

Unmasking The Hidden Influences: Psychological Ownership, Dark Triad Personality, and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviour among Indian Millennials

Unnikannan P Santhosh Kumar, Chetna Jaiswal, and Nishi Srivastava
Central University of South Bihar, Gaya

Unethical behaviours benefiting an organization have been associated with various negative factors, but little is understood about how positive factors that enhance an organization might also have adverse effects. This research explores the connection between psychological ownership, dark triad personality traits (Machiavellian Personality), and unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), aiming to provide a fresh perspective on this matter. A group of 250 employees was randomly selected from the southern region of India for the study. The findings from the statistical analysis using SPSS and JASP indicate a significant correlation between psychological ownership, Machiavellian Personality, and UPB, with both variables having a strong predictive value for UPB. Notably, Machiavellian personality does mediate the link between psychological ownership and UPB. The implications of this study are far-reaching, as it uncovers the intricate dynamics underlying UPB and its potential association with seemingly positive organizational factor. By identifying psychological ownership and dark triad traits in employees, it can contribute to cultivating ethical work environments.

Keywords: Unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB), Psychological ownership, Dark triad personality (Machiavellian), Millennial Generation

Amid a phenomenon known as “The Great Resignation,” (Kuzior, Kettler & Rab, 2022) characterized by a significant number of employees, particularly millennials, voluntarily leaving their current jobs in search of better opportunities, the competitive nature of the job market adds to the complexity. This situation can lead to distress among employees who are determined to retain their current positions, particularly considering the increasing concerns related to perceived unemployment issues (Kim & Von dem Knesebeck, 2016).

Over the past decade, unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) has garnered significant attention from researchers and the media alike. High-profile scandals, such as the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica data leak, the Volkswagen emissions scandal, and

various frauds committed by renowned companies, have shed light on the consequences of UPB (Clement, 2006). Although UPB may initially benefit a company, it can lead to severe consequences once exposed to the public, as demonstrated by Volkswagen’s delayed pollution controls (Lian et al., 2020). Additionally, Millennial generation is one among those generations who had undergone a swift transition in each aspect of their life including their attitude (Supeli & Creed, 2016). Howe & Strauss, 1991 defined the millennial cohort as consisting of individuals born between 1982 and 2004. India is the second largest country in terms of population where 34 per cent are millennials (440 million) and forms approximately 47% of the total work force. The Millennial generation has been growing

and will eventually supplant previous generations such as the Baby Boomer and Generation X (Friani & Mulyani, 2018).

India has several appealing attributes for business, establishing itself as a promising market for future investment. Its confidence in the foreign direct investment (FDI) market has increased to the eighth position, indicating a good outlook. Furthermore, India is the world's fastest-growing economy and ranks in the top 10 performers in emerging markets (Verma & Mohapatra, 2020). The 2009 Satyam Computer affair, in which accounting irregularities were committed to artificially inflate the company's earnings, harmed India Inc. and the country's regulatory authorities. This controversy cost a fair price for the investors and employees (Kant, 2009). Another example is Coca-Cola's excessive water use in Kerala, which contributed to a catastrophic depletion of groundwater resources because of the privatisation of India's water resources. Henceforth resulting in severe water shortages and hampered agricultural activities. As a result, the facility was not only closed in 2004, but a quarter of India's 28 states restricted the sale of Coca-Cola products in schools, with Kerala forbidding them entirely (Desk, 2017).

Unethical pro-organizational behavior is characterized by actions intended to enhance organizational functioning but that violate societal values, mores, laws, or ethical standards (Umphress & Bingham, 2011). Molinsky and Margolis (2005) refer to these actions as "necessary evils," where individuals cause harm to others in pursuit of a perceived greater good. In recent years, there has been an increase in interest in research on unethical pro-organizational behaviour as organisations attempt to maintain high ethical standards and promote responsible behaviour among their personnel. While unethical behaviour has been extensively researched, knowing the

specific context of unethical behaviour within an organisational environment is critical for recognising its distinct traits and effects (Umphress et al., 2010).

UPB affects confidence, both internally among employees and externally with stakeholders, and may result in reputational harm. This erosion of trust can stifle cooperation, creativity, and staff engagement, affecting organisational performance and sustainability in the long run. Furthermore, the ethical implications of UPB might lead to legal and regulatory concerns, jeopardising the organization's long-term viability (Effelsberg, Solga & Jochen 2014; McCoy 2020). According to the study, each additional deceiving car per 1,000 cars contributed to around 10% more emissions from automotive exhaust. At the county level, this increased pollution was associated with a roughly 2% rise in low birth weight and a 1.5% increase in infant death. Furthermore, children's asthma has gotten worse, as seen by an 8% increase in children's emergency room visits for asthma in a subgroup of five states (VW Emissions Scandal Affected Infant and Child Health, 2022).

Psychological ownership, on the other hand, revolves around a possessive feeling towards objects or entities. This feeling is characterized by the attachment represented by words like "MY," "MINE," and "OURS" (Wilpert, 1991). The concept emphasizes a strong link between employees and their employers, fostering a sense of ownership that positively influences organizational outcomes. Psychological ownership has been linked to increased job engagement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Wang et al., 2019; Mayhew et al., 2007). Moreover, it enhances the quality of organizational decision-making and reduces operational costs, ultimately improving organizational productivity (Javed, 2018).

However, it is essential to recognize that psychological ownership can also lead to negative behaviors among employees, affecting organizational productivity and effectiveness. Job engagement and job-based psychological ownership have been associated with territorial behavior, unethical conduct, and a lack of knowledge sharing (Wang et al., 2019). In today's competitive environment, a certain level of psychological ownership is necessary to boost employee commitment and achieve organizational success. High-performance work systems (HPWS) have been implemented by human resource management to enhance psychological ownership, but studies have also found a positive relationship between HPWS and UPB.

The dark triad personality traits, encompassing cunning cheat, haughty braggart, and callous hedonist characteristics, are widespread and prevalent in both professional and social environments (LeBreton, Shiverdecker & Grimaldi, 2018). These toxic qualities are more pervasive than their pathological or clinical counterparts, and they have been associated with unethical and counterproductive behaviors in organizations (Naseer et al., 2020; Harrison et al., 2018). Understanding the potential impact of dark triad traits on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB is essential, especially given the substantial increase in UPB in the workplace (Sheedy et al., 2021).

Despite the growing awareness of UPB, its underlying factors, and its consequences, there remains a need for a more nuanced understanding of the issues surrounding it. Furthermore, research on UPB has been limited in certain geographic regions, such as India, warranting more attention to this contemporary concern (Inam & Ho, 2021).

Rationale of the study

Given the increasing prominence of Indian millennials in the workforce, understanding the factors influencing their behavior is of paramount importance for organizations. The study delves into the relationship between psychological ownership, dark triad personality traits, and unethical workplace behavior (UPB). By exploring these connections, the research addresses the pressing need for insights into promoting ethical decision-making and fostering positive work environments. The study delves into psychological ownership, which refers to the emotional attachment individuals feel towards their organization. Investigating its impact on positive workplace behaviors, such as job performance and organizational citizenship, provides valuable insights for improving employee engagement and overall organizational success.

Additionally, this research adds depth by considering the dark triad personality traits - Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Understanding how these traits relate to psychological ownership sheds light on potential risks, allowing organizations to address negative consequences effectively and also acknowledges the significance of UPB, where employees may engage in unethical actions for perceived organizational benefit. Uncovering the drivers behind such behavior can lead to strategies that foster ethical work cultures and responsible decision-making.

Focusing on Indian millennials offers valuable cross-cultural insights. India's unique cultural norms and practices shape psychological ownership and dark triad traits, influencing their relationship with UPB. Understanding this context enriches global knowledge and enables tailored approaches to ethical challenges in organizations.

The study holds implications for academia and organizations alike. Academic

contributions expand knowledge in organizational psychology and human resource management. For organizations, the findings offer actionable insights to mitigate negative impacts of psychological ownership and dark triad traits while promoting ethical behavior and positive workplace outcomes among Indian millennials.

Unethical pro-organizational behaviour

Many essential traits required for the effective functioning of an organization are associated with unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB), such as organizational identification, which is considered valuable (Umphress, Bingham & Mitchell, 2010). These behaviors violate societal norms (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994). Organizational identification's effect on UPB is mediated by moral disengagement, particularly when perceived competition is high (Chen et al., 2016). UPB elicits a paradoxical emotional experience, where individuals feel both pride and guilt simultaneously, and those in the service sector with less guilt are more prone to engaging in UPB, experiencing heightened pride (Tang et al., 2020). Employees' psychological entitlement is also linked to UPB (Lee et al., 2019). Perceived interpersonal justice is positively related to UPB but only when mediated by positive leader-member exchange (LMX) (Bryant & Merritt, 2021).

Personal values play a role in UPB, as individuals with low moral identity and high affective commitment to the organization are more likely to engage in such behavior (Matherne & Litchfield, 2012). Moreover, the indebtedness felt by low performers due to perceived organizational support can also facilitate UPB (Wang, Zheng & Zhao, 2022). Additionally, employees' obsessive passion for their jobs, combined with high organizational identification, may lead to heightened UPB (Kong, 2016).

Unethical pro-organizational behaviour has been positively linked with organizational identification, ethical leadership and over-identification in which the last one is more inclined towards workplace crimes (Umphress et al., 2010; Miao et al., 2013; Vadera & Pratt, 2013). Apart from these factors, moral identification and obsessive passion has been positively associated with UPB, while ethical climate has been negatively associated (May et al., 2015; Jiang et al., 2016; Kong, 2016, Miao et al., 2020). Lawrence & Kacmar (2017) and Ghosh (2017), has found that the job insecurity felt by the employees working as engineers, accountants, healthcare workers and I.T filed has been positively linked with unethical pro-organizational behaviour. This implies that, in the current scenario where unemployment is increasing day by day, especially in India, the chances of those employed to engage in UPB will be more as they perceive job insecurity and unemployment. Though the acts of UPB might be beneficial for the organization, it is consequently hurting the employees themselves (Liu, 2021).

Psychological ownership

According to Dirks et al. (1996), psychological ownership in organizations can result in either positive or negative changes, depending on the intensity of ownership felt by employees. As the feeling of ownership ("MINE" feeling) increases, individuals may exhibit destructive behaviors when they perceive a separation from what they possess (Pierce et al., 2001). On the positive side, psychological ownership has been linked to various favorable organizational outcomes, such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, organizational self-esteem, and organizational citizenship behavior (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004).

Psychological ownership can also lead to constructive deviant workplace behavior, where individuals deviate from reference

group norms but conform to hyper norms to benefit the organization (Yıldız et al., 2015). Ghani et al. (2020) found that psychological ownership moderates the association between abusive leadership and knowledge hiding, lessening the relationship.

However, fostering psychological ownership without caution may lead to adverse effects, such as territorial behavior and unethical conduct among employees (Gosh et al., 2019). While the territorial feeling associated with psychological ownership can improve job performance and information sharing, it may also result in negative perceptions by others (Brown & Zhu, 2016). Organisations can thus benefit from managing psychological ownership because the possession of psychological ownership can motivate employees to perform at high levels and even inspire them to engage in extra-role behaviours and organisational citizenship behaviours (Man & Farquharson, 2015; Olckers & Du Plessis, 2012).

Dark triad personality

The counterproductive work behaviours resulting from psychological detachment had a positive relationship with the dark triad personality (DTP) (Syed et al., 2022) and DTP also acts as a positive moderator between positive attitude and competitiveness (Mayor et al., 2020). A particular trait in DTP known as Machiavellianism are more prone to engage in unethical pro-organizational behaviours (UPB) than other dimensions of DTP (Castille et al., 2018). While considering the sustainability issues prevailing in an organization, DTP and environmental/social responsibility were negatively correlated (Pelster & Schaltegger, 2021). A study conducted by Baka (2019) found that high DTP along with job control resulted in counterproductive work behaviours and bullying. The Machiavellianism of dark triad personality was positively related to

organizational citizenship behaviour intended towards organizational benefits and was unrelated to citizenship behaviors beneficial to individuals (Szabo et al., 2018). Individuals characterized as malevolent, i.e., those who scores high in each dimension of the dark triad personality was associated with the highest job performance (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Millennial Generation

Millennials tend to exhibit different attitudes, preferences, and expectations compared to their older generations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Leaders or immediate managers of the millennials tend to play an important role in retaining and increasing the commitment level of the Gen Y employees (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). As an effect of overindulging parents, Millennials tend to seek constant feedback, praise, guidance, and individual attention as they have been brought up in such an environment where these were provided in abundance by their parents (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010).

Indian Millennials, like their American counterparts, are digital natives who are far more adept at using the internet than their parent's generation (Mittra, 2011). While comparing United States Millennials and Indian Millennials, it was found that both the populations share many common characteristics like optimism and entrepreneurial orientation (Telefonica, 2013). Even with all the merits, millennials are also known for their lower loyalty (Myres & Sadaghiani, 2010) and can adapt to the innovative changes in technology (Shankar et al., 2010). Taking the case of unemployment and earnings, it was found that the millennial group are more affected compared to their counterparts (Escalonilla et al., 2022). The early unemployment has caused panic among individuals which lead them to decrease their job expectations and work outside of their comfort zone (Muhlbock

et al., 2022), in addition to this, unemployment also causes decline in life-satisfaction and other affective scarce (Lawes et al., 2022) and this feeling would evoke those with a well-paid job to perform all such behaviours which would increase their chances of survival in their esteemed organizations and one such behaviour is known as unethical pro-organizational behaviour.

Objectives

The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the mediating role of dark triad personality (Machiavellian) between psychological ownership of an individual and unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB). Specifically, (1) the first objective was to assess the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB. (2) To know the level of predictability of psychological ownership and dark triad personality (Machiavellian Personality) on UPB. (3) To estimate the level of predictability of Dark triad personality (Machiavellian Personality) on psychological ownership (4) The final objective was to evaluate the mediating role of dark triad personality (Machiavellian Personality) on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.

Hypotheses

- 1) There will be no significant relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.
- 2) There will be no significant relationship between the dimensions of psychological ownership and UPB.
- 3) Psychological ownership will not predict UPB.
- 4) The dimensions of psychological ownership will not predict UPB.
- 5) Machiavellian personality will not predict UPB

- 6) Machiavellian personality will not predict psychological ownership.
- 7) There will be no mediating effect of machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.

Method

Sample

The study sample comprised of 250 employees working as team facilitators and marketing agents in southern part of India from two different sectors (Architectural designing and Education). Only millennials i.e., individuals of age group 26 to 38 years have been chosen as they are currently contributing a significant amount of workforce in India. Furthermore, this study has also tried to balance the number of males and female participants so that a comparison between two genders would make much more significant.

Instruments

Psychological ownership: The Indian version of the scale was developed by Amit Shukla and Shailendra Singh (2015). It is a 12-item three-dimensional psychological ownership scale that showed acceptable psychometric properties (consistent factor structure, reliability and content, concurrent and construct validity). Internal reliability of scale across all three dimensions was assessed using Cronbach's alpha on two independent samples are .852, .838 and .798 for affection, connectedness, and obligation for the first sample. The second sample has .889, .907 and .894 as the corresponding values. All these values exceed the suggested cut-off of .70.

Unethical pro-organizational behaviour: Umphress and Bingham (2010) and uses Likert 7-point score from very disagree to very agree. The measurement are self-reports. The questionnaire has seven items,

but the last item's factor loading is relatively low, so some researchers who has used it often omitted. Seven items are "if it would help my organization, I would misrepresent the truth to make my organization look good.", "If it would help my organization, I would exaggerate the truth about my company's products or services to customers and clients." and so on.

Dark Triad Personality: The short version of Dark triad personality developed by Jones & Paulhus (2014) which measures Machiavellianism (9 items), Narcissism (9 items), and Psychopathy (9 items) where 5 items are reverse scored and is measured in a 5-point likert scale.

Results

Table 1. Correlation between UPB, Dark Triad personality (Machiavellian personality) and psychological ownership (Affection, connectedness, obligation) among the samples.

	n	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
UPB	250	3.92	1.87						
AF	250	5.33	1.13	.651**					
CON	250	5.44	1.13	.617**	.812**				
OB	250	4.89	1.02	.219*	.497**	.635**			
PO	250	5.22	.953	.522**	.856**	.937**	.781**		
DTPM	250	3.15	1.11	.545**	.348**	.346**	.097	.261**	

Note: AF= Affection, CON= Connectedness, OB= Obligation, PO= Psychological Ownership, DTPM= Machiavellian Personality

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level; * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 1 has shown a significant correlation between all the study variables. UPB has shown significant correlation with Machiavellian personality ($r=.545$, $P<0.01$), Psychological ownership ($r=.522$, $P<0.01$) and its dimensions, affection ($r=.651$, $P<0.01$), connectedness ($r=.617$, $P<0.01$)

except for obligation ($r=.219$, $P<0.05$) which has relatively weak correlation.

Regression Analysis: It was carried out to investigate whether the psychological ownership and its dimension and dark triad personality (Machiavellian) determines UPB.

Table 2. Regression Analysis summary using psychological ownership and its dimensions and dark triad personality (Machiavellian) as predictor variables (IV) and UPB as criterion variable (DV) among employees.

Criterion Variable: UPB

Predictor	R	R2	R2 Change	Beta	F Change	Sig of F Change
Affection	.651	.424	.651	72.123	.651	.001
Connectedness	.617	.380	.617	60.123	.617	.001
Obligation	.219	.048	.219	4.945	.219	.028
Psychological Ownership	.522	.273	.522	36.724	.522	.001
Machiavellian Personality	.545	.297	.545	41.379	.545	.001

Table 2 showed that UPB was well predicted by psychological ownership and Machiavellian personality with a maximum variance of 27.3% explained by psychological ownership and 29.7% explained by

Machiavellian personality. While considering the dimensions of psychological ownership, affection predicted UPB with a maximum variance of 42.4%, connectedness with a maximum variance of 38% while obligation did not predict UPB.

Table 3. Regression Analysis summary using dark triad personality (Machiavellian) as predictor variables (IV) and psychological ownership as criterion variable (DV) among employees.

Criterion Variable	R	R ²	Beta	F	Sig	Predictor Variable
Psychological ownership	.261	.068	.261	7.144	.009	Machiavellian Personality

Table 3 showed that psychological ownership was predicted by Machiavellian personality to certain extent with a maximum

variance of 6.8% explained by Machiavellian personality.

Table 4. Mediating effect of Machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.

Effect	Path	Estimate	SE	Z-Value	P	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Direct	PO → UPB	0.905	0.137	6.626	<.001	0.680	1.128
Indirect	PO → DTPM → UPB	0.268	0.081	3.298	<.001	0.136	0.464
Total	PO → UPB	1.172	0.144	8.128	<.001	0.979	1.358

Note: UPB=Unethical pro-organizational behaviour; DTPM=Dark triad Personality (Machiavellian); PO=Psychological ownership; SE= Standard Error

Table 4 showed that there is a mediating effect of Machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.

PO_Total: Psychological ownership Total, UPB_T: Unethical pro-organizational behaviour Total, DTP_M: Dark triad personality (Machiavellianism)

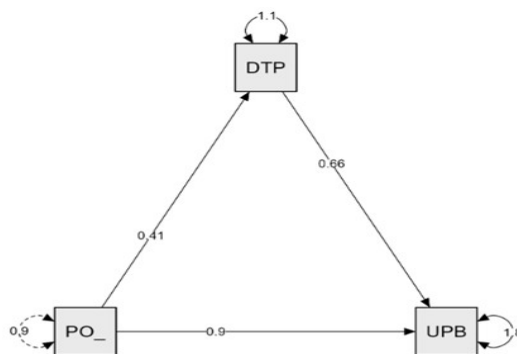


Figure 1. Path plot of the mediating role of Machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB

Figure 1 displayed that there is a significant mediating effect of Machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB.

Discussion

In the light of the results found, psychological ownership, which is one of those positive variables affecting the job performance and job commitment (Md-Sidin et al., 2009) has its own down side as it was significantly associated with unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB) and do have a significant predictive value. As

psychological ownership is considered as the feeling of possession felt towards something (Mayhew et al., 2007), an individual with high sense of ownership about his/her organization might have an emotional attachment which would eventually lead that person to take certain steps to upbring the organization at any cost which would eventually result in UPB.

Considering the dimensions of psychological ownership, affection and connectedness was significantly associated with UPB, while obligation has less significance while compared to the former two dimensions. Affection and connectedness felt by employees also predicted their unethical pro-organizational behaviour to a great extent while obligation did not. The base of psychological ownership is derived from regulatory focus theory proposed by Higgins (1998) which states that, individuals have a promotive self-regulation system which is concerned with accomplishments and aspirations and on the other hand, preventive self-regulatory system relates to the duties and obligation (Dawkins et al., 2017). Therefore, it provides a base for the findings that those employees who value accomplishments and aspirations more than duties and obligation tend to engage in UPB. Hence, the hypotheses 1, 2,3 and 4 has been rejected.

Affection and connectedness signify the emotional connections and sense of belonging employees develop with their organization. When employees feel emotionally attached to their workplace, they are more susceptible to be influenced by these emotional bonds, leading them to participate in actions that they perceive as beneficial to the organization, even if they raise ethical concerns. This heightened emotional investment can lead employees to prioritize the organization's interests over ethical considerations, thereby increasing

the likelihood of engaging in unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB).

Conversely, the dimension of obligation, which refers to the sense of duty and responsibility towards the organization, appears to have a weaker correlation with UPB. Employees who primarily base their commitment to the organization on a sense of duty may be less inclined to partake in unethical conduct, as they are more likely to prioritize their moral obligations over the organization's interests. As a result, this lesser significance suggests that the feeling of obligation does not strongly influence employees to engage in UPB.

The theoretical foundation of psychological ownership can be traced back to the regulatory focus theory proposed by Higgins (1998). According to this theory, individuals possess two distinct self-regulatory systems: the promotive self-regulation system and the preventive self-regulation system. The promotive system is driven by the pursuit of accomplishments, aspirations, and positive outcomes, while the preventive system focuses on fulfilling duties, meeting obligations, and avoiding negative outcomes.

The study's findings provide evidence supporting this theoretical framework, as they reveal that employees who prioritize accomplishments and aspirations over duties and obligations tend to exhibit UPB. This alignment implies that individuals guided by a promotive self-regulatory focus may be more inclined to overlook ethical considerations if they believe their actions will contribute to the organization's success and advancement.

Based on cognitive dissonance theory, people naturally seek consistency between their beliefs, attitudes, and actions. When employees strongly identify with their organization, experiencing a sense of psychological ownership, they might face

cognitive dissonance if their behaviour conflicts with the organization's best interests. To alleviate this dissonance, individuals may rationalize their unethical conduct as necessary for the organization's greater good or align it with the organization's goals. By doing so, they can uphold a positive self-perception as dedicated and valuable contributors to the organization, even when their actions raise ethical concerns. Consequently, this theory proposes that psychological ownership can function as a psychological mechanism that enables or justifies unethical behaviour in individuals striving to maintain a consistent self-concept within their organizational roles.

Machiavellian, one of the traits in dark triad has shown a significant relationship and a positive effect on psychological ownership and UPB. This implies that those employees who possess certain characteristics of Machiavellian personality like low morality and manipulateness (Jones & Paulhus, 2014) are more likely to engage in UPB where as those who have other characteristics of the same like planning ahead, maintaining positive reputation and strategic calculation are prone to show relatively high ownership. Machiavellians will unavoidably prioritise their own egotistical interests over those of others and the institutions they work for (Dahling et al., 2009) thus proving their engagement in UPB. From this study, it can be inferred that those employees with Machiavellian characteristics might feel entitled when they are recognized by higher authorities despite of the UPB they have committed which in turn would enhance their sense of psychological ownership towards their organization. This shows that the further mentioned hypotheses 5 and 6 have been disproved. It can be inferred that some individuals with Machiavellian traits not only exhibit manipulative behaviour but also demonstrate a deep emotional connection and ownership towards the organization. This unique blend

of characteristics may drive their inclination to participate in unethical pro-organizational behaviour (UPB) to further their personal interests while remaining emotionally attached to the organization.

Furthermore, the study did find a mediating effect of Machiavellian personality on the relationship between psychological ownership and UPB. Those with such personality traits often consider or misinterpret their felt affection towards their organization as a domineering possessiveness which results in various behaviours that might be unethical yet beneficial for the organization and to that person to a certain extend. Through the indices of Machiavellian personality, evidence suggests that participants with high psychological ownership may have the tendency to develop manipulative personality traits that can ideally fuel UPB. The total result provided evidence of a large overall impact of psychological ownership on unethical pro-organizational behaviour supporting the proposition that feelings of ownership may rationalise unethical behaviour particularly when accompanied by a Machiavellian disposition. For instance, employees who have overestimated their self-importance in the organization, may choose to fabricate information as a way of proving themselves right that they are necessary hence highlighting how psychological ownership can unintentionally foster harmful behaviours when combined with dark personality traits. Thus, the final hypothesis (7) has been rejected.

This study sheds light on the dual aspects of psychological ownership within the workplace. On one side, it has a positive impact on job performance and commitment, fostering stronger dedication to the organization. Conversely, it can also lead to unethical pro-organizational conduct, especially among individuals exhibiting certain Machiavellian traits, due to

heightened emotional attachments and feelings of connection. Understanding the intricate relationship between psychological ownership, employee characteristics, and ethical behaviour is crucial for organizations to cultivate a positive and ethical work environment. Future research could delve deeper into the underlying mechanisms that link psychological ownership to UPB and explore potential strategies to address its adverse effects on workplace ethics.

Limitations and Implications

The study has been conducted with 100 employees from southern part of India which provides a low generalisability rate and various other factors which also might influence UPB has not been included like organizational citizenship behaviour, organizational identification etc. This article also urges researches to study on the effect of peer pressure and management pressure on UPB which might also be a leading cause and make it more indigenous as possible because many cultural norms and values also play a significant role in human cognition and behaviours.

Conclusion

The study's findings emphasize the complex influence of psychological ownership in organizational behaviour. On one hand, it fosters positive workplace attitudes, including enhanced job performance, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviours. Such a sense of ownership strengthens employee engagement and contributes to a thriving work environment. On the other hand, a darker aspect of psychological ownership emerges, presenting risks in the form of Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviour (UPB). When individuals perceive the organization's success as their own, they may justify unethical actions to resolve cognitive dissonance and maintain a positive self-image. This behaviour, although providing

short-term gains, can have severe consequences, as evident in the Volkswagen Group's scandal that led to a significant decline in share value (Jung & Sharon, 2019). Organizations must adopt a comprehensive approach to nurture positive aspects of psychological ownership while addressing the dangers of UPB. Promoting a culture of ethics, providing ethical training, and emphasizing ethical leadership will help strike a balance and safeguard the organization's reputation and long-term growth.

References

- Baka, £. (2019). Explaining active and passive types of counterproductive work behavior: the moderation effect of bullying, the dark triad and job control. *International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health*, 32(6), 777–795. <https://doi.org/10.13075/ijomh.1896.01425>
- Brown, G., & Zhu, H. (2016). 'My workspace, not yours': The impact of psychological ownership and territoriality in organizations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 48, 54–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2016.08.001>
- Bryant, W. J., & Merritt, S. M. (2021). Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior and Positive Leader–Employee Relationships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 168(4), 777–793. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04211-x>
- Bryant, W., & Merritt, S. M. (2021). Unethical pro-organizational behavior and positive leader–employee relationships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 168, 777–793.
- Castille, C. M., Buckner, J. C., & Thoroughgood, C. N. (2018). Prosocial Citizens Without a Moral Compass? Examining the Relationship Between Machiavellianism and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(4), 919–930. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3079-9>
- Chen, M., Chen, C. C., & Sheldon, O. J. (2016). Relaxing moral reasoning to win: How

- organizational identification relates to unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(8), 1082.
- Chen, M., Chen, C., & Sheldon, O. (2016). Relaxing moral reasoning to win: How organizational identification relates to unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 101(8), 1082–1096. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000111>
- Chen, X., Lee, C., Hui, C., Lin, W., Brown, G., & Liu, J. (2022). Feeling possessive, performing well? Effects of job-based psychological ownership on territoriality, information exchange, and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0001027>
- Clement, R. W. (2006). Just how unethical is American business? *Business Horizons*, 49(4), 313–327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2005.11.003>
- Dahling, J. J., Whitaker, B. G., & Levy, P. E. (2009). The Development and Validation of a New Machiavellianism Scale. *Journal of Management*, 35(2), 219–257. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308318618>
- Dawkins, S., Tian, A. W., Newman, A., & Martin, A. J. (2017). Psychological ownership: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38(2), 163–183. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2057>
- Desk, H. N. (2017, July 15). Water wars: Plachimada vs Coca-Cola. <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/water-wars-plachimada-vs-coca-cola/article19284658.ece>
- Dewi, I. G. A. M., Riana, I. G., Kasuma, J., Mcguinness, E., Maria, S., & Darma, D. C. (2021). Predicting organizational citizenship behavior through psychological ownership and job satisfaction in four-star hotels. *Geo Journal of Tourism and Geosites*, 37(3), 807-813. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.37310-712>
- Dirks, K. T., Cummings, L. L., & Pierce, J. L. (1996). *Psychological ownership in organizations: Conditions under which individuals promote and resist change*.
- Donaldson, T., & Dunfee, T. W. (1994). Toward A Unified Conception Of Business Ethics: Integrative Social Contracts Theory. *Academy of Management Review*, 19(2), 252–284. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1994.9410210749>
- Effelsberg, David; Solga, Marc; Gurt, Jochen (2014). *Transformational Leadership and Follower's Unethical Behavior for the Benefit of the Company: A Two-Study Investigation*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 120(1), 81–93. doi:10.1007/s10551-013-1644-z
- Frian, A., & Mulyani, F. (2018). Millenials employee turnover intention in Indonesia. *Innovative Issues and Approaches in Social Sciences*, 11(3), 90-111.
- Ghani, U., Teo, T., Li, Y., Usman, M., Islam, Z. U., Gul, H., Naeem, R. M., Bahadar, H., Yuan, J., & Zhai, X. (2020). Tit for Tat: Abusive Supervision and Knowledge Hiding-The Role of Psychological Contract Breach and Psychological Ownership. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(4), 1240. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17041240>
- Ghosh, K., Zweig, D., & Sheldon, O. (2019). The dark side of psychological ownership: When pro-organization becomes pro-self. *Proceedings - Academy of Management*, 2019(1), 17338. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ambpp.2019.17338abstract>
- Ghosh, S. K. (2017). The direct and interactive effects of job insecurity and job embeddedness on unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Personnel Review*, 46(6), 1182–1198. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-05-2015-0126>.
- Harrison, A. J., Summers, J. W., & Mennecke, B. E. (2018). The Effects of the Dark Triad on Unethical Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 153(1), 53–77. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3368-3>
- Harrison, A., Summers, J., & Mennecke, B. (2018). The effects of the dark triad on

- unethical behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 153, 53-77.
- Hershatler, A., & Epstein, M. (2010). Millennials and the world of work: An organization and management perspective. *Journal of business and psychology*, 25, 211-223.
- Higgins, E. T. (1998). Promotion and Prevention: Regulatory Focus as A Motivational Principle. *Elsevier EBooks*, 1-46. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601\(08\)60381-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0065-2601(08)60381-0)
- Inam, A., Ho, J. A., Ng, S. I., & Mohamed, R. (2021). Inhibiting unethical pro-organizational behavior: Harnessing the effects of responsible leadership and leader-member exchange. *International Journal of Manpower*, 42(7), 1183-1201.
- JASP Team (2024). JASP (Version 0.19.0) [Computer software]
- Javed, T. (2018). Impact of Employee Ownership on an Organizational Productivity: A Mediating Role of Psychological Ownership. *Academy of Accounting and Financial Studies Journal*, 22(2), 1. <https://www.abacademies.org/articles/Impact-of-Employee-Ownership-on-an-Organizational-Productivity-A-Mediating-Role-of-Psychological-Ownership-1528-2635-22-2-147.pdf>
- Jones, D. B., & Paulhus, D. L. (2014). Introducing the Short Dark Triad (SD3). *Assessment*, 21(1), 28-41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073191113514105>
- Jung, J. C., & Sharon, E. (2019). The Volkswagen emissions scandal and its aftermath. *Global Business and Organizational Excellence*, 38(4), 6-15. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joe.21930>
- Kant, K. (2009, January 12). Satyam scam: It was there, we refused to look. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/satyam-scam-it-was-there-we-refused-to-look/articleshow/3965845.cms?from=mdr>
- Kim, T. J., & von dem Knesebeck, O. (2016). Perceived job insecurity, unemployment and depressive symptoms: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective observational studies. *International archives of occupational and environmental health*, 89(4), 561-573.
- Kong, D. T. (2016). The pathway to unethical pro-organizational behavior: Organizational identification as a joint function of work passion and trait mindfulness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 93, 86-91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.08.035>
- Kong, D. T. (2016). The pathway to unethical pro-organizational behavior: Organizational identification as a joint function of work passion and trait mindfulness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 93, 86-91. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.PAID.2015.08.035>
- Kuzior, A., Kettler, K., & R'ib, £. (2022). Great Resignation—Ethical, Cultural, Relational, and Personal Dimensions of Generation Y and Z Employees' Engagement. *Sustainability*, 14(11), 6764.
- Lawes, M., Hetschko, C., Schöb, R., Stephan, G., & Eid, M. (2022). The impact of unemployment on cognitive, affective, and eudaimonic well-being facets: Investigating immediate effects and short-term adaptation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pssp0000417>
- Lawrence, E. R., & Kacmar, K. M. (2017). Exploring the impact of job insecurity on employees' unethical behavior. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 27(1), 39-70. <https://doi.org/10.1017/beq.2016.58>
- LeBreton, J. M., Shiverdecker, L. K., & Grimaldi, E. M. (2018). The Dark Triad and Workplace Behavior. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5(1), 387-414. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032117-104451>
- LeBreton, J. M., Shiverdecker, L. K., & Grimaldi, E. M. (2018). The dark triad and workplace behavior. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 387-414.

- Lee, A. Y., Schwarz, G., Newman, A., & Legood, A. (2019). Investigating When and Why Psychological Entitlement Predicts Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics, 154*(1), 109–126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3456-z>
- Lian, H., Huai, M., Farh, J., Huang, J., Lee, C., & Chao, M. M. C. (2020). Leader Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior and Employee Unethical Conduct: Social Learning of Moral Disengagement as a Behavioral Principle. *Journal of Management, 48*(2), 350–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206320959699>
- Man, T. W. Y., & Farquharson, M. (2015). Psychological ownership in team-based entrepreneurship education activities. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, 21*(4), 600-621.
- Matherne III, C. F., & Litchfield, S. R. (2012). Investigating the relationship between affective commitment and unethical pro-organizational behaviors: The role of moral identity. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics, 9*(5), 35-46.
- Matherne, C. F., & Litchfield, S. R. (2012). Investigating the Relationship Between Affective Commitment and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors: The Role of Moral Identity. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability, and Ethics, 9*(5), 35–46. http://na-businesspress.home.stead.com/JLAE/MatherneCF_Web9_5_.pdf
- Mayhew, M. G., Ashkanasy, N. M., Bramble, T., & Gardner, J. (2007). A Study of the Antecedents and Consequences of Psychological Ownership in Organizational Settings. *Journal of Social Psychology, 147*(5), 477–500. <https://doi.org/10.3200/socp.147.5.477-500>
- Mayor, E., Daehne, M., & Bianchi, R. (2020). The Dark Triad of personality and attitudes toward cognitive enhancement. *BMC Psychology, 8*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-020-00486-2>
- McCoy, W. L. (2020). *Predictors of Willingness Towards Unethical Behavior in Followers of Charismatic/Transformational Leaders: A Quantitative Path Analysis Study* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix).
- Md-Sidin, S., Sambasivan, M., & Muniandy, N. (2009). Impact of Psychological Ownership on the Performance of Business School Lecturers. *Journal of Education for Business, 85*(1), 50–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832320903217903>
- Miao, N., & Xu, Y. (2013). The relationship between ethical leadership and unethical pro-organizational behavior: Linear or curvilinear effects? *Journal of Business Ethics, 116*(3), 641–653. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-012-1504-2>.
- Molinsky, A., & Margolis, J. (2005). Necessary evils and interpersonal sensitivity in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 2*, 245–268
- Mühlböck, M., Kalleitner, F., Steiber, N., & Kittel, B. (2022). Scarring Dreams? Young People's Vocational Aspirations and Expectations During and After Unemployment. *Social Inclusion, 10*(2), 252-264.
- Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of business and psychology, 25*, 225-238.
- Naseer, S., Bouckenooghe, D., Syed, F., Khan, A. K., & Qazi, S. (2020). The malevolent side of organizational identification: Unraveling the impact of psychological entitlement and manipulative personality on unethical work behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 35*(3), 333-346.
- Naseer, S., Bouckenooghe, D., Syed, F., Khan, A. L., & Qazi, S. (2020). The malevolent side of organizational identification: unraveling the impact of psychological entitlement and manipulative personality on unethical work behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 35*(3), 333–346.

- <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-019-09623-0>
- Olckers, C., & Du Plessis, Y. (2012). The role of psychological ownership in retaining talent: A systematic literature review. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management, 10*(2), 1-18.
- Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. L. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality, 36*(6), 556–563. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566\(02\)00505-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0092-6566(02)00505-6)
- Pelster, M., & Schaltegger, S. (2021). The dark triad and corporate sustainability: An empirical analysis of personality traits of sustainability managers. *Business Ethics, the Environment and Responsibility, 31*(1), 80–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12398>
- Pierce, J. L., Kostova, T., & Dirks, K. T. (2001). Toward a Theory of Psychological Ownership in Organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 26*(2), 298–310. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2001.4378028>
- Sheedy, E., Garcia, P., & Jepsen, D. (2021). The role of risk climate and ethical self-interest climate in predicting unethical pro-organisational behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics, 173*(2), 281-300.
- Sheedy, E., Garcia, P., & Jepsen, D. (2021). The role of risk climate and ethical self-interest climate in predicting unethical pro-organisational behaviour. *Journal of Business Ethics, 173*(2), 281-300.
- Strauss, W., & Howe, N. (1991). *Generations: The history of America's future, 1584 to 2069* (Vol. 538). New York: Quill.
- Supeli, A., & Creed, P. A. (2016). The longitudinal relationship between protean career orientation and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention-to-quit. *Journal of Career Development, 43*(1), 66-80.
- Syed, F., Raja, U., & Naseer, S. (2022). Dark personality in dark times: How Dark Triad personality interacts with injustice and politics to influence detachment and discretionary behaviours. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 40*(1), 50–66. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.1685>
- Tang, P. M., Yam, K. C., & Koopman, J. (2020). Feeling proud but guilty? Unpacking the paradoxical nature of unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 160*, 68–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.03.004>
- Tang, P. M., Yam, K. C., & Koopman, J. (2020). Feeling proud but guilty? Unpacking the paradoxical nature of unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 160*, 68-86.
- Thompson, C., & Gregory, J. B. (2012). Managing Millennials: A framework for improving attraction, motivation, and retention. *The psychologist-manager journal, 15*(4), 237.
- Umphress, E. E., & Bingham, J. (2011). When Employees Do Bad Things for Good Reasons: Examining Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors. *Organization Science, 22*(3), 621–640. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0559>
- Umphress, E. E., Bingham, J., & Mitchell, M. S. (2010). Unethical behavior in the name of the company: The moderating effect of organizational identification and positive reciprocity beliefs on unethical pro-organizational behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 95*(4), 769–780. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019214>
- Vadera, A. K., & Pratt, M. G. (2013). Love, hate, ambivalence, or indifference? A conceptual examination of workplace crimes and organizational identification. *Organization Science, 24*(1), 172–188. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1110.0714>
- Van Dyne, L., & Pierce, J. L. (2004). Psychological ownership and feelings of possession: three field studies predicting employee attitudes and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25*(4), 439–459. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.249>

- Van Dyne, L., & Pierce, J. L. (2004). Psychological ownership and feelings of possession: Three field studies predicting employee attitudes and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 25(4), 439-459.
- Verma, P., & Mohapatra, S. (2020). Strong Identification, Weak Ideology, Organisational Culture or All: Unethical Pro-organisational Behaviour in India. In *War, Peace and Organizational Ethics* (Vol. 23, pp. 123-150). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- VW Emissions Scandal Affected Infant and Child Health. (2022, August 4). Penn LDI. <https://ldi.upenn.edu/our-work/research-updates/volkswagen-emissions-scandal-affected-infant-and-child-health/#:~:text=The%20researchers%20found%20that%20adding,two%20measures%20of%20p articulate%20matter>
- Wang, L., Law, K. S., Zhang, M. J., Li, Y. N., & Liang, Y. (2019). It's mine! Psychological ownership of one's job explains positive and negative workplace outcomes of job engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(2), 229–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000337>
- Wang, L., Law, K. S., Zhang, M. J., Li, Y. N., & Liang, Y. (2019). It's mine! Psychological ownership of one's job explains positive and negative workplace outcomes of job engagement. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(2), 229–246. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000337>
- Wang, X., Zheng, X., & Zhao, S. (2022). Repaying the Debt: An Examination of the Relationship between Perceived Organizational Support and Unethical Pro-organizational Behavior by Low Performers. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 179(3), 697–709. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04809-0>
- Wilpert, B. (1991). Property, Ownership and Participation: On the Growing Contradictions Between Legal And Psychological Concepts, In R. Russell & V. Rus (Eds.), *International Handbook Of Participation In Organisations: For The Study Of Organisational Democracy, Co-Operation, And Self-Management*, 2, 149–164, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Xu, T., & Lv, Z. (2018). HPWS and unethical pro-organizational behavior: a moderated mediation model. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 33(3), 265–278. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jmp-12-2017-0457>
- Yildiz, B., Alpkın, L., Ateş, H., & Sezen, B. (2015). Determinants of Constructive Deviance: The Mediator Role of Psychological Ownership. *International Business Research*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ibr.v8n4p107>

Unnikannan P Santhosh Kumar, Research Scholar, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya. Email: unnikannan@cusb.ac.in; ORCID ID: 0009-0004-3677-6342

Chetna Jaiswal, PhD., Assistant Professor, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya. Email: chetna@cusb.ac.in; ORCID ID: 0009-0006-4718-5681

Nishi Srivastava, Research Scholar, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya. Email: nishisrivastava300@gmail.com; ORCID ID: 0009-0001-4436-3618