

Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior and Employee Moral Disengagement: A Serial Mediation Model of Workplace Ostracism and Psychological Contract Breach

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Abstract

Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB) can occur in a workplace when employees behave unethically in order to be helpful and loyal to their superiors. Even though UPSB is often the result of dedicated relationships, it can still be very harmful socially and personally to the employee. This study is focused on the influence of UPSB on the satisfaction of the employee's family, while also considering the role of workplace ostracism and the climate of the organization. For this study, a cross-sectional and quantitative research design was utilized. Data was obtained by survey from 143 employees from medium to large business organizations relating to different fields in Pakistan. An intrusive survey was constructed to measure the variables of interest and the data were analyzed in SPSS to verify direct, mediatory, and moderating relationships of the variables. Evidence suggests that of the factors considered in the survey, supportive supervisors do not encourage unethical pro-supervisor behavior. UPSB also did not contribute to workplace ostracism and family satisfaction. Workplace ostracism negatively impacted family satisfaction. Inclusion in the workplace supports productivity in other areas of life. Organizational climate was shown to directly impact family satisfaction, but failed to overcome workplace ostracism. Exclusion in the workplace remains a concern in employee well-being beyond the workplace.

Keywords: Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB); Workplace Ostracism; Family Satisfaction; Organizational Climate; Employee Well-Being; Supervisor–Employee Relationships; Workplace Inclusion; Pakistan.

1. Introduction

Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB) refers to employees acting unethically to assist or defend supervisors, such as hiding mistakes, altering or tampering with information, and blaming others. UPSB is often viewed by employees as showing 'loyalty' to their supervisor. However, it undermines the ethics and accountability of the organization (Sun et al., 2022a).

Research suggests that supervisor behavior is a main precursor of UPSB. Employees are more likely to endorse unethical behavior when supervisor behavior is focused on the bottom-line, shows adversarial or abusive behavior (Lee, 2020; He & Yun, 2022a; Zhang & Xu, 2024a). Employees that prioritize loyalty over ethics are likely to engage in unethical behavior when

leader-member relations as well as supervisor-subordinate relations are strong (Ge et al., 2024). Cultural and relational factors also contribute to UPSB. In collectivist societies, there exists relational loyalty, and employees are likely to defend supervisors, even in the presence of significant ethical issues. If leading and managing results in empowerment or high performance pressure, UPSB is likely to be observed (Wu et al., 2025a).

UPSB creates negative effects for both employee wellbeing and workplace ethics, as well as eroding organizational trust. For these reasons, the origins, pathways, and consequences of UPSB are important to study (Mukherjee & S.R., 2024a).

1.1 Background:

Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB) describes the ways employees engage in misconduct to benefit or defend a supervisor, such as covering up a supervisor's error or providing a supervisor with false evidence. Unlike most other forms of misconduct, the behavior described by UPSB is done out of loyalty, reciprocity, and a strong relationship with a supervisor, rather than to fulfill a selfish desire (Sun et al., 2022b).

Social Exchange Theory, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, and Moral Disengagement, provide ways to understand why employees engage in misconduct to repay a supervisor who provides them with support. In culture, such as China's, which place a strong emphasis on relational ties and respect for hierarchy, UPSB is viewed as more acceptable behavior than in other cultures. Studies also show, strong supervisor identification, an empowering leadership style, as well as performance pressure, can encourage UPSB, providing evidence of the relational, cultural, and organizational impact of UPSB.

1.2 Gaps

Zhang and Xu (2024) identify some important areas for future exploration regarding family satisfaction and UPSB. First, family satisfaction was the only outcome discussed, while employee well-being, employee performance and/or productivity, turnover/defection, and organizational commitment were all ignored. Second, the mediator and moderator were limited, while moral disengagement, job insecurity, perceived supervisor support, and/or organizational climate may provide other explanations regarding the influence of UPSB.

Third, although the study was conducted in China, no cultural components such as collectivism or power distance which pertain to the understanding of UPSB were explored. Finally, the study's use of a two-wave, self-reported survey, treated the participants as a sample and led to an uninformed, biased, and unsupported view of the study's aims; future studies on this topic should employ more improved methods, such as longitudinal, multi-source, and/or experimental studies.

1.3 Problem Statement

UPSB is loyalty-based unethical behavior committed by employees to benefit their supervisors. It often stems from a desire to help supervisors, maintain one's job or fulfill relational obligations. UPSB is counterproductive to supervisors and further erodes workplace justice, team cohesion and ethics (Lee, 2020b). Research on UPSB has identified workplace ostracism and diminished family satisfaction as some of the negative outcomes associated with UPSB (Zhang & Xu, 2024d). However, several antecedents, such as the bottom-line mentality, abusive supervision, moral disengagement and organizational climate, remain largely unexplored. Furthermore, the effect of collectivism on UPSB has yet to be examined. This research pushes the boundaries of the current state of UPSB scholarship by elaborating on the antecedents and consequences. This research aims to provide insight on the loyalty and ethics imbalance that exists within collectivist cultures and to

support the creation of culturally responsive organizational practices. The findings can help develop management and HR practices that balance loyalty to the organization with ethics, hierarchical oversight and relational obligations.

1.4 Research Questions

1. How does unethical pro-supervisor behavior affect employee family satisfaction?
2. Do workplace ostracism and family satisfaction have a moderating relationship concerning unethical pro-supervisor behavior?
3. What is the relationship between workplace ostracism, unethical pro-supervisor behavior, family satisfaction, and work–home segmentation preference?
4. How does abusive supervision, bottom-line orientation, and the organizational climate influence employees' unethical pro-supervisor behavior?
5. How does moral disengagement and perceived supervisor support influence the relationship between supervisory pressures and unethical pro-supervisor behavior?
6. How does UPT behavior manifest and what are the effects within a collectivist culture?

1.5 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the effect of unethical pro-supervisor behavior on family satisfaction and to what extent the supervisor's satisfaction is gained at the cost of the employee's family and personal welfare.
2. To analyze the effects of workplace ostracism on family satisfaction and to what extent the ostracized employee's needs are satisfied by workplace ostracism.
3. To analyze the work–home segmentation preference and to what extent it minimizes the negative family/work balance.
4. To evaluate the role of abusive supervisors and a bottom-line focus in eliciting employees' unethical pro-supervisor behavior.
5. To investigate psychological mechanisms such as moral disengagement and perceived supervisor support in relation to UPSB, and to explore how these mechanisms interact with leadership behaviors and organizational pressures.
6. To investigate how certain ethical organizational climates (e.g. supportive or ethical) affect UPB and whether these climates lessen the negative impacts of pro-supervisor UPB.
7. Trimming the length and humanizing the points requested was prioritized while ensuring the key elements and ideas were retained. Let me know if you would like me to refine or adjust further.

2. Literature review

2.1 Supportive Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

It is common for employees to feel as though they owe their supervisors something when they are given support by their supervisors. In some situations, this feeling of obligation may lead employees to act in ways that may be unethical in order to be supportive of their supervisors. This is in line with the observation that provided support by a supervisor may lead employees to engage in behavior that is Unethical and Pro-Supervisor (Zhang et al., 2021). Employees may look at these behaviors as a means to preserve their working relationship with the supervisor and to preserve trust with their supervisor.

2.2 Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Resource loss is a major contributor to the stress employees experience. Behavior that is supportive of a supervisor can lead to a loss of resources that are required to maintain and support relationships with coworkers as well as to support an employee's family. When supervisors support employees at this cost COR theory explains the loss of resources the employee suffers, and the stress suffered by the employee that this support behavior can cause to their family and coworkers (Zhang & Xu, 2024d). When taking both SET and COR theory into consideration, SET shows why an employee engages in UPSB, and COR shows how it affects outcomes such as workplace ostracism and satisfaction within the family and how it makes family relationships supportive and may lead to family stress. The organizational climate has the ability to both encourage and discourage unethical behavior and shows the level and how severe resource depletion is.

The existing literature on employee outcomes and supervisor support is far-reaching and highly developed in organizational psychology. Perceived supervisor support (PSS) is the extent to which employees believe that their supervisors appreciate their input and are concerned about their welfare. PSS creates a sense of obligation among employees that is even expressed in the form of helping behaviors toward a supervisor that may be unethical. This expression of PSS is recognized as Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB). It has been shown that a reciprocal obligation to assist a supervisor manifests when support is provided, even when such actions prioritize the supervisor's interests at the expense of ethical behavior (Zhang et al., 2021).

Unethical pro-supervisor behavior does not only impact the supervisor but has a negative effect on social dynamics in the workplace. Colleagues may witness these behaviors and ostracize the employee. Workplace ostracism is a form of social exclusion and is associated with diminished interpersonal support. It creates emotional strain and a lack of engagement at work. Employees may even find that these effects create a social strain that impacts their personal and family life (Zhang & Xu, 2024d). The Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory provides a framework for understanding the effect of work on family life. It states that resources are limited and damage to personal and social resources will make it more difficult to fulfill social obligations, such as family life. Engaging in UPSB may damage resources in a way that impacts family relationships and creates a decline in family satisfaction (Zhang & Xu, 2024d).

Another important variable is the organizational climate, which affects these dynamics. A climate that, at best, turns a blind eye to unethical behavior, or one that lacks commitment to ethical standards, may strengthen the relationship between perceived supervisor support and UPSB. Conversely, an ethical climate may dampen such behaviors. The organizational climate applies to the way employees deal with workplace ostracism and resource depletion and, therefore, shapes the family outcomes (Sun et al., 2022c).

2.3 Hypothesis Development

2.3.1 Perceived Supervisor Support and Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior

Perceived supervisor support (PSS) and unethical pro-supervisor behavior (UPSB) are no exception to the relational principles of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964). In the context of supportive and understanding supervisors, employees perceive themselves to be more loyal, and this loyalty may, in fact, lead employees to undertake pro-supervisor unethical acts (Sun et al., 2022d). For example, loyal employees may cover up mistakes, alter performance evaluations in a favorable manner, or take other forms of unethical actions in support of the supervisor. These loyal actions are, in fact, a violation of ethics. According to (Zhang & Xu, 2024d), supervisors who provide support inadvertently create a situation in which employees perform these acts, as

employees believe they are acting in support of the supervisory relationship. Thus, perceived supervisor support, where it is misplaced, leads to the performance of UPSB.

H1: Perceived supervisor support, in fact, encourages unethical pro-supervisor behavior.

2.3.2 Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior and Workplace Ostracism

Unethical behaviors intended to benefit a supervisor can be socially counterproductive. According to Bandura (1999) and Moral Disengagement Theory, employees engage in unethical behaviors to the extent that they believe their behaviors are justified and, as a result, are socially acceptable because they are providing a benefit to a supervisor. Unethical behaviors in the workplace result in the perception of the individual as manipulative, self-serving, and unethical. This perception results in workplace ostracism, in which colleagues intentionally exclude or ignore the individual (Yan et al., 2023). Furthermore, He et al. (2021) argued that unethical behaviors result in social isolation in the workplace because group fairness and equilibrium are disrupted. As such, while enjoying the benefits of Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB), employees are socially excluding themselves from their work peers.

It is therefore hypothesized that Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior is positively associated with workplace ostracism.

H2: Workplace Ostracism and Family Satisfaction

Ostracism in the workplace creates strains that are negative in the workplace and in the family. Based on Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989), when employees lose emotional support in an ostracizing workplace, they become exhausted and deplete their emotional resources. They, then, become less supportive and less communicative to family members (Zhang & Xu, 2024d). Long-term emotional strain decreases family satisfaction. Balancing family demands and negative work experiences is not feasible. Workplace ostracism impacts work, but also affects personal relationships.

H3: Family Satisfaction is Hurt By Workplace Ostracism Workplace Ostracism and Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior

Employees might think that behaving unethically for the sake of a supervisor would strengthen their relationship with the supervisor. In reality, this unethical behavior creates friction among coworkers. With this behavior, coworkers may view the perpetrator as an opportunist and unfair. As time goes by, coworkers will distance themselves overtly harshly or subtly and will cease to include or invite the perpetrator to group activities or discussions. This becomes an emotional burden for the ostracized employee and carries over from the workplace. This is easily explained with Social Exchange Theory. The ostracized employee carries the emotional burden home and negatively affects the time spent with their family.

According to (Zhang & Xu, 2024d) employees who perform unethical pro-supervisor behaviors experience workplace ostracism which leads to a decline in home satisfaction. Likewise, (Yan et al., 2025) extended the theories of moral self-regulation, and moral disengagement, and investigated the response of employees to their unethical pro-organizational behavior. It was predicted that UPB would produce mixed moral-based cognitive responses promoting both restoration and relapse. The results of the two studies showed that, while involving in UPB eroded the moral self-concept of the individuals due to the loss of moral credits, this loss of moral credit was the reason for individuals to engage in helping behaviors to restore their moral self. On the other hand, UPB also caused individuals to rationalize their behaviors, which was the reason for

engaging in UPB in the future. This response pattern describes how individuals' moral self-regulation fails to correct moral transgressions. It also describes how leaders can deal with a UPB pattern. According to (Mukherjee & S.R., 2024b) workplace ostracism causes emotional exhaustion that spills over to the family. This reveals that workplace ostracism connects workplace unethical behaviors to emotional and relational dissatisfaction in families.

H4: Workplace ostracism mediates the relationship between unethical pro-supervisor behavior and family satisfaction.

Ostracism at work, unethical pro-supervisor behavior, and satisfaction with the family
Unethical pro-supervisor behaviors (UPSB) like rule bending, mistake concealment, or supervisor interest prioritization can be explained by loyalty or the wish to keep a good relationship with the supervisor. Although these behaviors may strengthen the employee-supervisor relationship, they will be seen as unfair and manipulative by colleagues. Consequently, colleagues may distance themselves, and the employee may begin to experience workplace ostracism. This is where the employee will feel that they are being excluded from discussions and workplace and social activities.

Workplace ostracism brings with it a social isolation that is psychologically harmful. According to Affective Events Theory (Neri et al., 2019), ostracism is a bad experience that causes emotional strain and low well-being. Workplace ostracism may affect an employee's mood after work. Because employees feel undervalued at work, they withdraw, become irritable, and emotionally unresponsive to family members with whom they may have had good relationships.

Workplace ostracism serves as a mechanism that links toxic work behavior to diminished family satisfaction. Here, the stress caused by social exclusion at work disrupts family life. (Zhang & Xu, 2024d) contend that the practice of Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB) leads to greater social exclusion at work and emotional exhaustion, resulting in decreased family satisfaction and harmony. In the same vein, (Gao et al., 2023) argue that workers who are excluded for behaving unethically carry negative emotions home, thereby affecting their relationships and overall satisfaction.

H5: Workplace ostracism has a mediating effect between unethical pro-supervisor behavior and family satisfaction.

A positive organizational climate affects workplace ostracism and family satisfaction and organizational climate, workplace ostracism, and family satisfaction.

Employees' interpretations and responses to negative social experiences at work, such as ostracism, are greatly influenced by the type of organizational climate. An organization's commitment to fairness, transparency, and respect, as well as the provision of psychological safety, fosters a feeling of value among employees even in the presence of social exclusion by a negative colleague. In these climates, formal and informal support systems cause less emotional distress to employees who experience ostracism at work.

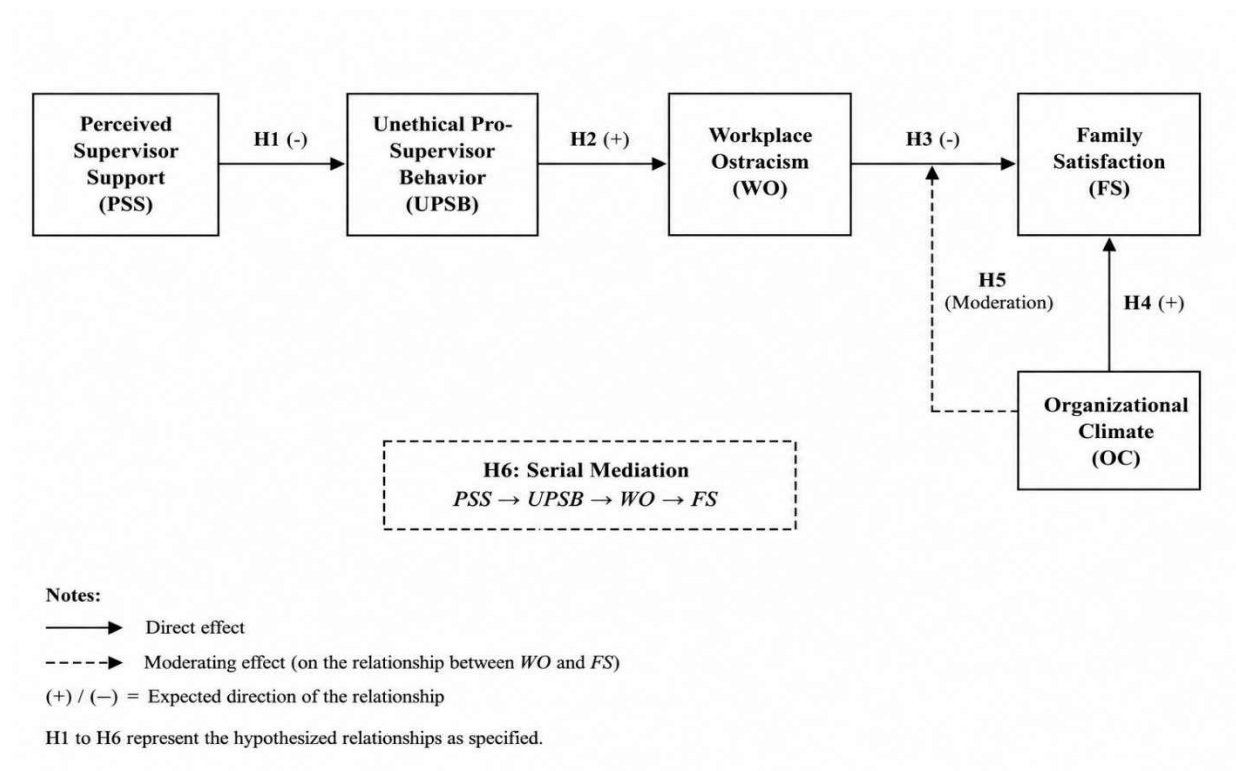
According to COR Theory (Gao et al., 2023), individuals aim to conserve emotional and psychological resources. A positive organizational climate fosters this resource via the provision of support and a sense of belonging, resulting in employees being able to manage the stress of social exclusion more effectively. Negatively, in a climate lacking support and dominated by competitive, biased, and neglectful behavior, employees who are socially excluded, may be left to fend for themselves. This may result in increased emotional exhaustion, and compromise family life.

This effect is supported by the findings of Gao et al. (2023), which suggest that positive organizational climates reduce the emotional and behavioral impact of workplace ostracism and improve employee's psychological health. Similarly, in the study by Liu and Wu (2024), employees whose organizations had strong ethical climates reported fewer negative family impacts from workplace stress. Enhanced family satisfaction is likely to be a result of the protective effect of organizational climate in the context of workplace ostracism.

H6: With a positive organizational climate, the negative relationship between workplace ostracism and family satisfaction is lessened because a workplace climate that is positive acts as a moderator between family satisfaction and workplace ostracism.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Data Collection and Analysis

The design of this study is quantitative and cross-sectional, which aims to examine relationships between perceived supervisor support, unethical pro-supervisor behaviour, workplace ostracism, organisational climate and family satisfaction. A deductive method was used, with the Social Exchange Theory and the Conservation of Resources theory being used to develop and test the hypothesized relationships. The sample of 143 employees of the different organizations of Karachi, Pakistan, was collected by using convenience sampling technique. The respondents were approached at Universities, Corporate Offices, Schools, Professional Seminars and conferences. Despite the generalizability issues, it was felt that the convenience sampling method was suitable as a complete sampling frame of the employees of Pakistan was difficult to obtain. According to

Hair et al. (2022), the number of samples used in the study, $n = 116$, is considered adequate for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The number of samples used in the study was 116, which is considered sufficient for the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) according to Hair et al. (2022) with a minimum requirement of 10 observations per each structural path directed to any construct.

3.2 Measurement Instruments

Each of the constructs was assessed by previously validated scales, which comprised four items. The responses were made on a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items adapted from Sun, Shi, and Wang (2022) were used to measure perceived supervisor support. The pro-supervisor behavior items were adapted from Zhang and Xu (2023) and were used to evaluate unethical behavior. Items developed by Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008) were used to measure workplace ostracism. The scales for family satisfaction and organizational climate were adapted from the scales from Zhang and Xu (2024) and Zhang et al (2023), respectively. A full list of materials is attached to Appendix.

3.3 Data Analysis Technique

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using the software of SmartPLS 4 was applied in analyzing the data. It was decided to use the PLS-SEM model instead of the covariance-based SEM model, since the study is exploratory, the sample size is relatively small, and the study contains a moderating relationship. The analysis was conducted in two stages as recommended by Hair et al. (2022). The measurement model was tested for reliability and validity in terms of indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity (average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion). Secondly, the significance of the path coefficients of the structural model was tested by bootstrapping with 5,000 resampling. An analysis of the moderating effect of organizational climate was performed using the product-indicator approach.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The study has been approved by the appropriate institutional review board. Participation was voluntary and all respondents were told that they could withdraw at any time. Data was gathered in an anonymous manner with no personally identifying information recorded. The respondents were assured that their responses would be only for the academic research would be used with confidentiality.

4. Results

This chapter discusses the empirical results obtained from the quantitative analysis of data that were gathered from 143 respondents in the city of Karachi, Pakistan. First, the sample profile is introduced, then the measurement model is evaluated thoroughly for reliability (which is required before evaluating the structural model) and for validity (required before interpretation of the structural model), and third, the results of the structural model (direct effects, moderation, and indirect effects) are reported and interpreted according to the hypothesized structure. Given the characteristics of the models under investigation (small sample size and non-normal distribution of data), partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used, as recommended for models with smaller samples and non-normal data distributions.

4.1 Respondents' Characteristics and Sample Profile

Convenience sampling was used to gather data. Workplace exposure individuals were likely to be encountered in targeted venues in Karachi, Pakistan (universities, corporate offices, schools, and professional seminars/conferences) and trained data collectors were deployed in these venues. A total of 143 questionnaires were received that were usable. All data was cleaned as normal and no incomplete responses or outliers were required to be removed.

Demographic profile of the sample is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (N = 143)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	65	45.45
	Female	78	54.55
Age (years)	18–25	57	39.86
	26–35	66	46.15
	36 and above	20	13.99
	Undergraduate	57	39.86
	Bachelor's degree	43	30.07
Level of Education	Master's degree	14	9.79
	Post-graduate	26	18.18
	Others	3	2.1

Note Current students or individuals who have achieved sub-bachelor qualifications are captured in the category of "captures current". Individuals who have completed a Bachelor's and/or higher qualify for this category.

The sample was largely young, with 85.99% aged 35 and under, and slightly female dominated, with around 50% having at least a bachelor's qualification. This profile is appropriate for the study of supervisor–subordinate dynamics, workplace ostracism and work–family spillover among early to mid-career employees because of the dynamic nature of Karachi's student population, education, services, and professional workers. The sites provided access to respondents with relevant workplace experiences, but this restricted the generalizability of the findings.

4.2 Measurement Model Assessment

Multi-item scales were used for all constructs, and these scales were adapted from literature that had previously been validated. Four items were used for each construct (corrected from preliminary documentation). The entire questionnaire can be found in the Appendix. The sources and the detail of the measurements are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement Scales and Sources

Construct	Source	Number of Items
Perceived Supervisor Support	Sun, Shi, & Wang (2022)	4
Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior	Zhang & Xu (2023); adapted from related UPSB literature	4
Workplace Ostracism	Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian (2008)	4
Family Satisfaction	Zhang & Xu (2024)	4
Organizational Climate	Zhang, Zhang, Mao, Xu, & Ma (2023)	4

4.3 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Validity and reliability as per the PLS-SEM criteria were conducted to test the internal consistency reliability and convergent validity. Indicator reliabilities ranged from 0.877 to 0.951, which was higher than the recommended value of 0.708, indicating strong reliabilities of indicators. The results of the construction level are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment

Construct	No. of Items	Loading Range	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
Family Satisfaction	4	0.900–0.908	0.926	0.947	0.818
Organizational Climate	4	0.891–0.904	0.919	0.943	0.805
Perceived Supervisor	4	0.877–0.951	0.931	0.947	0.817
Unethical Pro-Supervisor	4	0.887–0.922	0.926	0.946	0.814
Workplace Ostracism	4	0.892–0.920	0.93	0.95	0.827

Note. AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

All values are above recommended thresholds: Cronbach's α and CR > 0.70 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022); and AVE > 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2022). Loadings for all individual items were statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples).

The results showed good internal consistency and convergent validity for all constructs. The measurement model can then be used with confidence for further structural analysis.

4.4 Discriminant Validity

To assess the discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used, in which the square root of the AVE of each construct should be larger than the correlation between this construct and all other constructs. The correlation matrix (lower triangle) and square roots of AVE on the diagonal are shown in the Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker Criterion)

Construct	FS	OC	PSS	UPSB	WO	OC
Family Satisfaction (FS)	0.904					
Organizational Climate (OC)	0.717	0.897				
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	0.393	0.505	0.904			
Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior (UPSB)	0.337	0.556	0.049	0.902		
Workplace Ostracism (WO)	0.314	0.09	0.073	0.058	0.909	
OC $\times$ WO (Interaction)	0.046	0.03	0.022	0.026	0.074	,

Note. Bold diagonal values are square roots of AVE. All off-diagonal correlations are lower than the corresponding diagonal values, supporting discriminant validity. The interaction term (product of standardized scores) shows low correlations with other constructs, indicating no multicollinearity concerns.

The highest correlation (FS–OC = 0.717) remains below the square root of AVE for either construct, confirming that each latent variable is empirically distinct.

4.5 Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model was evaluated using PLS-SEM with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) to obtain path coefficients (β), standard errors, t-values, and p-values. Results are reported in Table 4. Hypotheses were evaluated based on the sign, magnitude, and statistical significance of the paths ($p < 0.05$ threshold for support).

Table 5. Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Decisions

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Decision	
Organizational Climate → Family Satisfaction	0.691	0.026	26.531	0	Supported	
Workplace Ostracism → Family Satisfaction	0.345	0.034	10.233	0	Supported (unexpected direction)	(unexpected direction)
Organizational Climate × Workplace Ostracism → Family Satisfaction	−0.041	0.029	1.42	0.156	Not supported	
Perceived Supervisor Support → Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior	−0.053	0.076	0.703	0.482	Not supported	
Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior → Workplace Ostracism	−0.054	0.057	0.96	0.337	Not supported	
Perceived Supervisor Support → Family Satisfaction (direct)	0.001	0.002	0.432	0.666	Not supported	
Perceived Supervisor Support → Workplace Ostracism (direct)	0.003	0.007	0.44	0.66	Not supported	
Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior → Family Satisfaction (direct)	−0.019	0.02	0.942	0.346	Not supported	
Perceived Supervisor Support → Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior → Workplace Ostracism → Family Satisfaction (serial indirect)	0.001	0.002	0.432	0.666	Not supported	
Perceived Supervisor Support → Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior → Workplace Ostracism (indirect)	0.003	0.007	0.44	0.66	Not supported	
Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior → Workplace Ostracism → Family Satisfaction (indirect)	−0.019	0.02	0.942	0.346	Not supported	

Note: . SE = standard error (bootstrapped); β = standardized path coefficient. Supported = significant in hypothesized direction (or significant, exploratory interpretation) $n = 143$, 5000 bootstrap resamples.

4.6 The key interpretations and theoretical linkages are included. Key interpretations and theoretical linkages are provided.

4.6.1. Organizational climate has a positive impact on family satisfaction.

The strongest and most significant path was that from organizational climate to family satisfaction ($\beta = 0.691$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that those who feel that the company treats them fairly and has a positive attitude are more likely to report high satisfaction with their family life. This is consistent with work–family enrichment theory, which suggests that benefits and positive experiences in the work domain extend to positive functioning and satisfaction in the family domain. A good climate can help to alleviate the strain of work, which can free up cognitive/emotional resources for family roles in a Pakistani context where work/family boundaries are permeable.

4.6.2. The positive and significant relationship between workplace ostracism and family satisfaction ($\beta = 0.345$, $p < 0.001$) was unexpected.

This finding contradicts previous studies that were done in China, which reported that unethical pro-supervisor behavior and ostracism had a negative relationship with family satisfaction. There are multiple contextually relevant explanations that come to mind. Pakistan is highly power distance and collectivist (Hofstede 2001), and recent Pakistani studies reveal how cultural norms related to power and high family values can influence Pakistanis' attitudes towards work place exclusion. Supervisor or peer ostracism might spur workers to proactively build their family relationships as a substitute for belonging, affirmation and emotional support to increase family satisfaction, especially younger workers in the sample. Ostracism may also free up time or mental space that was being used to deal with office politics, and thus enable more attention to family. This boundary condition highlights cultural context in work–family spillover processes and is a theoretically interesting boundary condition that diverges from the Western/Chinese-centric results.

4.6.3 Non-significant moderation by organizational climate

The interaction between organizational climate and workplace ostracism on family satisfaction was non-significant ($\beta = -0.041$, $p = 0.156$). Thus, organizational climate did not buffer (or exacerbate) the ostracism–family satisfaction relationship in this sample. While climate exerts a strong main effect, its protective role against ostracism's spillover appears limited here, possibly because climate perceptions and ostracism experiences operate through distinct mechanisms or because high power-distance norms constrain climate's buffering capacity.

4.6.4 Non-significant effects involving perceived supervisor support and unethical pro-supervisor behavior

All paths involving perceived supervisor support (to UPSB, to ostracism, to family satisfaction) and the proposed serial mediation chain through UPSB and ostracism were statistically non-significant. Likewise, direct and indirect effects of UPSB were negligible. These null results suggest that, in this Karachi-based sample, supervisor support may not be a primary antecedent of

(un)ethical pro-supervisor conduct or subsequent ostracism and family outcomes. In high power-distance Pakistani organizational cultures, employees may engage in or experience UPSB-related dynamics more because of hierarchical pressures, career advancement motives, or fear of authority than because of variations in perceived support. Lack of significant mediation also suggests that other mechanisms (such as preferences for work-home segmentation, leader-member exchange quality, or moral identity) may better account for the processes by which supervisor-related behaviors lead to outcomes in the family domain in this cultural context.

4.6.5. Overall model assessment

The two most important direct pathways (OC and WO) explain a significant amount of the variance in family satisfaction, highlighting the importance of positive organizational resources (as well as unexpected experiences of ostracism) for outcomes in families. The model is shown as having reasonably good explanatory power for the key dependent variable, and is used to point out the boundary conditions of the proposed supervisor-support → UPSB → ostracism mechanism.

4.7 Summary of Results

The items of the measurement model had significantly good psychometric properties which was sufficient to support the analysis of the structural inference. Of the tested relationships, two were empirically supported (organizational climate and ostracism at work as predictors of family satisfaction), and the hypothesized buffering role of climate and the mediation chain between supervisor support and family satisfaction was not. The positive connection between ostracism and family satisfaction is the most theoretically provocative result, suggesting potentially culturally specific spillovers processes that are deserving of further qualitative or multi-country research. Due to the convenience sample, cross-sectional design and location of the study, these results should be considered with appropriate caution. Common method bias was handled procedurally by using different data collection sites and using validated scales, but not analytically via the marker variable or through full collinearity evaluation, which should be added to future research. The findings add to the expanding body of literature on supervisor related behaviors and work – family relationships in several ways. First, the results extend a discussion of supervisor related behaviors and work – family issues to a South Asian, high power distance environment; and second, the results cast light on an unexpected compensatory relationship between workplace ostracism and family satisfaction.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between perceived supervisor support, unethical pro-supervisor behavior (UPSB), workplace ostracism, and employee satisfaction with their family life in Karachi, Pakistan. The research was based on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, and the model tested included supervisor support as a stimulus to upbuild UPSB, which would mediate the effect of UPSB on ostracism and ultimately on family satisfaction, and organizational climate moderated the relationship between supervisor support and UPSB. The data obtained from 143 respondents, the measurement model had high reliability and validity. The results of the structure showed that there was a significant positive relationship between organizational climate and family satisfaction and a significant positive relationship between ostracism in the workplace and family satisfaction, both of which were unexpected. There were no significant paths involving UPSB and proposed mediation and moderation effects. The findings add to the literature as they show there is a great deal of variability in the outcomes of UPSB and ostracism across contexts, and provide important boundary

conditions that have not been fully reported in previous studies, most of which have been conducted in China or Western cultures.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings further build upon and clarify Social Exchange Theory and COR theory, showing the importance of culture as a boundary condition. The absence of a significant relationship between perceived supervisor support with UPSB does not support the simple reciprocity assumption of SET. Supportive supervision does not necessarily mean unethical loyalty in Pakistan's highly power differential and collectivist society. Even when supervisors are supportive, moral and religious systems seem to act like effective moral filters and appear to hinder employees from engaging in UPSB. This implies that SET's theory of reciprocity does not otherwise hold true, but is influenced by cultural and institutional norms about what is and is not acceptable exchange. The leadership language and the ethical competencies in emerging economies also come from recent research, which further emphasizes the significance of these contextual filters for leader–follower relationships.

The surprising positive relationship between ostracism in the workplace and family satisfaction is the most theoretically provocative finding of the study. The positive correlation seen here suggests a compensatory mechanism in the case of COR where typically loss spirals from social exclusion are predicted. In a Pakistani context where family is the primary focus, a sense of being excluded from work could encourage workers to make more of an effort to maintain family bonds as their other important source of belonging and emotional support. This cross domain compensation extends COR theory in that resource depletion in one domain leads to resource acquisition in another domain, under certain cultural circumstances. It also defies common views of the work–family literature which assumes that ostracism always leads to negative spillover effects.

The moderating effect of the ostracism–family satisfaction relationship is absent, which further clarifies the boundary condition, and the strong main effect of organizational climate on family satisfaction is again helpful in understanding the boundary condition. Positive organizational climates create resources that enhance family life, in line with work–family enrichment perspectives. But these climates fail to shield the personal-level emotional effects of ostracism. The pattern is consistent with those studies that focus on general organizational practices (e.g., found in TQM and agile manufacturing research studies in Pakistani industries) that generally contribute to the overall well-being of the organizations without paying attention to specific interpersonal exclusion issues. The cumulative results then place cultural and institutional differences between Pakistan contexts and those examined in previous UPSB studies in the heart of the theoretical debate, instead of in the margins.

5.2. Practical Implications

The findings have clear implications for organizations in Pakistan and other emerging-economy settings. First of all, supervisor support alone will not help to reduce UPSB. Ethical leadership skills should be developed within the organization instead, and a culture fostered where unethical loyalty is not expected and is actively discouraged. Leadership Development programs need to include supporting behavior, as well as clear ethical boundaries and motivating language which builds inclusion.

Second, the impact of workplace ostracism was larger than the impact of UPSB on family outcomes. It is therefore essential that organizations put in place targeted mechanisms for identifying and tackling social exclusion, such as confidential reporting systems, inclusion training and team building efforts. Watchful monitoring of team dynamics using data, which has been demonstrated to boost operational performance in manufacturing settings in Pakistan, could be

adapted to detect early signs of ostracism. Last, investments in fair processes, open communication and supportive practices will likely increase family satisfaction, which in turn will have returns that go beyond the workplace, into the employee's personal life and well-being.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions.

A few restrictions should be noted. The cross-section, single source design limits causal inferences, but included procedural remedies. The relatively small sample size (enough for the PLS-SEM analyses performed) may have lowered the power to detect smaller effects and the convenience sample from one city (Karachi) limits generalizability. In studying sensitive behaviours like UPSB, social desirability concerns must be taken into account. Lastly, the Pakistan-specific context is an advantage in the sense that it allows for the understanding of underrepresented contexts, however, the boundary conditions presented here need to be tested in other contexts.

Longitudinal or multiwave designs should be used in future studies to determine causality and to explore the nature of these relationships across time. Additional mediators (e.g., emotional exhaustion, moral disengagement) and moderators (e.g., preferences for work-home segmentation, quality of LMX) would give a more comprehensive understanding. Comparative studies on cross-cultural differences between Pakistan and China, or other countries, would be particularly beneficial for investigating the cultural boundary conditions discussed in this study. To increase validity, multiple data sources (supervisor, peers, family member) would be used. Qualitative or mixed-methods analyses might also shed light on the compensatory mechanisms by which ostracism strikes a positive note on satisfaction in the family in collectivist contexts. Lastly, adopting lessons learnt from organizational agility, research-informed practices and sustainable leadership within one's own companies in Pakistan, provide exciting pathways to create better interventions and reduce workplace exclusion.

The results of this study provide evidence that the effects of unethical pro-supervisor actions and workplace ostracism are not necessarily identical, but are profoundly influenced by cultural, ethical, and organizational norms. The study provides insights into the positive association among ostracism and family satisfaction, and the more immediate link of social exclusion to family outcomes, thereby enriching theory and providing practical advice for developing more inclusive work environments in emerging markets.

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Appendix A: Research Questionnaire

Thank you for participating in this academic study. This questionnaire is designed to examine employees' perceptions of supervisor relationships, workplace experiences, organizational climate, and family satisfaction. All responses are anonymous and confidential and will be used solely for academic research purposes. There are no right or wrong answers. Please respond based on your current or most recent workplace experiences. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without consequence. The study has received ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section A: Demographic Information

Please provide the following information:

No.	Question	Response Options
A1	Gender	☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Prefer not to say
A2	Age group (in years)	☐ 18–25 ☐ 26–35 ☐ 36 and above
A3	Highest level of education	☐ Undergraduate ☐ Bachelor's degree ☐ Master's degree ☐ Post-graduate ☐ Other
A4	Current employment status	
	/ Industry (optional)	_____

Section B: Perceived Supervisor Support (Adapted from Sun, Shi, & Wang, 2022)

Item	Statement	Rating (1–5)
B1	My supervisor cares about my opinions and well-being.	
B2	My supervisor is willing to help me when I have work-related problems.	
B3	My supervisor values my contributions to the team.	
B4	My supervisor provides the support I need to perform my job effectively.	

Section C: Unethical Pro-Supervisor Behavior

(Adapted from Zhang & Xu, 2023)

Item	Statement	Rating (1–5)
C1	I have taken actions that benefit my supervisor even when they involved bending ethical rules.	
C2	To support my supervisor, I have withheld negative information about his/her performance from others.	
C3	I have engaged in behaviors that favor my supervisor at the potential expense of fairness to colleagues or the organization.	
C4	I have covered up mistakes made by my supervisor to protect his/her reputation.	

Section D: Workplace Ostracism

(Adapted from Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008)

Item	Statement	Rating (1–5)
D1	My supervisor has ignored my greetings or presence at work.	
D2	I have felt excluded from conversations or social interactions involving my supervisor.	
D3	My supervisor has treated me as if I were invisible or not part of the team.	
D4	I have been left out of important work-related discussions or decisions by my supervisor.	

Section E: Family Satisfaction

(Adapted from Zhang & Xu, 2024)

Item	Statement	Rating (1–5)
E1	I am satisfied with my family life.	
E2	My family life is close to ideal.	
E3	I feel happy and fulfilled in my relationships with family members.	
E4	I have a strong sense of support and belonging within my family.	

Section F: Organizational Climate

(Adapted from Zhang, Zhang, Mao, Xu, & Ma, 2023)

Item	Statement	Rating (1–5)
F1	The organization treats employees fairly and with respect.	
F2	There is open communication and opportunities for employees to voice concerns.	
F3	The organizational climate encourages different approaches to solving problems.	
F4	Employees feel supported and valued in this organization.	

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your time and valuable responses.