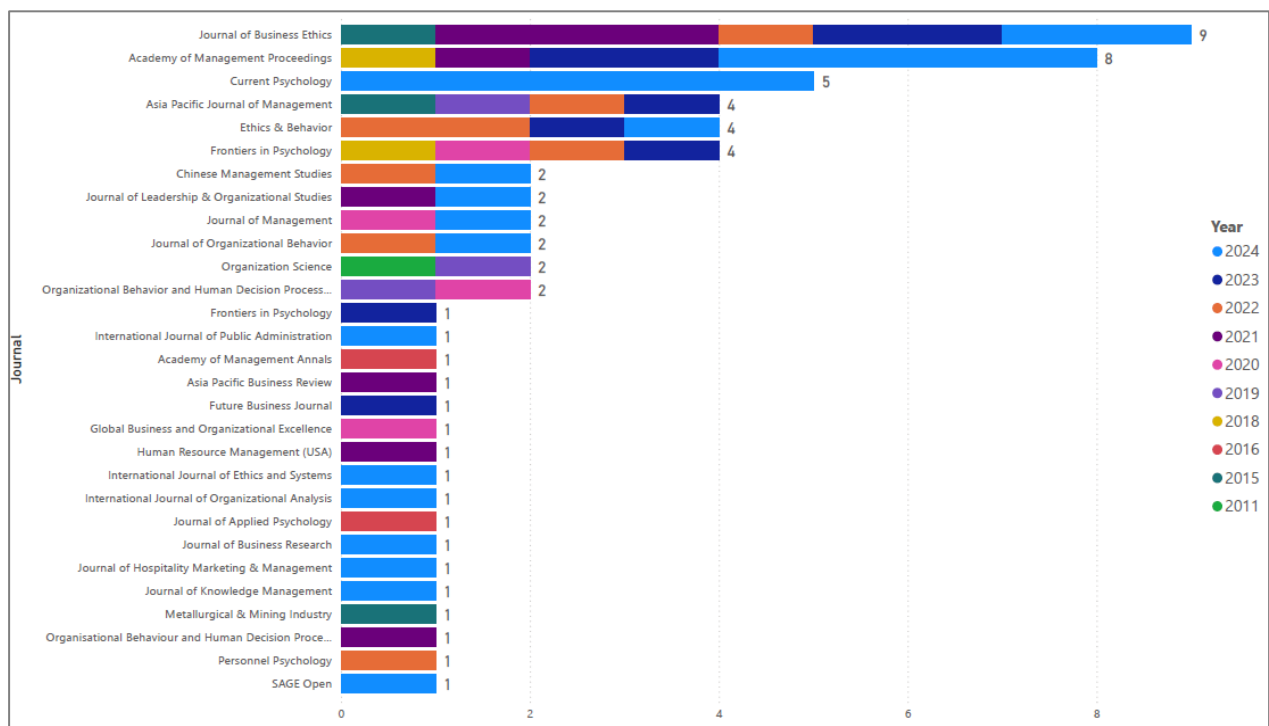


Figure 5: Journals publishing UPB research 2011-2024.

Source: Author (Adapted from Mishra et al., 2021)

The top publishing journals are the Journal of Business Ethics, Current Psychology, and Asia Pacific Journal of Management. The Academy of Management proceedings are accepting more studies, and additional journals are publishing articles on this topic, as shown in **Appendix H**.

2.6. Inductive content analysis

The review aimed to explore the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour, the impact of these outcomes, and the theoretical underpinnings at an individual, interpersonal, and organisational level while identifying gaps for future research. The review adopted inductive content analysis because a structured literature review strategy was followed, and the technique allows for insights to be gathered based on the review questions (Snyder, 2019).

Content analysis is “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). Vears and Gillam (2022) describe inductive content analysis as a qualitative method that constructs content meaning through reading text rather than searching for specific content. The process is inductive, as it involves an iterative approach using codes identified within the data, and this differs from deductive content analysis, where codes are predetermined based on previous research before data collection; furthermore, this method is unassuming and free from bias (Vears & Gillam, 2022). Applying the method will make it possible to review and analyse current literature by looking for patterns and themes that will lead to a specific conclusion regarding the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour in a systematic manner, even though the UPB phenomenon is across multidisciplinary fields (Gaur & Kumar, 2018).

The analysis process entailed the following steps: step one was reading. The first thing to do was to familiarise myself with the literature and understand what it says about the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Through reading, I developed the ability to recognise themes and patterns related to the research questions and determine relevant information (Vears & Gillam, 2022). Reading an article multiple times helped me to grasp the study and the overall status of the area.

Step two involved the first round of coding. This coding process used Atlas.ti, which covered 56 articles in the sample. It is important to note that this does not include the seven previous literature reviews highlighted in Table 1. The iterative process involved identifying a piece of text and labelling it with a code to summarise the meaning without losing context (Vears & Gillam, 2022). Coding allowed me to make sense of the data in relation to the research questions (Elliott, 2018). The codes were then grouped into categories (Vears & Gillam, 2022) as they showed some relation based on the content and how the codes related to each other

(Elliott, 2018). Step three involved the second round of coding, where subcategories were developed from the broad categories identified in step two. This process required examining these categories while maintaining the original context (Vears & Gillam, 2022).

Step four involved refining the subcategories by identifying relationships and merging some subcategories without losing meaning while keeping others as they were (Vears & Gillam, 2022). All four steps developed a coding schema consisting of categories and subcategories aligned to the review questions aimed at understanding the consequences of UPB (Gaur & Kumar, 2018). The last step was the analysis process, which included data synthesis and interpretation. At this stage, I connected the categories from the coding schema to form themes that provide a summarised explanation of the consequences of UPB, as per the research aim and questions (Gaur & Kumar, 2018; Vears & Gillam, 2022). The categories that emerged are discussed in the literature review. These include the different roles at an individual level, the various connections and interactions at an interpersonal level, and a range of theories explaining different outcomes and their impact within, outside and directly on the organisation.

2.7. Limitation of research design

The primary step of identifying relevant articles involved using keywords and search terms, which were continuously identified or refined based on the literature reading (Tranfield et al., 2003); therefore, not all keywords were identified and utilised in the search process; thus, the review sample could have excluded pertinent articles. The articles had to meet a specific and subjective inclusion criterion, which meant that non-English articles were excluded, even though they might have offered valuable insights. Furthermore, the selection of articles was biased because the articles in the review are studies based on subjective findings and conclusions from the authors and criteria that satisfy the editors of a particular journal (Tranfield et al., 2003). Also, one person did the data abstraction and coding for this SLR, which could impact the review findings.

2.8. Data quality strategy

The following strategy was applied to ensure data quality: First, transparency was maintained by detailing the search strategy, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and limitations for audit purposes (Snyder, 2019). Second, the research scope did not concentrate on the last five years but extended to articles between 2011 and September 2024. This allowed for the inclusion of articles from different journals and fields relevant to the review because limiting the research scope would have affected both the depth and rigour of the review, impacting the findings (Snyder, 2019). Last, during the coding process, a code book detailing the code, categories, description of categories, and themes was created.

3. Structured Literature Review

3.1. Consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

3.1.1. Individual level

The research explores the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour from an individual perspective. It highlights two key roles: UPB actors, the employees actively engaging in the behaviour, and UPB observers, who watch and witness the behaviour of others within the organisation, as detailed in **Appendix I**.

UPB actors

Umphress and Bingham (2011) defined unethical pro-organisational behaviour, focusing on individual employees and the emotional and cognitive impacts of such behaviour. They noted that emotions highlight morality within situations, while cognitive dissonance leads to attitude changes post-engagement in unethical acts. Pierce and Aguinis (2015) also argued that behaviours like UPB, go beyond reason and need to promote specific organisational goals, can negatively affect individuals and harm stakeholders.

Research over the years has expanded, revealing that UPB has emotional and cognitive effects that lead to subsequent behaviours. When individuals engage in UPB, the immorality of their actions triggers feelings of guilt, which leads them to pursue ways to redeem themselves. To achieve this, they may engage in various voice behaviours, including promotive voice, where they propose new ideas to improve the organisation, or prohibitive voice, where they express concerns about harmful practices (Wang & Xiao, 2018; Wang et al., 2021)

Some UPB actors may self-remediate by opposing inappropriate organisational behaviours and policies, using their voices to promote ethical standards (Xia et al., 2023). Whistleblowing is another ethical voice when individuals feel ashamed, demonstrating their commitment to morality and accountability to both leaders and colleagues, as noted by Chen and Zhang (2024). The authors caution that whistleblowing is negatively perceived in cultures like China, making it difficult to amend UPB through it when feeling shame. These outcomes are a natural expectation for those who have engaged in UPB and are committed to making amends through ethical actions. However, unethical pro-organisational behaviour has proven that unethical behaviour can be overlooked when pursuing benefits for the organisation, but this often has negative consequences for UPB actors (Liu et al., 2022). These include a state of anxiety due to experiencing mixed emotions (Liu et al., 2021), self-interested unethical behaviour and workplace cheating behaviour (Zhao et al., 2024), decreased task performance due to feelings of depression (Hao et al., 2023), and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) due to low moral standards influenced by UPB (Zhang, 2023).

The paradoxical nature of unethical pro-organisational behaviour cannot be ignored because individuals engaging in this behaviour will likely experience conflicting feelings afterwards. The unethical features associated with UPB bring about feelings of guilt and shame. However, the behaviour also kindles a sense of pride and entitlement from the pro-organisational mindset. Individuals often feel a sense of accomplishment and importance in their contributions to the organisation despite the negative implications of their actions.

Yang et al. (2021) showed that these mixed feelings can lead to different outcomes based on an individual's moral values, potentially resulting in either counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) or organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Other conflicting results are positive customer service and self-serving cheating behaviour (Chen et al., 2022a), increased organizational citizenship behaviour and decreased work efforts (Xu et al., 2024), and mixed effects on pro-social behaviours like pro-environmental actions (Zhao & Qu, 2022). Additionally, these feelings can affect moral judgment and decision-making, leading to self-interested unethical behaviour (SUB) and the social charity dimension of organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB-S) (Zhang & Du, 2023). Moreover, UPB can result in negative and positive personal outcomes. For instance, individuals who engage in UPB may experience positive spillover from work to family (WFPS), as well as work-to-family conflict (WFC) (Chen et al., 2022b). Additionally, while UPB can contribute to increased work engagement, it may lead to job burnout (Xu et al., 2024).

Research has explored how some factors can help individuals navigate these mixed emotions with positive outcomes. The findings indicate that the influences of guilt-proneness result in coworker-directed consequences of organisation-focused citizen behaviour (OCBO) and customer-directed consequences of citizen behaviour (OCBC) (Tang et al., 2020), whilst the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) results in increased service-oriented behaviour and decreased deviant behaviour (Liao et al., 2024).

It is clear that the unethical features of UPB have an indirect effect on OCB toward the customer; on the other hand, the pro-organisational features of UPB tend to lead to positive outcomes with an indirect effect on OCB toward the organisation when there is a strong relationship between manager and employee (Gong, 2024). Moreover, studies that have focused on the beneficial features of UPB confirm the positive outcomes, such as extra-role behaviours of innovation and helping (Shin et al., 2024). It also leads to better job performance, especially in-role service performance and customer-oriented OCB, because these UPB actors find their work meaningful and prove their competence and mastery of managing unethical activities that are beneficial (Alqhaiwi, 2024).

UPB Observer

The focus at the individual level has been on UPB actors, but their behaviour occurs amongst observers. Observers are a significant group within an organisation and play a crucial role in responding to unethical behaviour. Their responses can directly affect the organisation, making them key stakeholders whose reactions must be carefully considered (Pierce & Aguinis, 2015). Tang et al. (2022) found that observers may feel admiration and engage in helping behaviour towards a UPB actor if they view the act as pro-organisational. However, if the focus is on the unethical nature of the act, they may respond by instigating civility, avoiding interaction, or whistleblowing. The perceived ethicality of unethical pro-organisational behaviour can influence whistleblowing. The pro-organisational aspects of such behaviour may deter observers from engaging in whistleblowing efforts, as noted by Mishra (2024). Observers' reactions matter more than those of UPB actors. The perceived level of punishment for UPB can influence the attitude and behavioural reactions of the observers in the organisation, with potential outcomes of increased staff turnover intention or decreased engagement in unethical pro-organisational behaviour by observers (Liu et al., 2024)

3.1.2. Interpersonal level

Research on the effects of unethical behaviour that benefits the organisation highlights different employee interactions, as shown in **Appendix J**. This discussion addresses the consequences at each level.

Leader UPB on employees

Leaders often struggle to balance the needs of their organisation with those of other stakeholders, and choosing to put organisational benefits first while ignoring societal norms does not fare well with employees, failing to see these leaders as transformational figures (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015). In other instances, as shown by Ma et al. (2024), employees engage in ethical behaviour to compensate for the leaders' immorality out of guilt.

There is a growing trend of unethical pro-organisational behaviour as employees often follow their leaders' examples when they identify with them (Zhang et al., 2018). Also, how leaders and employees relate has a massive influence, such that employees can learn and adopt the behaviour, resulting in subsequent negative consequences of employees engaging in self-interested unethical behaviour (Lian et al., 2020). However, a leader's behaviour can strain the relationship with employees. When employees encounter leaders engaging in UPB, they might choose to stay quiet instead of speaking up, and this silence can lead to decreased job satisfaction, performance, and quality of organisational decision-making processes (Chen et al., 2024).

A notable benefit to leader UPB is that an employee can perceive positive outcomes from it, resulting in organisational citizenship behaviours toward the supervisor (OCBS) (Cai et al., 2024a). In addition, when the resulting outcome of leader UPB is employee UPB, this is seen as a positive outcome due to the intended benefit to the organisation of the behaviour from both sides (Cai et al., 2024b; Li & Mo, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021) highlighting that leader UPB does not always translate into negative employee response.

Leaders' personalities have an impact such that those who exhibit Machiavellian traits and engage in UPB can influence their employees in contradictory ways. Research by Wen et al. (2020) shows that this dynamic can result in two opposing outcomes: on the one hand, it may lead to unethical behaviour among employees, while on the other, it can foster organisational citizenship behaviour. This highlights the complex interplay between leadership style and employee actions within organisations. The diverse influence of leader UPB can shape employees' work attitudes and behaviours in both positive and challenging ways. An individual can respond to the leader's unethical behaviour by reducing prosocial behaviour, such as knowledge hiding as a protective measure against any possible negative consequences of the leader's actions (Masood et al., 2024). On the other hand, when employees adopt ethical standards, this can mitigate the adverse effects of leader UPB and create a positive work environment that encourages knowledge-sharing among employees (Masood et al., 2024).

Leader response to employee UPB

Leader UPB impacts employees' behaviour is complex, so how do leaders respond when employees engage in unethical pro-organisational behaviour? A leader's response is also complex. A leader can disregard the unethical act and focus on the beneficial outcomes. In some cases, this could lead to employees trusting the leader and perceiving the positive outcome as justice (Schuh et al., 2021). In certain situations, the employee UPB is viewed as organisational citizenship behaviour, which positively affects how employees are evaluated, particularly when they are recognised as high performers, as noted by Lee et al. (2024). Another case shows that focusing on the outcomes masks employee UPB, which encourages a strong relationship between a leader and an employee, i.e., leader-member exchange (LMX) when there is a common objective of contributing to the organisation (Zhan & Liu, 2022).

The unethical features of UPB can influence a leader's response, such that they evaluate individual job performance with ratings based on moral consideration of the employees' behaviour (Fehr et al., 2019). The influence can also impact how leaders assess an employee's career prospects by assigning low ratings on their promotability (Xu, 2023). Furthermore, the potential damage of employee UPB in public organisations will likely cause leaders to respond with negative performance appraisals of the employee (Schwarz et al., 2024). In certain situations, a leader may react to employee UPB with abusive actions

stemming from diminished trust in that employee. This reaction often aims to punish or limit those engaging in such behaviour despite the underlying intention to ultimately benefit the organisation, as Gao et al. (2023) noted.

Employee UPB on coworkers

Based on previous discussions, it is evident that UPB occurs regardless of its position. In the workplace, colleagues interact more with each other than with leaders, leading to a high level of influence on each other's behaviours and attitudes. This interaction can make unethical behaviour contagious in the organisation, leading coworkers to learn, justify, and adopt similar practices (Shu, 2015). The research on UPB has expanded to include lateral contagion, i.e., employee-to-coworker influence, complementing previously studied vertical contagion, i.e., leader-to-employee, and this means that coworkers are likely to learn and engage in UPB when they know and have witnessed others doing so (Zeng et al., 2022).

UPB within and between levels

Some studies have investigated the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour by exploring the between, i.e., interpersonal level and within, i.e., individual-level outcomes separately. Leader UPB can encourage employees at an individual level to learn and adopt unethical behavioural principles such as moral disengagement and employee self-interested unethical behaviour, and these behaviours will then, at an interpersonal level among a team, develop a team-level unethical climate (Azhar et al., 2024). The paradox of UPB indicates that a leader's behaviour can also trigger or hinder employees' citizenship behaviour such that when an employee observes the behaviour at an interpersonal level, it results in increased citizenship behaviour; however, when observed at a personal level, the employee is less likely to exhibit citizenship behaviour (Cai et al., 2024c). This demonstrates the ripple effect of UPB.

The mediating and moderating roles of UPB

Recently, studies have explored the mediating and moderating roles of UPB and the resulting outcomes at the individual level. People with narcissistic traits are more likely to behave unethically to achieve their goals (Khawaja et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2020). The mediating role of UPB suggests that narcissistic personality traits can lead to one engaging in unethical behaviour that benefits the organisation, and as demonstrated previously, the behaviour results in guilt and shame, prompting individuals to recognise their misconduct, ultimately benefiting the organisation. These emotional responses lead to reformative behaviours (Wang & Xiao, 2018; Wang et al., 2021). This is important as previous studies have focused on situational and attitudinal factors rather than individual traits (Shah et al., 2020).

Situational factors like Leader UPB have been investigated to show their mediating and moderating effects. Dela Cruz et al. (2023) highlighted the mediating role of leader UPB in the

family business, which influences employees to engage in UPB by vicariously learning the behaviour. Nosrati et al. (2024) showed that employees who experience unethical leadership experience the feeling of exhaustion that will lead them to engage in unethical pro-organisational behaviour and eventually engage in unethical pro-family behaviour for selfish benefits rather than organisational benefits. Furthermore, leader UPB as a situational factor has been shown to have moderating effects in a relationship that results in employee UPB, where ethical decision-making is influenced by perceived leader UPB when employees identify with the organisation (Ho, 2024).

3.1.3. Organisational level

UPB intends to benefit the organisation or its members, but earlier studies focused on its negative impact (Umphress et al., 2011). Unethical pro-organisational behaviour leads to low business performance when service behaviour is conducted alongside unethical practices (Jiang, 2016). When the public perceives that an organisation has benefitted from unethical behaviour, the moral judgment regarding its stock is influenced by the morality of its goals, such that when morally high, the stock price drop will be minimal compared to morally low goals (Baker et al., 2019). Recently, Xia et al. (2021) explored how UPB may encourage firms to engage in innovation strategy. This behaviour helps companies in developing countries overcome government inefficiencies and high barriers to market entry to gain specific resources.

3.2. Impact of unethical pro-organisational behaviour outcomes

Pierce and Aguinis (2015) emphasised the importance of understanding the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour and its broader impacts. They noted that the interconnectedness of organisations, employees, and society means that negative outcomes from UPB at one level can adversely affect others, potentially leading to serious consequences, such as the collapse of organisations like Enron. The discussion will explore the impact of these consequences across three analytical levels.

3.2.1. Individual level

UPB actors

Understanding the downstream effects of employees engaging in UPB is crucial as it reveals behaviours that can impact individuals, organisations, or society. Employees engaging in UPB have presented reformative behaviour seeking to make amends through different ethical voices on behalf of the organisation and stakeholders (Chen & Zhang, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Wang & Xiao, 2018; Xia et al., 2023), resulting in positive effects. However, unethical

acts after UPB can negatively impact the organisation (Zhang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2024) or affect workplace performance (Hao et al., 2023).

Pursuing organisational benefits through UPB can significantly impact individuals, especially as work and family roles increasingly intertwine (Chen et al., 2022b). The negative consequences of such behaviour often elevate work-to-life conflict, as the anxiety stemming from workplace dynamics disrupts the balance between work and personal life (Liu et al., 2021). However, this behaviour can also lead to positive spillover effects, as it may benefit the organisation and enhance work-to-family connections despite increasing work stress. Thus, the impact of UPB on employees is multifaceted, introducing challenges and potential benefits in the context of work-life dynamics (Chen et al., 2022b).

The outcomes of UPB actors experiencing mixed emotions highlight different effects. The impact of these outcomes are negative behaviours and positive behaviours (Chen et al., 2022c; Gong, 2024; Liao et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang & Du, 2023) towards the organisation. This duality highlights the complexity of UPB and its significant implications for organisational dynamics. The personal outcomes of individuals engaging in UPB are intricately connected to their roles and functions, suggesting that their actions have broader implications for the organisation (Xu et al., 2024).

The various forms of organisational citizenship behaviours show that UPB is a form of unethical behaviour that can have positive consequences for coworkers and customers, illustrating that ethical and unethical behaviours can coexist and impact the organisation positively (Tang et al., 2020). Sometimes, employees navigate and reconcile these mixed emotions, leading to positive effects on customers and the organisation (Gong, 2024; Liao et al., 2024). In addition, the outcomes generated through the pro-organisational part of UPB positively affect the organisation (Shin et al., 2024) and customers (Alghaiwi, 2024).

UPB Observer

When observers feel that UPB actors' actions have benefited the organisation, they are willing to help and make their positive contributions with a positive impact on the organisation (Tang et al., 2022). In addition, the impacts are favourable for the organisation when an observer neutralises potential threats through avoidance or being a whistle-blower to sanction the UPB actor (Mishra, 2024; Tang et al., 2022). However, an observer focusing on the unethical actions of a UPB actor can have detrimental effects on both the organisation and the individual involved. This scrutiny may lead to harmful behaviour directed at the UPB actor, perpetuating further unethical conduct as retribution (Mishra, 2024).

The reaction of observers to UPB punishment can positively and negatively impact the organisation. When the perceived level of punishment is high, this might deter an observer

from engaging in UPB, fostering an ethical climate. On the contrary, when UPB goes unpunished, employees may consider leaving the organisation, negatively impacting staff turnover (Liu et al., 2024).

3.2.2. Interpersonal level

Leader UPB on employees

A leader's behaviour can unintentionally affect employees positively or negatively, even if they intend to benefit the organisation. Employees may view a leader engaging in UPB actions negatively and feel compelled to respond by demonstrating ethical behaviour. This response counterbalances the leader's misconduct, ultimately fostering a culture of integrity within the organisation. (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; Ma et al., 2024). However, unethical leadership can motivate and influence employees to engage in unethical behaviours, impacting how employees perform their jobs, and this can significantly harm the organisation and the employees in the long term (Chen et al., 2024; Lian et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

UPB is unique in that the pro-organisational character of the behaviour can be perceived positively and lead to beneficial outcomes for a leader, as noted by Cai et al. (2024a). This highlights how leader UPB can inspire employees to adopt and engage in unethical pro-organisational behaviour when viewed as contributing to organisational goals (Cai et al., 2024b; Li & Mo, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). However, when employees encounter mixed outcomes from their leaders' behaviour, the effects may be mixed for the organisation, as Masood et al. (2024) and Wen et al. (2020) suggested.

Leader response to employee UPB

As discussed earlier, a leader's response to employee UPB results in different outcomes, and the effects follow the same diverse trend. The adverse effects on the organisation when a leader disregards employees' unethical acts highlight a pessimistic view of a leader's role in sanctioning unethical behaviour by employees (Schuh et al., 2021; Zhan & Liu, 2022), or when a leader views employee UPB as OCB when high performance is considered (Lee et al., 2024).

Conversely, when a leader responds negatively to employee UPB, the effects are favourable for the organisation. For example, moral consideration is included in employee performance (Fehr et al., 2019), an employee's promotability is rated low (Xu, 2023), or potential damage to the organisation is considered during employee performance assessment (Schwarz et al., 2024). These responses highlight that such behaviour is unacceptable.

In some instances, abusive behaviour towards employees who engage in UPB has been used to sanction them. However, according to Gao et al. (2023), when leaders respond in such a

manner, it punishes the employee and promotes a culture of unethical conduct within the organisation. This response reflects a broader issue where negative leadership leads to adverse outcomes for both the individual and the organisation.

Employee UPB on coworkers

Unethical pro-organisational behaviour can spread among coworkers, becoming a learned behaviour that undermines the very fabric of an organisation. According to Zeng et al. (2022), individuals often mimic the unethical actions of their peers, leading to a normalisation of such behaviour. When many employees engage in these practices, it cultivates an environment where unethical behaviour is accepted. Research by Shu (2015) highlights that this perception can influence how employees view their organisation, and adverse effects are to be expected.

UPB within and between levels

Exploring unethical pro-organisational behaviour at two levels reveals significant consequences. Referencing UPB, employees may resort to self-interested unethical actions at an individual level, thus less inclined to demonstrate citizenship behaviour (Azhar et al., 2024; Cai et al., 2024c). With such behaviours, the intent is selfish and bound to have a negative effect on the organisation. At the interpersonal level, the outcomes are more nuanced. While individual unethical behaviour can foster a negative team climate (Azhar et al., 2024) that harms the organisation, it can also lead to instances where employees display increased citizenship behaviour, positively impacting the organisation (Cai et al., 2024c).

The mediating and moderating roles of UPB

UPB can function as a mediator, which can positively and negatively affect the organisation. On the positive side, guilt and shame arise, resulting in reformative behaviours that ultimately benefit the organisation (Shah et al., 2020; Khawaja et al., 2023). However, within family businesses, the impact of UPB as a mediator tends to be negative, with destructive behaviours leading to unethical pro-family behaviour potentially harming the business (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Nosrati et al., 2024). When considering leadership, the presence of UPB can have detrimental effects on the organisation. When employees perceive their leader's actions as unethical, this perception encourages employees to adopt similar practices (Ho, 2024).

3.2.3. Organisational level

The impact of UPB on organisations is complex and mixed. On the negative side, low business performance often results when customers become aware that employees have acted against their interests, leading to customer loss (Jiang, 2016). Furthermore, public perception of an organisation's unethical practices typically brings negative economic repercussions (Baker et

al., 2019). However, there are situations where UPB can positively impact the organisation. For instance, in regions with low institutional integrity, unethical practices may help companies bypass bureaucratic obstacles to maintain their operations. (Xia et al., 2021).

3.3. Underpinning theories of the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

Scholars examining unethical pro-organisational behaviour have employed various theories to analyse its consequences. Some research has integrated multiple theories to offer diverse perspectives on the outcomes. A summary of these theoretical perspectives, organised by different levels of analysis, can be found in **Appendix K**. While some studies have referenced other literature work to explain UPB outcomes, this aspect will not be explored in this study as it is not aligned with the review objectives and questions.

3.3.1. Individual level

UPB actors

Social exchange theory was the foundational framework for understanding unethical pro-organisational behaviour. It highlights the dynamics between two parties involved in the reciprocal exchange of resources (Blau, 1964). Employees may engage in UPB as a form of reciprocation for the positive relationship with their employer, i.e., the organisation (Umphress & Bingham, 2011). The theory suggests that this relationship is crucial to the employee's ability to engage in self-remediation post-UPB. Specifically, those who feel supported by their leaders are more likely to utilise ethical voices to make amends (Xia et al., 2023). The paradoxical nature of UPB influences the dynamics by enhancing organisational citizenship behaviour directed towards the organisation (OCB-O) through positive manager-employee exchanges, as these interactions yield beneficial outcomes for the organisation. Conversely, it reduces organisational citizenship behaviour directed towards customers (OCB-C) due to unethical practices that negatively impact customer relationships, as noted by Gong (2024).

The appraisal theory of emotions suggests that after an unethical event, a UPB actor will subjectively evaluate the event and behaviour (Roseman & Smith, 2001), and it is this assessment that will elicit different emotional experiences and subsequent work-related behaviours (Moors et al., 2013). Emotions influence workplace behaviour such that guilt affects customer-focused behaviour, prompting individuals to engage in actions that benefit customers. On the other hand, pride can lead to organisation-focused behaviours, reinforcing commitment to the company. Additionally, emotions can impact how employees interact with their coworkers (Tang et al., 2020). Others explored the elicited feeling of depression, which

results in decreased task performance (Hao et al., 2023), and shame, which results in increased job burnout (Xu et al., 2024).

The *social cognitive theory* (Bandura, 1986) posits that humans are moral agents capable of self-regulation, and weakened ethical constraints can lead to past behaviour being referenced. Chen et al. (2022a) explained how the self-regulation process influenced by social and individual mechanisms leads to UPB inducing conflicting psychological states that lead to behavioural outcomes that impact stakeholders, i.e., customer service behaviour and the UPB actor, i.e., self-serving cheating behaviour. Zhao et al. (2024) highlight that after engaging in UPB, employees' self-regulating capabilities are weakened, leading to subsequent unethical acts such as workplace cheating behaviour.

The affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) posits that workplace events can trigger emotional responses, influencing employee behaviours. UPB can evoke feelings of shame, and to rectify this, individuals may resort to internal whistleblowing, as highlighted by Chen and Zhang (2024).

Moral Licensing Theory indicates that engaging in UPB boosts employees' moral self-evaluation, allowing them to feel more justified in acting immorally due to past moral actions (Merritt et al., 2010). Focusing on the pro-organisational features of UPB can foster psychological entitlement, leading to unethical behaviour (Liu et al., 2022). Conversely, this entitlement may encourage extra-role behaviours that enhance organisational effectiveness (Shin et al., 2024). Whereas the *moral cleansing theory* (Sachdeva & Medin, 2009) explores how individuals involved in UPB engage in positive actions to restore their moral integrity and regain self-worth (Wang & Xiao, 2018; Wang et al., 2021)

The Conservation of Resources Theory illustrates how engaging in UPB elicits work stress that impacts work-life balance differently. It can lead to increased individual stress arising from the inability to meet family expectations, resulting in work-to-family conflict (WFC) (Chen et al., 2022b). Also, UPB demands additional effort from employees, increasing their accountability and responsibilities, which can deplete their cognitive and emotional resources and hamper pro-social behaviours (Zhao & Qu, 2022). *The Social Identity Theory* (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) suggests that individuals identify with their organisation through their peers, adopting group traits and justifying their actions with pro-organisational intent while engaging in extra-role behaviours (Shin et al., 2024).

The cognitive dissonance theory (Bandura, 1986) posits that individuals experience discomfort when their actions contradict their beliefs or attitudes. Yang et al. (2021) suggest that such behaviour can lead individuals to seek relief from dissonance, motivating actions like counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) or organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

The self-regulation theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) explains how individuals control their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours to reach their goals. UPB can initiate a self-regulation

process to align with these goals. However, UPB can be confusing and weaken their moral judgment, leading to counterproductive workplace behaviour (Zhang, 2023). *The Moral Compensation Theory* (Cornelissen et al., 2013) posits that people engage in ethical behaviour after committing an unethical act to atone for their transgressions. This theory illustrates how employees seek to improve organisational ethical standards following misconduct (Xia et al., 2023). According to the *paradox theory* (Smith & Lewis, 2011), individuals experience confusion when facing elements that may make sense on their own but become contradictory when combined. UPB is paradoxical, and the mixed emotions that arise from the behaviour affect employees' personal lives (Liu et al., 2021).

The self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) posits that employees are motivated when their psychological need for competence, relatedness, and autonomy are fulfilled. The theory examines that by engaging in UPB, the psychological needs fulfilled are meaningful work that leads to improved customer service (Alqhaiwi, 2024). *The work-life boundary theory* suggests that work and life are two domains with different and often conflicting demands (Adams et al., 2017). According to Liu et al. (2021), this theory offers insights into how anxiety experienced in the workplace due to UPB can overflow into personal life, thereby exacerbating work-to-life conflict.

UPB Observer

The Appraisal Theory of emotions suggests that emotions arise from evaluating events (Roseman & Smith, 2001). It explains why people can have different emotional reactions to the same event, as these emotions depend on how the individual appraises the impact of that event on their well-being (Moors et al., 2013). The theory posits that UPB occurs in a context where observers witness the event, leading to varying emotions and reactions towards the UPB actor. (Tang et al., 2022).

The sensemaking theory (Maitlis, 2005) examines how employees interpret workplace events, which shapes their relationship with the company and the subsequent behavioural adjustment (Liu et al., 2024). The inherent ambiguity surrounding UPB can lead to different outcomes for UPB actors. This variation makes it hard for observers to reach the same assessment or conclusion about the organisation (Liu et al., 2024). Last, *the moral foundation theory* (Graham et al., 2013) suggests that there are differences in the moral reasoning of humans based on the five core moral foundations of "care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation" (pp 66-71), and lately liberty/oppression. Mishra (2024) explored from an observer's perspective that when loyalty is the preferred core moral foundation, the observer is likely to be influenced by the perceived ethicality of UPB and unlikely to blow the whistle, highlighting how the pro-organisational aspect of the behaviour can influence employees' whistleblowing efforts by masking UPB as an ethical conduct.

3.3.2. Interpersonal level

Leader UPB on Employee

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) explores the dynamics between leaders and their employees, and Nguyen et al. (2021) showed that engaging in UPB is perceived as a positive response to the leader. *The social learning theory* (Bandura, 1977) suggests that people learn behaviours by observing role models, particularly their leaders (Fehr et al., 2019). Employees will likely model the UPB of trusted and respected leaders (Lian et al., 2020; Masood et al., 2024). *The social identity theory* (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) posits that UPB can spread from managers to employees when they identify with the organisation through the leader. This highlights the influence leaders have on their behaviour and attitudes and may be inclined to replicate the actions of their leaders, thereby engaging in UPB. This concept is supported by the insights of Zhang et al. (2018).

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) suggests that leaders influence employees' willingness to engage in UPB, depending on their relationship (Nguyen et al., 2021) or the employees' ethical mindset (Cai et al., 2024b). However, this influence can also lead to silence in the face of inappropriate behaviour (Chen et al., 2024).

The *social information processing theory* (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) emphasises the importance of social cues in helping individuals understand their work environment. These cues influence how employees perceive their surroundings, attitudes, and behaviours concerning their roles and interactions with others. The theory explains how leaders can provide employees with conflicting social information by engaging in UPB, which may lead to mixed outcomes, such as unethical actions and positive behaviours, as noted by Wen et al. in 2020.

The Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) illustrates how UPB triggers depression, leading to decreased task performance (Hao et al., 2023). The theory emphasises the connection between workplace events and employee emotions; thus, certain occurrences can provoke specific feelings, affecting employee behaviour (Chen & Zhang, 2024).

The motivated reasoning theory (Kunda, 1990) indicates that individuals often approach situations with a bias toward favourable outcomes, as self-interest greatly influences their subjective assessments. Cai et al. (2024) gave insights into the varied responses of employees to leaders' UPB. Employees' reasoning tends to align with the perceived benefits, suggesting favourable outcomes can significantly shape their evaluations and decisions.

Moral disengagement theory (Bandura, 1999) is a part of social cognitive theory and asserts that individuals can apply strategies to reduce the negative sentiment of immoral conduct; thus, the theory explains how individuals would focus on the pro-organisational aspects of the behaviour by reducing the unethical character of UPB (Schuh et al., 2021).

Leader response to employee UPB

Zhan and Liu (2022) explored UPB through *Social Exchange Theory* (Blau, 1964), finding that the benefits of UPB help employees strengthen their relationships with leaders when aligned, who may reciprocate with better performance ratings. Additionally, when UPB actors are loyal to the organization, leaders may overlook the unethical acts during performance evaluations, primarily if a strong relationship exists (Schwarz et al., 2024)

The Social Identity Theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) suggests that when employees do not identify with their organisation or leader, their UPB is viewed negatively by leaders as destructive, leading to potential punishment (Gao et al., 2023). However, when a leader disregards unethical acts and focuses on the pro-organisational nature, employee UPB is perceived positively. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and fairness among employees towards their leader, as noted by Schuh et al. (2021).

The *Social Information Processing Theory* (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) posits that employee behaviour is a critical social cue in the manager-employee relationship, influencing leaders' perceptions and actions towards their employees (Gao et al., 2023).

Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) suggests that employee UPB can cause leader anxiety, leading to harmful reactions toward the employee (Xu, 2023).

Employee UPB on coworkers

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains how coworkers may engage in UPB by imitating the actions of their peers through vicarious learning (Zeng et al., 2022).

The Moral Judgement Theory (Evans, 2008) outlines two ways employees make moral judgments that influence whether they imitate their peers' unethical pro-organisational behaviour. First, they assess behaviour against moral principles without considering outcomes. Second, they evaluate actions based on potential consequences, distinguishing the act from its results. This framework helps coworkers decide whether to emulate peers and engage in UPB (Zeng et al., 2022). *The Social Information Processing Theory* (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) examines the contagion effect of employee UPB. It proposes that coworkers may adopt similar conduct by interpreting their working environment, which is shaped by the attitudes and actions of their colleagues (Shu, 2015).

UPB within and between levels

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) posits that employees learn from their leaders' behaviours, which can sometimes result in negative conduct in the workplace. Drawing on the theory, Azhar et al. (2024) explained how leader UPB can encourage employees at an individual level to adopt unethical behavioural principles. Furthermore, the employees' selfish, immoral behaviour can spill over and influence their team, resulting in an unethical team

climate (Azhar et al., 2024). *The Construal level theory* (Trope & Liberman, 2010) suggests that people justify their UPB actions by focusing on the benefits rather than ethical implications. Therefore, the theory explains employees' decision-making process after observing leader UPB and the spillover effects on others, and the interpersonal decision-making centres on the benefits to the organisation, driven by a sense of obligation (Cai et al., 2024c).

The mediating and moderating roles of UPB

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) explains that people can learn unacceptable behaviour by observing messages about what is acceptable. This learning is influenced by the visibility and positions of their leaders. Perceived leader UPB can affect the link between employees' cognitive moral development (CMD) and their engagement in UPB (Ho, 2024). Family leader's UPB also signals employees that such behaviour is permissible (Dela Cruz et al., 2023).

The Trait Activation Theory posits that "employees will derive intrinsic satisfaction from work environment where they can show their unique personality traits, and they can prove themselves" (Khawaja et al., 2023, p. 2). This theory explains how personality traits relate to UPB. Narcissistic traits can increase the likelihood of engaging in UPB and trigger guilt or shame (Shah et al., 2020; Khawaja et al., 2023). In this context, employee UPB serves as a link between narcissism and these emotional responses.

The Moral Licensing Theory (Merritt et al., 2010) explored the mediating role of UPB between unethical leadership and unethical pro-family behaviour, as Nosrati et al. (2024) outlined. Employees engaging in UPB for organizational benefits may be encouraged to partake in other unethical behaviours.

3.3.3. Organisational level

The Institutional Theory suggests that companies must actively engage with formal and informal institutional requirements to obtain essential resources, particularly those provided by government institutions (Scott, 2013). Building on this theory, Xia et al. (2021) showed that UPB can benefit businesses in emerging markets with inefficient institutions, helping them navigate bureaucratic challenges, red tape, and significant market entry barriers to access resources vital for sustaining their innovation efforts.

4. Findings from the Literature Review

4.1. Consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

4.1.1. Individual level

UPB actors

Earlier research on UPB mainly examined the negative consequences for individuals who engaged in this behaviour. Emotional and cognitive responses were expected to drive behavioural change, with key findings highlighting guilt from unethical actions, shame from negative self-view, and cognitive dissonance due to conflict between actions and beliefs (Umphress & Bingham, 2011). The review findings show that these emotional and psychological responses are linked to behaviours that aim to make things right. These include ethical voices, i.e., promotive and prohibitive voices against inappropriate behaviour behaviours (Wang et al., 2021; Wang & Xiao, 2018; Xia et al., 2023), as well as whistleblowing (Chen & Zhang, 2024). Recent research reveals a broader range of emotions that can motivate individuals to correct their wrongdoings. The findings suggest that addressing unethical actions can lead to positive pro-organisational behaviours, supporting the view by Liao (2024) that making amends benefits organisations and stakeholders. Contradictory to the intent of the behaviour, review findings indicate that individuals may be motivated to engage in UPB when they perceive that their leaders reward specific actions. This support can foster a mindset focused on self-interest, leading to counterproductive work behaviours and even cheating in the workplace (Liu et al., 2022; Zhang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2024).

Clearly, UPB affirms that unethical behaviour can be disregarded in pursuing benefits but at a personal cost for the UPB actor (Liu et al., 2022). The findings highlight that individuals feel guilty yet are proud of achieving organisational goals, but this ambivalent state has led to anxiety and work-to-life conflict (Liu et al., 2021). Also, feeling ashamed of their actions elicits depression, impacting work performance (Hao et al., 2023). Other adverse personal consequences include increased job burnout, decreased work effort and conflict balancing work and life (Chen et al., 2022b; Jiang et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024). However, it is worth mentioning that there can be positive work-to-life spillover outcomes from UPB, indicating a complex interplay between organisational loyalty and personal well-being (Chen et al., 2022b).

As alluded to earlier, the paradoxical nature of unethical pro-organisational behaviour leads to mixed emotional reactions. This has intrigued researchers to understand the internal psychological processes in UPB actors' minds regarding the behaviour and its consequences. Then, can I assume that individuals experience mixed emotions and subsequent behaviours

after assessing the implications of their actions? The assumption is confirmed by Tang et al. (2020) with findings that appraising UPB events elicits guilt and pride, but navigating and reconciling the opposing feelings leads to increased customer-focused citizen behaviour and coworker-directed behaviour, respectively, as consequences that benefit the organisation. The sentiment is shared by Liao (2024), who found that UPB leads to increased service orientation behaviour and decreased deviant behaviour when opposing feelings are reconciled.

The complexity of mixed response to UPB is marked by its opposite and confusing outcomes, highlighting the tension between unethical actions and pro-organisational traits (Chen et al., 2022a; Yang et al., 2021; Zhang & Du, 2023). Some confusion arises from the evidence that UPB citizenship behaviour outcomes are not always beneficial to the organisation or stakeholders, because the unethical nature of this behaviour often targets customers, leading to a decline in organisational citizenship behaviour towards them (Gong, 2024). This confirmed the findings by Zhao and Qu (2022), where UPB actors found it unnecessary to continue with a pro-environmental behaviour attitude.

UPB Observer

The review findings reveal a critical angle of investigating the consequences of UPB from an observer's perspective. Observers are important in an organisation because how they respond to unethical behaviour can significantly affect the workplace. (Pierce & Aguinis, 2015).

In the same manner that UPB actors experience ambivalent responses, findings show that observers' appraisal of UPB events and behaviour can elicit mixed emotional and behavioural responses (Tang et al., 2022). UPB intends to benefit the organisation or its members; therefore, review findings suggest that when UPB is assessed from its pro-organisational characteristics, this will deter an observer from blowing the whistle (Mishra, 2024). However, the whistleblowing act needs to be investigated further due to the complexities of the experienced paradox. As discussed in the outcomes section, the option to act can also be culture context specific. UPB observers tend to judge the organisation rather than the actor when they perceive inconsistencies in punishment for engaging in the behaviour. The findings indicate that views on punishment can have two effects: they may drive observers to leave their jobs or reduce their likelihood of engaging in UPB. (Liu et al., 2024). The research on UPB observers is still in the infancy stage, with three empirical studies in the review.

4.1.2. Interpersonal level

Leader UPB on employees

The review findings emphasise the significant influence of a leader's behaviour. With this behaviour, the challenge arises from balancing organisational gains and adhering to societal

norms. Employees who see UPB as unethical respond negatively and view the leader unfavourably (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015); some are likely to behave ethically to compensate for the leader's perceived immoral actions (Ma et al., 2024).

The review findings show that leader UPB can affect employees' feelings about their work and behaviour. This happens in two ways: first, when an employee identifies with the leader, and second, how employees and leaders relate. Some adverse outcomes include employees engaging in unethical behaviour (Lian et al., 2020; Wen et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). Unfortunately, prosocial behaviours such as knowledge hiding are also impacted negatively (Masood et al., 2024). Interestingly, the adopted employee UPB can be seen as a positive outcome due to its intended benefit to the organisation (Cai et al., 2024b; Li & Mo, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021), highlighting that leader UPB does not always translate into negative employee response. Other positive outcomes are organisation citizenship behaviour (Wen et al., 2020) and increased prosocial behaviours, i.e., knowledge sharing (Masood et al., 2024). These outcomes reflect the intriguing paradoxical nature of UPB.

The downside of leader UPB is the strain it imposes on the relationship with employees, who may feel compelled to remain silent about inappropriate workplace behaviour, as Chen et al. (2024) noted. Employee silence and deterring observers' whistleblowing behaviour are similar because, in both scenarios, leaders act as obstacles. These findings reveal a complex power dynamic regarding leaders when employees respond to misconduct, whereby employees choose to avoid repercussions.

Leader response to employee UPB

The review findings indicate that leaders respond to UPB by considering its characteristics. Focusing on positive outcomes leads to favourable employee results, as UPB is seen as a form of organisational citizenship behaviour reflecting employees' good intentions for the organisation (Lee et al., 2024; Schuh et al., 2021). This masks unethical behaviour and strengthens leader-member exchange relationships (Zhan & Liu, 2022). Does this mean that leaders tend to disregard unethical behaviour and focus on the benefits to the organisation? The review findings challenge the notion and indicate that some leaders have responded negatively to employee UPB, which can adversely affect performance (Fehr et al., 2019) and promotability (Xu, 2023). This negative response from leaders will also arise when such behaviours are perceived to pose a potential risk to the organisation.

Employee UPB on coworkers

The review findings indicate that UPB is contagious among employees in organisations (Shu, 2015). While most studies have primarily examined how employees learn such behaviour from their leaders, the emerging evidence suggests that coworkers significantly influence each

other. When employees observe their peers engaging in UPB, they are more likely to adopt similar behaviours (Zeng et al., 2022). This highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of workplace behaviour beyond just the leader-employee relationship.

UPB within and between levels

Most studies in the review have investigated the consequences of UPB at an individual or interpersonal level. However, recent studies have recognised a connection and influence between the two levels of analysis. Leader UPB influences an employee at an individual level, but the individual's response filters through to the interpersonal level, resulting in an unethical team climate (Azhar et al., 2024). Other findings show that an employee's response to leader UPB is at individual and interpersonal levels with different outcomes (Cai et al., 2024c). The findings highlight the complex challenge presented by the behaviour. It raises intriguing questions about how leaders manage and respond to UPB at individual and interpersonal levels within their teams. Understanding these dynamics could provide valuable insights into ethical leadership and organisational culture.

The mediating and moderating roles of UPB

The review findings indicate that unethical pro-organisational behaviour has mediating and moderating effects. Traditionally, UPB is viewed as an independent variable leading to specific outcomes. However, recent studies (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Khawaja et al., 2023; Nosrati et al., 2024; Shah et al., 2020) highlighted the mediating role of UPB. The role demonstrates its link to narcissism and leader UPB (Nosrati et al., 2024). As expected, the outcomes of unethical leadership mediated by UPB are mixed with employees experiencing feelings that detest their actions and, in another case, engaging in unethical pro-family behaviour. These findings are consistent with the reformative and distractive behaviours that result from UPB. The moderating effect of unethical pro-organisational behaviour demonstrates that leader UPB, similar to organisational culture, immediate job context, and work characteristics, can act as an external influence that shapes an individual's behaviour (Ho, 2024).

4.1.3. Organisational level

The review reveals that research on the consequences of UPB at an organisational level is limited, with only three studies included and two of these studies explaining the outcomes from an external stakeholder perspective.

Integrating unethical practices in customer service can harm businesses, as the aggrieved customers may disengage and switch to competitors (Jiang, 2016). Additionally, the study by Baker et al. (2019) shows that the public's perception of an organisation's unethical acts impacts stock market price drop depending on the morality of the organisation's goals. Recent research has highlighted the potential importance of UPB in specific geographical contexts.

The behaviour can be instrumental for organisations in overcoming inefficiencies and obtaining essential resources that support their innovation strategies (Xia et al., 2021)

With only three studies, additional research is essential to understand the long-term effects. This confirms the emphasis by Mukherjee (2024) on the need to understand the consequences of UPB in a dynamic business environment, as the behaviour can become “a factor that may potentially disrupt business and country economies” (p. 33). Understanding the consequences from both employee and observer perspectives is crucial; as discussed earlier, subsequent behaviours can negatively affect productivity and organisational performance?

4.2. Impact of unethical pro-organisational behaviour outcomes

4.2.1. Individual level

UPB Actor

The findings highlight that when employees engage in unethical behaviour despite the intended benefits for the organisation, they often become aware of the wrongdoing and the potential harm it causes to stakeholders (Chen & Zhang, 2024; Wang et al., 2021; Wang & Xiao, 2018; Xia et al., 2023). Therefore, to make amends, UPB actors would engage in reformative behaviours. This highlights that engaging in unethical behaviour can spur positive organisational change and improve employee conduct. However, UPB also leads to more deviant behaviours against the organisation, indicating that transgressions committed to benefit the organisation would ultimately harm it (Hao et al., 2023; Zhang, 2023; Zhao et al., 2024).

The findings highlight the significance of recognising the impact of UPB on individuals, especially as work and personal life roles become more intertwined (Chen et al., 2022b). While employees may act with good intentions to benefit their organisation, such behaviours can inadvertently disrupt their personal lives. This underscores the need to consider how UPB affects the overall well-being of employees (Chen et al., 2022b; Liu et al., 2021). With only two studies, additional research is needed as the review findings show that the mixed effects of UPB are far-reaching (Chen et al., 2022b), underscoring the importance of curbing the behaviour (Liu et al., 2021). Therefore, the impact of employee UPB is on the organisation, its employees, and customers.

As expected, when outcomes are viewed through the pro-organisational features of the behaviour, the effects are favourable for the organisation (Alqhaiwi, 2024; Shin et al., 2024).

The review findings suggest that UPB can result in customer-oriented OCB, described as “discretionary behaviours in serving customers that go above and beyond formal job

requirements” (Alqhaiwi, 2024, p.3). UPB violates customer values, so I believe customer-oriented OCB indicates that a UPB actor offers diligent service while undermining customer interests, negatively affecting the customer. It is essential to clarify what customer-oriented OCB means concerning unethical pro-organisational behaviour. In summary, when an employee engages in UPB, the downstream effects include reformative and destructive behaviours towards the organisation, customers, and personal life of the UPB actor.

UPB Observer

The review findings highlight that UPB can elicit varying responses from observers. On the one hand, the behaviour may garner admiration, ultimately benefiting the organisation (Tang et al., 2022). However, is this consistent, or can admiration unintentionally encourage undesirable behaviours? Recognising this complex dynamic is essential for effectively addressing the implications of UPB in organisational settings. Whistleblowing is an effective tool for exposing misconduct and sanctioning UPB actors, as Mishra (2024) and Tang et al. (2022) noted. Despite its effectiveness, the complexities involved in the whistleblowing process suggest that further research is necessary to fully understand its implications and challenges. An observer’s choice to avoid interactions with a UPB actor as a response to the misconduct (Mishra, 2024) may yield positive short-term outcomes. However, this raises questions about the sustainability of such avoidance and the potential long-term implications for the organisation.

Consequences for unethical behaviour are often seen as a sign that an organisation does not tolerate misconduct. The review findings indicate that a UPB observer may respond with abusive behaviour to sanction the UPB actor (Mishra, 2024). Unfortunately, this is bound to create negative repercussions for the organisation and the employees involved. This highlights the complex dynamics of handling unethical behaviour and the potential for the response to exacerbate the situation by responding in a harmful way, thus complicating efforts to address misconduct effectively. On the other hand, if an observer perceives that there is no punishment for UPB, the impact on the organisation is negative, indicating acceptance of the behaviour, but when some form of punishment is administered, employees may cease to engage in UPB, resulting in positive effects for the organisation (Liu et al., 2024).

4.2.2. Interpersonal level

Leader UPB on employees

The findings indicate that leader UPB can have various downstream effects on the organisation. The positive effects on the organisation result from employees disagreeing with the behaviour through their actions (Effelsberg & Solga, 2015; Ma et al., 2024). However, it is

evident that employees can be influenced by the leader's behaviour and adopt UPB, which can have mixed effects on the organisation. When the behaviour is viewed as unethical, then there are downstream adverse effects on the organisation (Chen et al., 2024; Lian et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018), and when pro-organisational, there are positive effects on both the organisation and the leader (Cai et al., 2024b; Li & Mo, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021). Other findings highlight the complexity of the behaviour with simultaneous mixed effects on the organisation (Masood et al., 2024; Wen et al., 2020). The dichotomy of these findings reflects the nuanced impact of a leader's behaviour on their employees and the organisation. Therefore, understanding the long-term ramifications of UPB (Zhang et al., 2018) will emphasise the unethical characteristics of the behaviour rather than the short-term rewards.

Leader response to employee UPB

A leader's response to employee UPB can have negative and positive downstream effects on the organisation and the employee engaging in the behaviour. The organisation's ethical culture and leadership will continue when leaders disapprove of unethical conduct (Fehr et al., 2019; Schwarz et al., 2024; Xu, 2023), regardless of the beneficial intention. An organisation is bound to suffer when leaders implicitly endorse UPB by prioritising results over ethical concerns (Lee et al., 2024; Schuh et al., 2021; Zhan & Liu, 2022), signalling a climate perpetuating unethical behaviour. When leaders resort to abusive behaviour as a means of discipline, it will adversely impact both the organisation and the individual employee (Gao et al., 2023), and this type of response mirrors how observers would respond to employee UPB.

Employee UPB on coworkers

Research on the contagion effect of UPB among colleagues is limited. There are only two articles on this topic, with the first article by Shu (2015) and the subsequent study released eight years later by Zeng et al. (2022). This highlights a significant gap in the literature regarding the spread of UPB amongst colleagues. The review findings agree that employee UPB is contagious with negative effects of subsequent unethical behaviours within the organisation. The findings are similar to the influence of leader UPB on employees and the influence of employee UPB on observers. Therefore, UPB can be learned by anyone from leaders and colleagues within an organisation directly at an interpersonal level and indirectly at an individual level.

UPB within and between levels

The review findings indicate that responses to UPB at an individual level lead to destructive behaviours (Azhar et al., 2024; Cai et al., 2024c). This aligns with previous discussions about the behaviours of UPB actors. These behaviours will then influence others at an interpersonal

level, such that the adverse effects reflect the negative impact on the organisation, whilst the positive effects reflect the pro-organisation characteristics of UPB with a positive impact on the organisation (Azhar et al., 2024).

The mediating and moderating roles of UP

The review findings illustrate reformative and destructive behaviours towards the organisation. The findings indicate that as a mediator, UPB can advocate for reformative behaviours in negative individual traits (Khawaja et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2020) that have positive effects on the organisation and the individual. However, UPB's mediating role can adversely affect the family businesses (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Nosrati et al., 2024). Moreover, UPB harms the organisation through destructive behaviours when acting as a moderator. These findings reflect the impact of UPB as a situational factor and the downstream effects on the organisation and the UPB actor.

4.2.3. Organisational level

According to the review findings, UPB can harm organisations, particularly when clients become aware that employees are undermining their interests (Jiang, 2016). This sentiment supports my view that the customer-oriented OCB outcome entails employees offering diligent service that may conflict with customer interests. This negatively impacts customers and business performance. Moreover, even when an unethical action serves a seemingly moral organisational goal, it can still harm the organisation economically, as evidenced by a decline in stock price. Negative responses from external stakeholders are likely to be the consequence, given the inherently harmful nature of UP towards this group.

The review findings suggest that UPB can positively impact the organisation, mainly when unethical actions are employed to secure resources for business operations (Xia et al., 2021). However, these advantages are short-term, indicating a need for further research to explore the long-term impacts of UPB at this level of analysis. The short-term impacts of UPB on the organisation are clear, but research on the long-term implications needs to be more extensive.

4.3. Underpinning theories of the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

4.3.1. Individual Level

UPB actors

Various theories have been used to explain the outcomes of an employee engaging in unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Fourteen theories were used, as shown in **Appendix L**, to explain the behaviour's emotional, psychological, and behavioural outcomes. The social

identity and social exchange theories suggest that individuals who engage in UPB often do so because they strongly identify with their organisation (Shin et al., 2024). In turn, this sense of belonging leads them to reciprocate their positive relationship with the organisation through actions that benefit it (Gong, 2024; Umphress & Bingham, 2011; Xia et al., 2023).

The appraisal theory of emotions, affective events, paradox, and self-determination theories suggest that UPB evokes specific emotions, influencing individuals' subsequent actions. Each theory offers a unique perspective on how these emotions are generated and their influence on subsequent behaviours. The paradoxical nature of UPB elicits mixed emotions that may result in reformatory or destructive behaviour by individuals (Alqhaiwi, 2024; Chen & Zhang, 2024; Hao et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2021; Tang et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2024). Similarly, social cognitive theory and cognitive dissonance theory highlight the conflicting psychological state that UPB actors experience and the impact of UPB on weakening self-regulating capabilities, leading to subsequent unethical acts (Chen et al., 2022a; Yang et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2024). The findings show that the moral licensing theory focuses on the prosocial perspective of UPB, where the UPB actor is concerned with the benefits of the behaviour for the organisation, leading to extra-role behaviours (Shin et al., 2024).

On the other hand, exploring the unethical characteristics of UPB reveals interesting dynamics through various theoretical lenses. The moral cleansing theory, self-regulation theory, and moral compensatory theory suggest that individuals involved in UPB are likely to engage in ethical actions to atone for their misdeeds (Wang & Xiao, 2018; Wang et al., 2021; Xia et al., 2023). These findings indicate that UPB triggers the restoration of individuals' moral self-image and reconciles their actions with their ethical standards. The impact of UPB can influence various areas of an individual's life beyond the workplace. The work-life boundary theory and conservation of resources theory illustrate how UPB can lead to a conflict between work and personal life. The review finding suggests through these theories that UPB actors' subsequent behaviours are determined by social factors, events, and behaviour assessment, resulting in reformatory and destructive behaviours towards the organisation and personal life (Chen et al., 2022b; Liu et al., 2021; Zhao & Qu, 2022). These findings suggest that UPB is voluntary and aims to benefit the organisation but may result in personal sacrifices.

UPB Observer

Only three theories were used in the review to explain a UPB observer's response to unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Through the appraisal theory of emotions, it is clear that the impact of an event on observers' well-being plays a role in their response; thus, different people can experience the same event but will elicit different emotions that inform subsequent positive and negative behaviours towards the UPB actor (Tang et al., 2022). On the other hand, the sensemaking theory explains how a UPB observer would interpret UPB events with

subsequent behaviour directed towards the organisation based on the punishment administered to the UPB actor (Liu et al., 2024). The moral foundation theory also assesses a UPB event through specific moral reasoning, and the review findings show that loyalty to the organisation will mask UPB as an ethical conduct for the observer (Mishra, 2024). In summary, UPB observers undergo an assessment process to inform subsequent behaviours directed towards the organisation or UPB actor. The moral licensing theory can further explain if admiring a UPB actor (Tang et al., 2022) could result in a tendency for an observer to engage in UPB when seen from the benefit perspective.

4.3.2. Interpersonal level

Leader UPB on employees

Social theories are dominant in explaining the consequences of a leader engaging in unethical pro-organisational behaviour and the effects on the employees. The theories reflect the influence of a leader's behaviour and attitude in an organisation, a sentiment shared by Ahmad et al. (2024) in their review. The social exchange theory explains the relationship between a leader and an employee and the willingness of employees to engage in UPB to reciprocate with acts that will benefit the leader and them indirectly, where leaders would respond positively or disregard the unethical act (Zhan & Liu, 2022) and focus on the outcome (Schwarz et al., 2024). The review findings on the social learning theory reveal that employees imitate or model the acts of a leader by engaging in UPB (Fehr et al., 2019; Lian et al., 2020). Earlier discussions indicate that employee UPB can result in other unethical actions; thus, further research is necessary to understand these implications better.

Social cognitive theory is similar to social learning in that leaders are role models who influence employee behaviour (Cai et al., 2024b). Social identity theory findings reveal that when an employee identifies with an organisation, a leader can be a proxy, allowing the employee to model their behaviour (Zhang et al., 2018). Last is the social information theory, with review findings suggesting that a leader's behaviour provides clues to an employee to make inferences about the work environment and adopt similar conduct (Wen et al., 2020).

The moral disengagement theory explains that employees focus on the advantages of UPB to justify their actions, mainly when influenced by their leaders (Schuh et al., 2021). The findings support the idea that employees assess a leader's behaviour to determine its appropriateness before engaging in it. This aligns with the affective events theory, which illustrates how emotional responses can lead to various behaviours, both positive and negative (Chen & Zhang, 2024; Hao et al., 2023). Additionally, the theory of motivated reasoning suggests that employees' decision-making is influenced by the perceived benefits they might gain from their UPB actions (Cai et al., 2024a). In conclusion, a leader's behaviour can influence and

motivate an employee to adopt UPB. However, the decision to engage in UPB begins with assessing an event based on personal values or self-interest, but UPB presents a challenge due to its conflicting features.

Leader response to employee UPB

It is not surprising that a leader's response to employee UPB draws from social theories. The review findings illustrate that identifying with an organisation (Schuh et al., 2021) and a solid manager-employee relationship with aligned organisational goals (Gao et al., 2023; Schwarz et al., 2024) fosters positive leader responses. Further research could draw from the theory of motivated reasoning to understand if a leader's response is biased towards favourable outcomes of employee UPB when there is tension between organisational performance and ethical principles. Although Xu (2023) showed that UPB is an affective event that triggers emotions in leaders, potentially leading to negative responses toward the employee.

Employee UPB on coworkers

From the review findings, social learning theory (Shu, 2015), moral judgment theory (Zeng et al., 2022), and social information processing theory illustrate the importance of observational learning in the workplace. Coworkers mimic other employees' actions, including unethical pro-organisational behaviour.

UPB within and between levels

From the review findings, social cognitive theory explains how leaders influence employees and, in turn, influence their coworkers (Azhar et al., 2024). This aligns with Zeng et al. (2022), where the social learning theory explains how UPB can be vicariously learned across the organisation. Also, each level has a decision-making process to justify the subsequent behaviour, as explained by the construal level theory (Cai et al., 2024c). Understanding the ripple effects of individual behaviour on an interpersonal level is crucial. A combination of other social theories and decision-making process theories could offer more insights.

The mediating and moderating roles of UPB

From the findings, the theories indicate different ways of adopting UPB. The social learning theory illustrates a learned behaviour (Dela Cruz et al., 2023; Ho, 2024). The activation theory suggests how certain personality traits drive people to engage in UPB (Shah et al., 2020; Khawaja et al., 2023). Lastly, the moral licensing theory describes how participating in UPB can lead to other unethical behaviour (Nosrati et al., 2024).

4.3.3. Organisational level

Earlier studies on UPB have primarily neglected to employ theoretical frameworks to explain its consequences for organisations. Most existing literature has concentrated on the reactions of external stakeholders, such as customers, and the associated long-term economic repercussions for companies (Baker et al., 2019; Jiang, 2016). Only one study employed institutional theory to underscore the short-term benefits of UPB (Xia et al., 2021). This gap in research is troubling, as it is widely acknowledged that UPB can have significant long-term effects on organisations. Organisational culture theory could provide a valuable lens to better understand how UPB becomes accepted within organisations and how different industries adopt this behaviour to attain legitimacy and ensure survival in competitive environments. This may provide insights into the long-term effects of disregarding the unethical act and focusing on the outcomes of UPB.

Figure 6 presents a conceptual framework mapping of the consequences, underpinning theories, and impact of the outcomes. (+) indicates positive and (-) indicates negative consequence or impact of the outcomes.

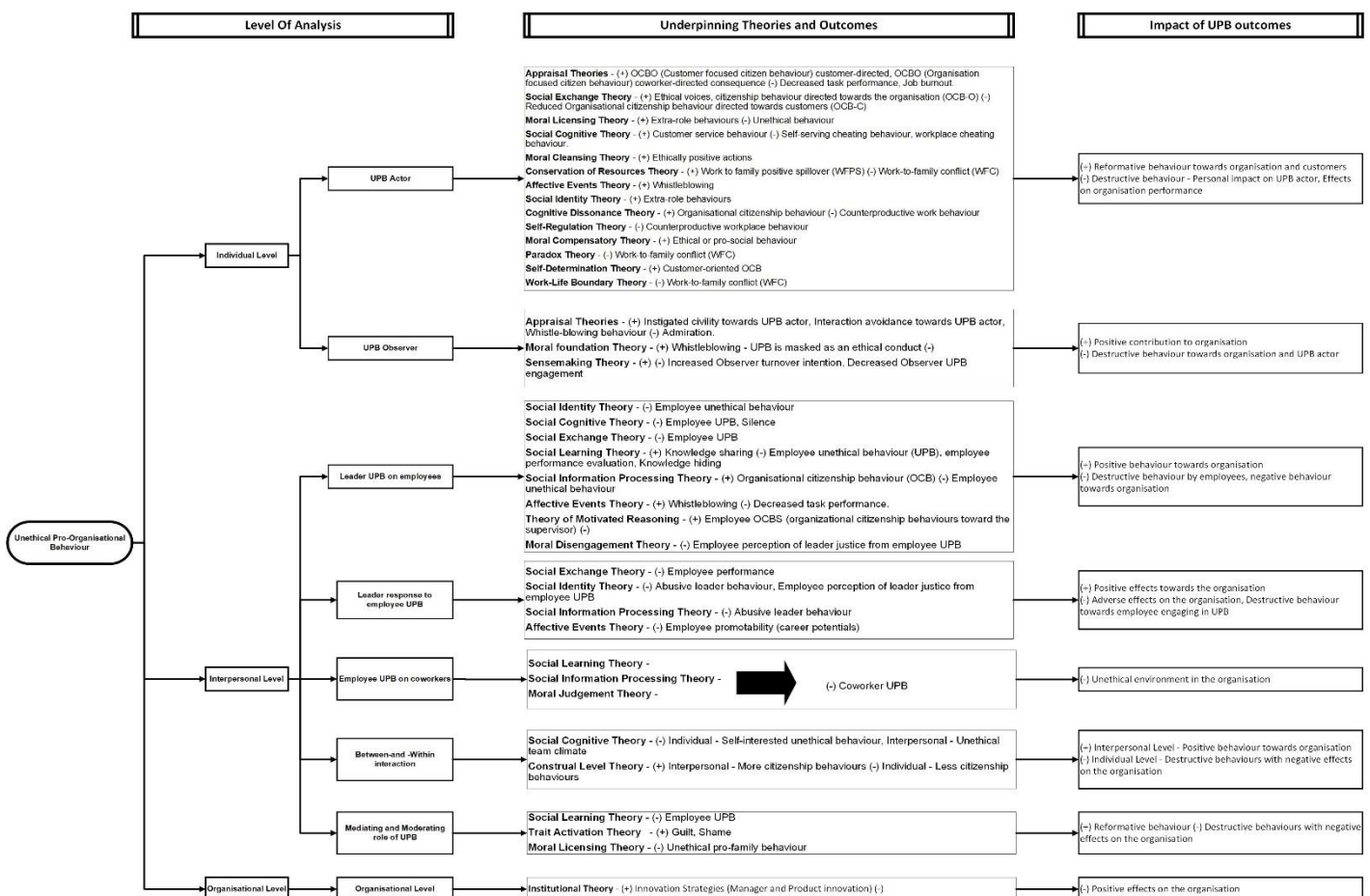


Figure 6: A framework of UPB consequences research.

Source: Author

5. Formulation of Questions for Future Research, and Conclusion

The structured literature review on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour conducted between 2011 and 2024 has revealed that the consequences of this behaviour are diverse and mixed across the different levels of analysis, reflecting its dual features. UPB does not happen in a vacuum at an individual level, and the consequences of the behaviour from a UPB actor and observer perspective are crucial. At the interpersonal level of analysis, leaders significantly influence their employees' attitudes and behaviours. How a leader responds to employee actions creates a ripple effect, impacting interactions on both individual and interpersonal levels. Leaders are influential, but employees also influence each other's attitudes and behaviours, which impacts team dynamics. The limited research on the consequences at an organisational level is concerning, and one can assume that outcomes at this level require longitudinal studies; however, other metrics can be used to test this. Currently, the consequences are explained from external stakeholders' perspectives, and the benefits of the behaviour are explained in specific geographical settings.

The downstream effects of UPB are not explicit in most studies. However, they can be inferred from the findings, indicating reformative and destructive behaviours with negative and positive effects, respectively, towards the organisation, customers, and personal life of the UPB actor. The review findings highlight the significance of recognising the impact of the behaviour on individuals, especially as work and personal life roles become more intertwined. The review findings reveal that various theories explain the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour. At an individual level, the theories explain the decision-making and assessment processes. The interpersonal level theories are predominantly from the social perspective, whilst the organisational level theory looks at ways UPB can assist in obtaining resources.

5.1. Future Research

5.1.1. Consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

I. Whistleblowing dynamics

The review focuses on the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour across different levels of analysis. While studies were conducted in isolation, it became clear that some common themes and outcomes emerged regardless of the specific context. Evidence indicates similarities in how employees respond to leader UPB and observers' response to unethical pro-organisational behaviour (Mishra, 2024; Tang et al., 2022). A notable finding is the complex power dynamic involving leaders in the

context of whistleblowing. Leaders may leverage cultural contexts or their influence on either discourage employees from reporting misconduct or evade accountability themselves. Furthermore, the perceived ethicality of UPB can obscure its unethical nature, making individuals less likely to report misconduct, further deterring individuals from whistleblowing. This review underscores the need for further research to address the following questions:

- a) Are the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour culture-specific?
- b) How do employees hold leaders and colleagues accountable for unethical pro-organisational behaviour through whistleblowing without fear of retribution?

Such studies would provide scientific evidence on the effectiveness of whistleblowing as a tool to expose unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Additionally, whistleblowing can serve as a mechanism for promoting reformative behaviour within organisations.

II. Consequences of observing unethical pro-organisational behaviour and the underpinning theory

When observers admire individuals' positive contributions through UPB, they are motivated to contribute positively to the organisation (Tang et al., 2022). However, can this admiration inadvertently encourage unwanted behaviours? Studies have shown that employees can vicariously learn and adopt UPB from coworkers, potentially leading to further misconduct (Zeng et al., 2022), especially when positive outcomes are perceived (Cai et al., 2024a). This confirms previous studies demonstrating that individuals are likely to engage in immoral behaviours in an environment that allows for it and when there are benefits (Gottschalk, 2012). Is this the same for observers? Understanding this dynamic is crucial for navigating the implications of UPB in organisational contexts. A combination of moral licensing theory, social learning theory and neutralisation theory can explain how admiring someone who engages in UPB leads an observer to learn and participate in similar unethical actions, especially when they see potential benefits. Future research can, therefore, address the following questions:

- a) What are the consequences of an observer admiring unethical pro-organisational behaviour and its impact on the organisation?

III. Individual and interpersonal link of UPB consequences and underpinning theories

Leaders exhibit mixed reactions to employees who engage in unethical pro-organisational behaviour. These responses can affect individuals directly and have broader implications that influence interpersonal dynamics within the team or organisation. Therefore, understanding the ripple effects of individual behaviour on interpersonal relationships is important. Decision-

making and assessment theories, such as self-determination theory, could explain why people engage in undesirable behaviours from witnessing leaders engaging in UPB. Furthermore, more social theories, such as social cognitive and social identity theories, could shed light on the outcomes from an interpersonal standpoint based on how employees relate and identify with colleagues and the organisation. Future research can, therefore, address the following questions:

- a) How do leaders manage and respond to employee UPB on both individual and interpersonal levels
- b) How does the individual response to UPB influence the interpersonal response to UPB?

Understanding these dynamics could provide valuable insights into ethical leadership and organisational culture.

5.1.2. Impact of unethical pro-organisational behaviour outcomes

Evidence suggests that unethical pro-organisational behaviour begets destructive behaviours in those who engage in or respond to it. This underscores the need to understand the long-term impact of the behaviour on organisations from the perspectives of both employees and leaders, as discussed below.

IV. Long-term effects of employee UPB on the organisation

In some aspects, employees will engage in subsequent behaviours that impact their productivity and organisational performance. Organisational culture theory is “shared perceptions of organisational work practices within organisational units that may differ from other organisational units” (Van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004, p. 571). The theory emphasises the role of an organisation’s culture in shaping employee behaviour. The theory suggests that unethical behaviour that supports an organisation can happen when such actions are seen as normal, especially when displayed by leaders. Future research can, therefore, address the following question:

- a) What are the long-term effects of employees engaging in other inappropriate acts due to UPB on organisational performance?

V. Long-term effects of abusive leader response to employee UPB on the organisation

In other aspects, leaders have responded through abusive behaviour to sanction individuals engaging in UPB. It is important to investigate if such a response is sustainable and effective in curbing unethical pro-organisational behaviour and its impact on organisational performance. Future research can, therefore, address the following questions:

- a) What is the long-term impact on the organisation when a leader responds negatively to employees' unethical pro-organisational behaviour?

VI. Long-term effects on an organisation when a leader disregards an employee's unethical pro-organisational behaviour

On the contrary, there are other times when leaders disregard unethical acts and focus more on the outcomes. Future research could draw from the theory of motivated reasoning to examine if a leader's response is biased towards favourable outcomes of employee UPB when there is tension between organisational performance and ethical principles. The benefits of UPB are short-term; therefore, what is the impact of prolonging such behaviour? Examining these dynamics can provide insights into how such actions shape organisational values, employee morale, and overall performance? Future research can, therefore, address the following question:

- b) What is the long-term impact on the organisation when a leader disregards unethical behaviour and responds positively to employees' unethical pro-organisational behaviour?

VII. Long-term effects of leader responses to employee unethical pro-organisational behaviour through abusive behaviour.

According to the human resource management literature, organisational commitment is a key factor in predicting employee retention (Al-Jabari & Ghazzawi, 2019). This is particularly important in most countries like South Africa, where specific skills are limited, and organisations seek ways to retain individuals with relevant talents. However, the country has experienced numerous corporate scandals, and the perceived encouragement of unethical behaviour due to its benefits to the organisation contradicts the principles of organisational commitment, defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation" (Mowday et al., 1979, p. 226).

The appraisal theory of emotions is relevant because UPB is an affective event that can trigger various emotions (Chen & Zhang, 2024). The complexity of these emotional events suggests that observers, similar to those directly involved, are likely to experience both positive and negative emotions in response that will influence the subsequent behaviour (Tang et al., 2022). Drawing from the appraisal theory of emotions, the aim will be to explore how observing and assessing unethical pro-organisational behaviour within an organisation elicits an emotional response and its effect on the employees' organisational commitment that is used as a retention strategy indicator. Future research can, therefore, answer the following question:

- a) How do observers appraise an unethical pro-organisational behaviour event in the organisation, and which emotions are elicited?
- b) How do the elicited emotions from the observed unethical pro-organisational behaviour event have an effect on organisational commitment?

In addition, the paradox of UPB has shown mixed responses from observers (Mishra, 2024). Therefore, what are the implications of observers responding with abusive behaviour to sanction the UPB actor? Unfortunately, this is bound to create negative repercussions for the organisation and the employees involved. This highlights the complex dynamics of handling unethical behaviour and the potential for observer responses to exacerbate the situation by responding in a harmful way, thus complicating efforts to address misconduct. Future research can, therefore, address the following question:

- a) What is the long-term impact on the organisation when an observer responds through unethical behaviour to unethical pro-organisational behaviour?

5.1.3. Underpinning theories of the consequences of unethical pro-organisational behaviour

Future research suggests theories like moral licensing, social learning, and neutralisation to explain the observer's perspective on unethical pro-organisational behaviour. Additionally, self-determination, social cognitive, and social identity theories can provide insights into the connection between individual behaviour and interpersonal relationships. The downstream effects of such behaviour highlight that it occurs within a broader context, with further studies examining responses from employees, leaders, and observers through organisational culture, motivated reasoning, and appraisal theories of emotions.

5.2. Conclusion

Understanding the roles people play at work, both as participants and observers, helps us see how unethical pro-organisational behaviour affects individuals. At an interpersonal level, the analysis highlights the different connections, interactions, and influences among coworkers. While the UPB aims to benefit the organisation with some positives, it is still unethical, with damaging effects within and outside the workplace. The theoretical and practical implications of this behaviour are apparent from the review; however, further research is needed.

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Note: An asterisk (*) in the title shows articles included in the review sample, while the others are supporting studies.

Appendices

Appendix A: Articles by keywords

Table 2: Number of articles by keywords

Keywords	No. of Articles
"unethical pro-organizational behavior"	36
"unethical pro-organisational behaviour"	
"unethical pro-organizational behaviour"	
"unethical proorganizational behavior"	
"pro organizational unethical behavior"	2
backwards and forward citation	25
Total	63

Source: Author

Appendix B: Articles Citation

Table 3: Number of citations per articles

Authors	Citation Count
(Ahmad et al., 2024)	0
(Alqhaiwi, 2024)	0
(Azhar et al., 2024)	0
(Baker et al., 2019)	39
(Bolino and Grant, 2016)	761
(Cai et al B., 2024)	0
(Cai et al C., 2024)	0
(Cai et al. A, 2024)	4
(Chen & Zhang, 2024)	0
(Chen et al. A, 2022)	34
(Chen et al. B, 2022)	29
(Chen et al., 2024)	1
(Dela Cruz et al., 2023)	0
(Effelsberg & Solga, 2015)	173
(Fehr et al., 2019)	165
(Gao et al., 2023)	2
(Gong, 2024)	0
(Hao et al., 2023)	2
(Ho, 2024)	0
(Hosain, 2019)	25
(Jiang & Xie, 2024)	0
(Jiang et al., 2023)	36
(Jiang, 2016)	86
(Khawaja et al., 2023)	2
(Li & Mo, 2021)	0
(Lian et al., 2020)	122
(Liu et al., 2021)	55
(Liu et al., 2022)	22
(Ma et al., 2024)	0
(Masood et al., 2024)	2
(Mishra et al., 2021)	144
(Mishra, 2024)	0
(Mo et al., 2022)	61
(Mukherjee, 2024).	0
(Nguyen et al., 2021)	31
(Nosrati et al., 2024)	7
(Pierce & Aguinis, 2015)	63
(Schuh et al., 2021)	45
(Schwarz et al., 2024)	0
(Shah et al., 2020)	25
(Shin et al., 2024)	0

(Shu, 2015)	39
(Tang et al., 2020)	144
(Tang et al., 2022)	67
(Umphress & Bingham, 2011)	857
(Wang & Xiao, 2018)	2
(Wang et al., 2021)	65
(Wen et al., 2020)	19
(Xia et al., 2021)	6
(Xia et al., 2023)	3
(Xu et al., 2024)	2
(Xu, 2023)	0
(Yang et al., 2021)	30
(Zeng et al., 2022)	17
(Zhan & Liu, 2022)	29
(Zhang et al., 2018)	57
(Zhang, 2023)	9
(Zhao & Qu, 2022)	1
(Zhao et al., 2024)	0
(Liu et al., 2024)	0
(Zhang & Du, 2023)	12
(Liao, 2024)	17
(Lee et al., 2024)	0

Source: Author

Appendix C: Academy of management proceedings articles

Table 4: Academy of Management proceedings articles.

Authors	Citation
(Cai et al C., 2024)	0
(Dela Cruz et al., 2023)	0
(Lee at al., 2024)	0
(Li & Mo, 2021)	0
(Ma et al., 2024)	0
(Mishra, 2024)	0
(Wang & Xiao, 2018)	2
(Xu, 2023)	0

Source: Author

Appendix D: Expanded study composition per region.

Table 5: Research methodologies used in the consequences of UPB

Research Methodology	Research Methods	Number of articles
Conceptual and theoretical	Studies that defined the construct and discussed potential consequences of the behaviour. Discussion of existing literature o UPB but not a literature review	3
Mixed Methods	Surveys, Vignette experiment	1
Qualitative	Literature reviews	5
Quantitative	Surveys, interviews, assessments, incident recall experiments, scenario-based lab studies, vignette-based experiments	54
Total		63

Source: Author

Appendix E: Expanded study composition per region.

Table 6: Expanded Study composition per region

Research Methodology	Country of study	Continent	Number of Articles
Mixed Methods	China	Asia	1
Qualitative	Australia	Oceania	1
	United States of America	North America	1
	India	Asia	2
	China, Australia, United States of America	Multi continental	1
Quantitative	China	Asia	29
	Iran	Asia	1
	Pakistan	Asia	3
	United States of America	North America	2
	Vietnam	Asia	1
	Jordan	Asia	1
	Not mentioned	not mentioned	7
	Côte d'Ivoire	Africa	1
	Germany	Europe	1
	South Korea	Asia	1
	Taiwan	Asia	1
	Taiwan, China	Asia	1
	China, United States of America	Multi continental	3
	USA, Canada, United Kingdom, China	Multi continental	1
Indonesia, Germany	Multi continental	1	
Conceptual	United States of America	North America	2
Theoretical	China	Asia	1
Total			63

Source: Author

Appendix F: Academy of management journals quality list

Table 7: Journal ranking and field

Journal	AJG 2041 - Journal ranking	ABDC 2021 - Journal ranking	Scimago	Field	No Raking	Number of Articles
Journal of Business Ethics	3	A	0	Ethics	No	9
Academy of Management Proceedings	Academy of Management Proceedings	0	0	Academy of Management	Yes	8
Current Psychology	1	0	0	Psychology	No	5
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	3	A	0	International Business	No	4
Ethics & Behavior	0	0	0	Psychology	Yes	4
Frontiers in Psychology	1	0	0	Psychology	No	4
Chinese Management Studies	1	C	0	International Business	No	2
Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	0	0	Green	Strategy and Management	No	2
Journal of Management	4*	A*	0	Management	No	2
Journal of Organizational Behavior	4	A*	0	Psychology	No	2
Organization Science	4*	A*	0	Organisational Behaviour	No	2
Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	4	A*	0	Psychology	No	2
Frontiers in Psychology	0	0	0	Psychology (miscellaneous)	Yes	1
International Journal of Public Administration	2	B	0	Public Sector	No	1
Academy of Management Annals	4*	A*	0	Management	No	1
Asia Pacific Business Review	2	B	0	International Business	No	1
Global Business and Organizational Excellence	0	0	0	Business Management and Accounting	Yes	1
Human Resource Management (USA)	4	A*	0	Human Resource Management	No	1
International Journal of Ethics and Systems	0	0	Green	Philosophy	No	1
International Journal of Organizational Analysis	0	0	0	Strategy and Management	Yes	1
Journal of Applied Psychology	4*	A*	0	Organisational Behaviour	No	1
Journal of Business Research	3	A	0	Research	No	1
Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management	0	0	Green	Business Management	No	1
Journal of Knowledge Management	0	A	0	Information Management	No	1
Metallurgical & Mining Industry	0	0	0	Human Resources	Yes	1
Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes	4	A*	0	Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management	No	1
Personnel Psychology	4*	A*	0	Psychology	No	1
SAGE Open	0	0	0	Social Sciences (miscellaneous)	Yes	1
Future Business Journal	0	0	0	Management	Yes	1
Total						63

Source: Author (Adapted from GIBS Info Central, 2024)

Appendix G: Academy of management journals quality list

Table 8: Academy of Management Journals quality list

Journal Title	AJG 2024	ABDC 2022	Publisher	ISSN	eISSN	Field
Academy of Management Annals	4*	A*	Academy of Management	1941-6520	1941-6067	Management
Academy of Management Discoveries	3	A	Academy of Management		2168-1007	Management
Academy of Management Journal	4*	A*	Academy of Management	0001-4273	1948-0989	Management
Academy of Management Perspectives	4	A	Academy of Management	1558-9080	1943-4529	Management
Academy of Management Review	4*	A*	Academy of Management	0363-7425	1930-3807	Management

Source: GIBS Info Central, 2024

Appendix H: List of journals in the review

Table 9: List of published journals for consequences of UPB

No.	Journal	Journal Ranking	No. of articles	Percentage
1	Journal of Business Ethics	High	9	14%
2	Academy of Management Proceedings	High	8	13%
3	Current Psychology	No	5	8%
4	Asia Pacific Journal of Management	High	4	6%
5	Ethics & Behavior	No	4	6%
6	Frontiers in Psychology	No	4	6%
7	Chinese Management Studies	No	2	3%
8	Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies	No	2	3%
9	Journal of Management	High	2	3%
10	Journal of Organizational Behavior	High	2	3%
11	Organization Science	High	2	3%
12	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	High	2	3%
13	Frontiers in Psychology	No	1	2%
14	International Journal of Public Administration	No	1	2%
15	Academy of Management Annals	High	1	2%
16	Asia Pacific Business Review	No	1	2%
17	Global Business and Organizational Excellence	No	1	2%
18	Human Resource Management (USA)	High	1	2%
19	International Journal of Ethics and Systems	No	1	2%
20	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	No	1	2%
21	Journal of Applied Psychology	High	1	2%
22	Journal of Business Research	High	1	2%
23	Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management	No	1	2%
24	Journal of Knowledge Management	High	1	2%
25	Metallurgical & Mining Industry	No	1	2%
26	Organisational Behaviour and Human Decision Processes	High	1	2%
27	Personnel Psychology	High	1	2%
28	SAGE Open	No	1	2%
29	Future Business Journal	No	1	2%
	Total		63	100%

Source: Author

Appendix I: Individual level roles

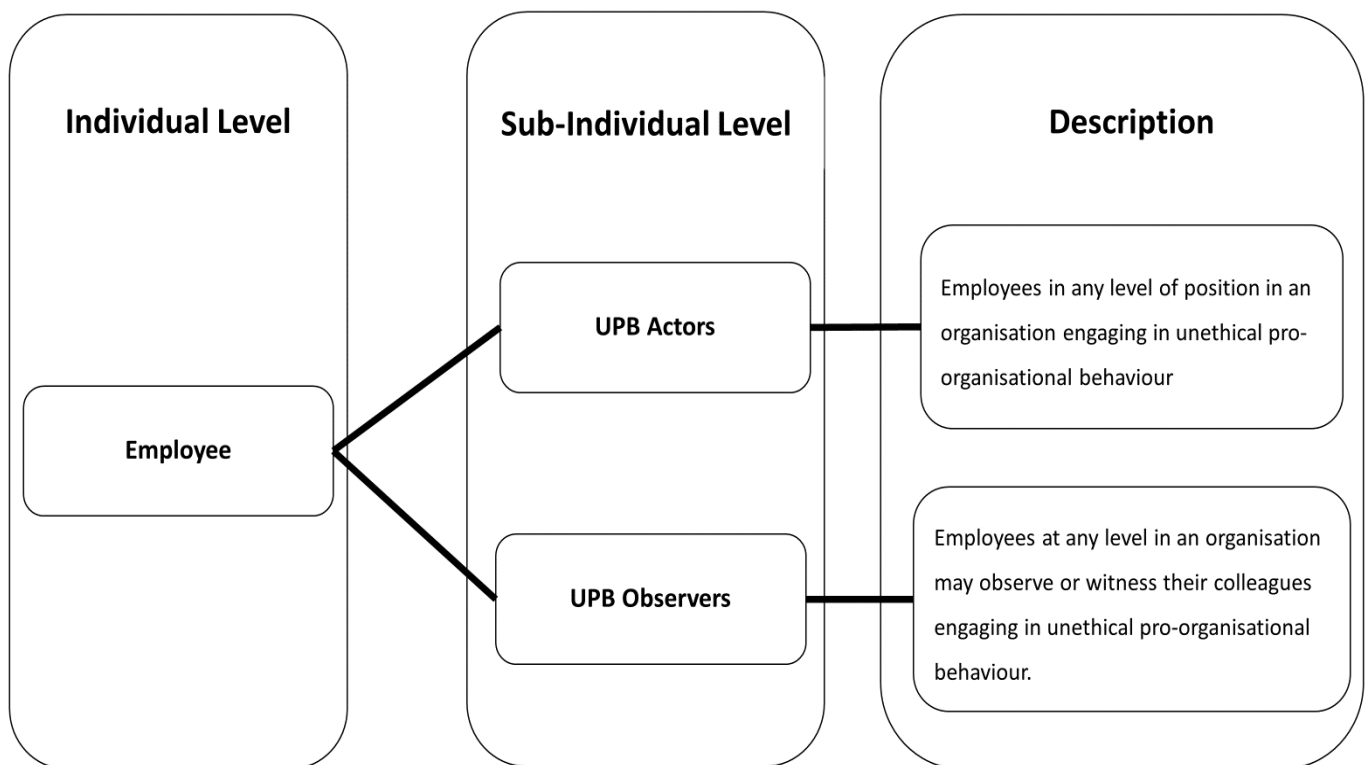


Figure 7: Individual level roles in analysis UPB consequences.

Source: Author

Appendix J: Interpersonal level of analysis.

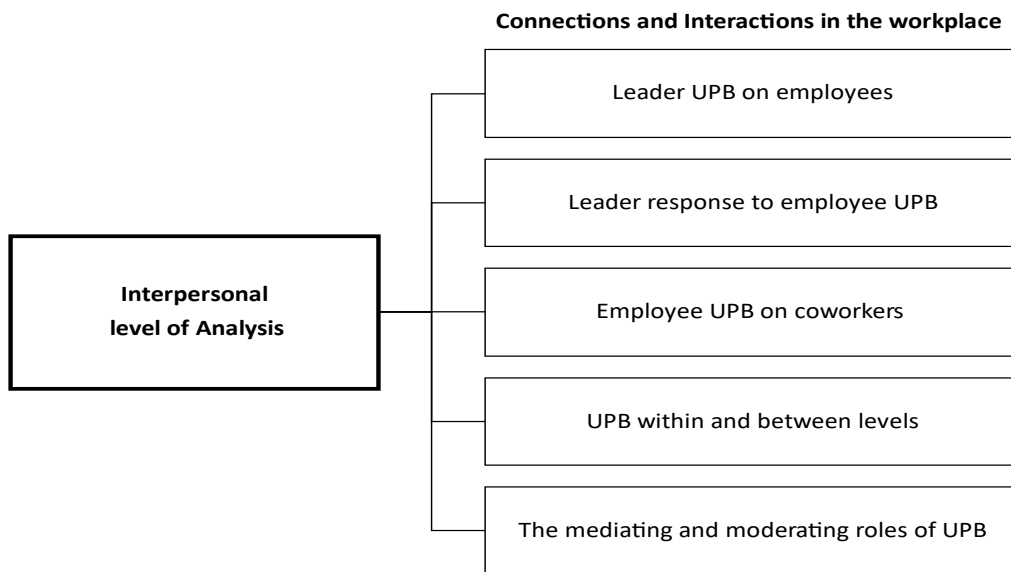


Figure 8: Interpersonal level of analysis.

Source: Author

Appendix K: Underpinning theories per level of analysis

Table 10: Underpinning theories per level of analysis

Level of analysis	Sub Level of analysis	Theories	No of Articles
Individual Level	Within Person – UPB Actor	Appraisal Theories	3
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Social Exchange Theory	3
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Moral Licensing Theory	2
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Social Cognitive Theory	2
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Moral Cleansing Theory	2
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Conservation of Resources Theory	2
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Affective Events Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Social Identity Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Cognitive Dissonance Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Self-Regulation Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Moral Compensatory Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Paradox Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Self-Determination Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person - UPB Actor	Work-Life Boundary Theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person – UPB Observer	Appraisal Theories	1
Individual Level	Within Person – UPB Observer	Moral foundation theory	1
Individual Level	Within Person – UPB Observer	Sensemaking theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Social Identity Theory	3
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Social Cognitive Theory	3
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Social Exchange Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Social Learning Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Social Information Processing Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Affective Events Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Theory of Motivated Reasoning	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Moral Disengagement Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader UPB on Employee	Construal Level Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader response to employee UPB	Social Exchange Theory	3
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader response to employee UPB	Social Identity Theory	2
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Leader response to employee UPB	Social Information Processing Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Employee UPB on coworkers	Social Learning Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Employee UPB on coworkers	Social Information Processing Theory	1
Interpersonal Level	Interpersonal – Employee UPB on coworkers	Moral Judgement Theory	1
Between-and-within level	UPB within and between levels	Social Cognitive Theory	1
Between-and-within level	UPB within and between levels	Construal Level Theory	1
Mediator-Moderator UPB	Mediator-Moderator UPB	Social Learning Theory	2
Mediator-Moderator UPB	Mediator-Moderator UPB	Trait Activation Theory	2
Mediator-Moderator UPB	Mediator-Moderator UPB	Moral Licensing Theory	1
Organisational level	Organisational level	Institutional Theory	1

Source: Author