



# Impact of Work Regulatory Focus and Work Locus of Control on Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors in Pharmaceuticals: Mediating Role of Reflective Moral Attentiveness

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## ABSTRACT

This study intends to examine the effect of promotion work regulatory focus, external work locus of control on unethical pro-organizational behaviors and mediated role of reflective moral attentiveness in pharmaceutical sales sector of Pakistan. SEM technique was used with SPSS 23 version to analyze the data of 308 pharmaceutical sales managers of Pakistan collected through online questionnaires. The study finds the significant positive effect of promotion work regulatory focus and external work locus of control on unethical pro-organizational behaviors and significant mediated role of reflective moral attentiveness. The study is the first to examine the mediated role of reflective moral attentiveness in association of promotion work regulatory focus and external work locus of control with unethical pro-organizational behaviors in pharmaceutical sales sector of Pakistan. Managers must give the preferences to ethical matters in their team meetings and resolve the ethical dilemmas as a team. Managers must acknowledge the ethical behaviors by promoting these employees to higher positions. Managers should encourage the employees to ponder the moral issues and consider the consequences of unethical behaviors to the organization. Only those applicants should be hired displaying high level of moral attentiveness through hard-hitting ethical questions and ethical scenarios.

**Keywords:** work regulatory focus, work locus of control, unethical pro-organizational behaviors, social cognitive theory, moral attentiveness, social exchange theory, pharmaceuticals..

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Unethical pro-organizational behaviors (UPB) have received substantial attention of scholars and practitioners these years due to their conflicting nature (Miao *et al.*, 2020). UPB are unethical on one hand and at same time

they are purported to support the organization (Umphress *et al.*, 2010; Tang *et al.*, 2021). They are undesirable and bring bad name to the organization (Bryant, 2020). UPB must be curbed as they are executed in violation of ethical standards (Tang *et al.*, 2021).

Unethical practices have threatened every sector of the society but they are particularly conspicuous in pharmaceutical sales due to social implications (Malik *et al.*, 2021). The pharmaceuticals offer bribes to the doctors, services for renovation of clinics and send them abroad to attend the educational conferences (Awal *et al.*, 2021). All these tactics are employed to influence the prescription generation at the cost of patient benefit (Limbu and Huhmann, 2021). The pharmaceutical sales personnel frequently exaggerate the product benefits, hide genuine information and tell lies to the doctors to benefit the organization (Sawad, 2021).

Promotion work regulatory focus (WRF) describes the extent to which employees are motivated for the expansion, advancements and fulfillment of their aspirations (Neubert *et al.*, 2008; Cornwell, 2021). External work locus of control (WLOC) is the extent to which employees are interested in support of supervisor, rewards, bonuses, promotions to satisfy their self (Spector, 1988; Mulki, 2019).

Driving from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) promotion WRF and external WLOC are likely to transgress into UPB. In consistent with this theory employee with promotion WRF and external WLOC feel indebted to return back to the firm (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2020). This reciprocation is necessitated to maintain the trust and appreciation of employers (Umphress *et al.*, 2010). The promotion WRF and external WLOC are translated into UPB through cognitive minimization (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2020). The employees neutralize their unethical acts as if these are desired by the organizations (Khan *et al.*, 2021).

Reflective moral attentiveness (RMA) describes the extent to which one ponders and reflects on moral matters (Reynolds, 2008). Reflective moral attentiveness is believed to be a thought provoking and action oriented component of moral attentiveness (Miao *et al.*, 2020). The reflective moral attentiveness needs to be enhanced as a way to diminish UPB in pertinent with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2014).

This scholarship is the first to integrate reflective moral attentiveness as a mediating variable in association of promotion WRF and external WLOC with UPB in pharmaceutical sales sector of Pakistan. Promotion WRF and external WLOC are converted into UPB in violation of moral principles. The managers should motivate and reward the employees exhibiting ethical practices. The managers should not encourage the performance at the expense of moral standards otherwise this would send wrong message to fellow employees. The human resource department can extend tremendous role in enhancing the cognitive abilities of employees through recurrent training and development programs.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Unethical Practices in Pharmaceutics

Unethical behaviors have threatened every sector of the society including health, banking, insurance, construction, education, accounting, hospitality, auditing, transportation, automobiles but they are particularly important in pharmaceuticals because of their substantial social implications (Ahmed, 2020). Unethical behaviors are detrimental to the organizations such as stealing, misappropriating company property, misuse of time, dodging superiors, dodging customers by false promises and other notorious fraudulent scandals (Altawalbeh *et al.*, 2020). Unethical practices have haunted every segment of pharmaceuticals including procurement, distribution, drug registration, selection of drugs for public usage but they are predominantly permeating in sales segment (Cohen, 2007). The succeeding section describes six key zones in the pharmaceutical sector that are strategic decisional points and major areas for unethical practices: manufacturing of drugs, drug registration, selection of drugs for public consumption, procurement from pharmaceuticals, distribution to markets, drug sales promotion and dispensing (Cohen, 2007).

### **Unethical Practices in Manufacturing**

The production of pharmaceutical drugs requires the compliance to GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) that ensures “*that the products are consistently produced and controlled to the quality standards appropriate to their intended use and as required by the marketing authorization*”. GMP is a set of written guidelines which is updated from time to time based on newer findings (Cohen, 2007). GMP covers all areas of manufacturing (and beyond), including handling of raw materials, storage, production, packaging, and labeling. According to observations of WHO, compliance with GMP aids in reducing the perils intrinsic in drug manufacturing, particularly, cross-pollution (comprising unforeseen pollutants) and miscalculations triggered by, for example, false labeling put on bottles (Cohen, 2007).

Pakistan has a well-defined GMP standard. With the support of WHO, trainings of regulatory staff and pharmaceutical personnel have been carried out on several occasions. At this level, Pakistan is much better placed than many other developing countries (Gul *et al.*, 2021). Our problem in general is not lack of adequate regulations; it is adequate, transparent, across the board execution (Gul *et al.*, 2021). The political polarization and alignment have been made to become integral part of regulating system through political appointments and promotions of chosen ones, and transfers and sidelining of those not following in line.

### **Unethical Practices in Drug Registration and Market Authorization**

Similarly unethical practices in above mentioned zone is also exposed to unethical practices (Cohen, 2007). 1950s saw the great tragedy of a large number of limbless children born to women who were taking the drug, thalidomide. The drug was introduced as a sedative and became a popular prescription rapidly. Soon, reports of increase in limbless births started coming in but their relationship to thalidomide was not established immediately. By the time, the drug was withdrawn; number of defective births had mounted already. Even some patients kept taking what they had with them. Later, the parents of these children sued and were awarded huge compensations. Some of the children survived long into future with severe deformities and severe disabilities (Cohen, 2007). This human tragedy led to the need for a formal process for registration of drugs before marketing. The process of registration/market endorsement is done by the national drug control agency, DRAP in case of Pakistan (Malik, 2021). DRAP is responsible for evaluation of the drug efficacy against specific diseases, safety, and possible side effects (Malik, 2021). For generic drugs, bioequivalence/bioavailability may also be required in some countries, but not yet in Pakistan. Drug regulating agencies also set standards for manufacturing, storage, and distribution. To further regulate Pharma business, Drug regulating agency requires that manufacturing and selling is done by relevant license holders only; the licenses are issued by the agency (Cohen, 2007). Other areas of supply chain, use at the end consumer, and the gathering of information after the drug is sold on the market, are also controlled. The situation in Pakistan has seen a favorable evolution over time. However, our drug registration system still suffers from a host of issues, which need addressing urgently and seriously (Malik, 2021).

### **Unethical Practices in Selection of Drugs**

The section describes the susceptibility of this point to malpractices. Pakistan allocates a fair amount of budget every year for public healthcare (Ahmed, 2020). It covers procurement of medicines, medical disposables, medical equipment and running of public healthcare infrastructure (Gul *et al.*, 2021). It is a huge structure with billions of rupees in funding. Public procurement procedures have undergone several revisions as the new learning came in and new guidelines were available. Current set of rules known as ‘Public Procurement Rules’ is a set of elaborate policies and procedures, the purpose of which is to select products on merit and guard against corruption in the process (Gul *et al.*, 2021). However, it should be understood that where large sums of money are involved, the entire system conspires to make corruption possible. The concerned staff devises ingenious ways to beat the system. Another factor that sustains corruption in countries like Pakistan under all

circumstances is the compulsion to do so (Gul *et al.*, 2021). The entire chain from bottom to top lives beyond legitimate means thanks to illegitimate income. If they stop earning the wrong way, they will not be able to maintain their standard of living. So, the corruption goes on unabated, so that the life of rich and not-so-famous is maintained. Drug manufacturers are to be blamed equally (Nishtar, 2007). They desire that their drugs be procured in bulk by the government, whether they qualify or not (Nishtar, 2007). They make cartels, they join hands with procurement staff, and they backstab their fellow drug makers to get a large piece of cake (Gul *et al.*, 2021).

### **Unethical Practices in Procurements**

The procurements are highly exposed to unethical practices (Cohen, 2007). Purchasing is the foremost link between the public structure and medicine providers, and its objective is to purchase the precise number of medicines in the maximum economical way (Cohen, 2007). Governmental roles in this decisional area comprises: inventory managing, cumulative buying, public bid competitions, procedural scrutiny of proposals, the appropriate distribution of resources, payments, receiving the medicines acquired and qualitative checks (Cohen, 2007). Procurements show frequently poor documentations and processing, which makes it a cool point for corrupt practices (Cohen, 2007). The purchasing of public financed drugs supply is mostly exposed to corrupt practices as the quantities are high. To make this process transparent, the succeeding administrations in Pakistan have been introducing several technical checks. If there is an absence of moral authority in the procurements, potential adversarial outcomes comprise favoring of one provider through the restrictive competition or the ignoring unfair specifications, buying of unsuitable drugs and overpaying the drugs (Cohen, 2007).

### **Unethical Practices in Distributional Function**

This section describes how this point is exposed to corrupt practices (Cohen, 2007). Be it is a governmental organization or a private firm that is engaged on contract by the administration to distribute drugs, the systems need to ascertain the in time and safer distribution of correct volumes of medicines to health centers and pharmacy shops where deliveries are required (Cohen, 2007). Delivery and inventory overheads can comprise a substantial extent of the selling prices of a product, particularly when products are transported to distant sites or wherever poor competition results in unsuitable mark-ups by merchants and sellers (Cohen, 2007). Good Delivery Practices standardizes necessities for employees, documentations, premises and tools. Just one component of distribution such as poorer storing settings can result in damages due to both the deviation (corrupt intents) and expiries of products (Cohen, 2007). Qualitative principles must be upheld in storing services, and should include preservation units for assuring the reliability of the products and good security to reduce the menace of theft.

### **Unethical Practices in Prescriptions and Dispensing**

This section describes how this area is prone to unethical practices. Drug prescription and dispensing involves doctors, chemists, nurses, and other health-care workers for diagnosis of patient problem and deciding what medications patients should follow (if any) to treat a certain ailment (Nishtar, 2007). This is the decisional point where the sufferers should perceive the advantages of the whole system, if it is working effectively. Patients must get the correct drug at the accurate time and with the proper information (Gul *et al.*, 2021). The patients may not always get the most suitable medicine for his/her illness because the decisions may be influenced by factors other than the appropriateness (Cohen, 2007).

The developed countries have adopted a system in which the prescribing function has been separated from dispensing function. The doctors do not get any financial benefit by prescribing a more costly drug or more quantities of a drug. The dispensing decision is taken by the dispensing pharmacist who may also offer cheaper

generic version to a patient if he agrees. Exemptions may sometimes be permitted for rural doctors where they may be allowed to dispense also (Cohen, 2007).

A problematic area in many countries is the opportunities for unethical practices between doctors and drug providers in terms of undue influence on drug prescribing habits (Nishtar, 2007). Doctors' contact with the pharmaceutical representatives was related with repeated demands for extra drugs on hospital formulary and changes in prescription practices (Nishtar, 2007). The effect of industry on doctor prescription practices has raised concerns worldwide but it is predominantly prominent in developing states wherever doctors are normally not compensated well and legal or professional morals are not established well (Nishtar, 2007). A WHO reported on medicine advertising that in the USA, nearly US\$22 billion was consumed on promotion in 2002. The identical report highlights that the pharmaceutical industry is frequently the single source of drug information for health care workers in emerging countries (Cohen, 2007).

The drug regulatory authority is extending its role in bringing transparency into the system but a lot needs to be done to prevent the manipulation of pharmaceuticals (Malik, 2021). The pharmaceuticals offer kickbacks, services for the refurbishment of clinics and luxurious items to influence the doctors for drug support (Khowaja, 2020; Sawad, 2021). The pharmaceuticals offer sponsored visits to attend the educational conferences within country and abroad, arrange birthday celebrations, negotiate company sponsored cars and deliver medical equipment inscribed specifically with doctor names to manipulate the prescriptions from doctors (Khushi Muhammad *et al.*, 2020; Arun, 2021; Limbu, 2021).

Scholars are increasingly focused on UPB due to their contradictory nature (Tang *et al.*, 2021). They are unethical, purported to benefit the organizations and organizational members (Miao *et al.*, 2020). The UPB are unacceptable as these are performed in violation of moral principles (Graham *et al.*, 2015). These behaviors bring benefits to the organization in short time but are damaging in the long run and must be thwarted (Bryant, 2020). UPB include amplifying the product benefits to doctors, hiding genuine information of the product from doctors, telling lies to the doctors about product and not issuing refund to the customers accidentally overcharged (Awal *et al.*, 2021; Malik *et al.*, 2021).

UPB are prosocially driven from self to others (Bryant, 2020). Though they are oriented from self to others, the element of self-interest is not altogether excluded from such tendencies to support the organization (Miao *et al.*, 2020). We contend that the employees are likely to execute UPB to qualify for promotion, monetary incentives organizationally sponsored perks and supervisory support.

### **Promotion Work Regulatory Focus and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors**

Work regulatory focus describes the goal attainment approaches of the employees at work (Neubert *et al.*, 2008). Persons with prevention WRF tend to be more security conscious; exhibit duty bound conduct and are inclined to prevent losses while individuals with promotion WRF are predisposed to gains, fulfilling aspirations and advancements (Neubert *et al.*, 2008). One study has investigated preventive focus in context of UPB (Bryant, 2020) while another examined promotion focus in backdrop of UPB (Graham *et al.*, 2015). Recently scholars have studied both foci in context of sales performance (Khan, 2021). The relationship of promotion WRF with UPB is best explained in terms of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). In pertinent with this theory, we argue that promotion focused employees are disposed to provide more benefits to the organization to qualify rewards and advancement on the job. Further they are motivated to reciprocate to the organization on securing rewards and acquiring promotion. This reciprocation is necessitated to sustain mutually favorable relationships (Blau, 1964). We argue that pharmaceutical sales persons with promotion focus are more probably to engage in UPB to realize sales targets that will ensure incentives and subsequent promotion. The sales staff offers expensive items, kickbacks and other personalized services to the doctors in their persuasive efforts to achieve targets (Awal *et al.*, 2021; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Sawad and Andrews, 2021). They would even exaggerate about

the products, hide factual information, and sell expired or inferior drugs to the doctors (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2021). We contend that higher the promotion WRF, higher is the likelihood of executing UPB. Hence we suggest the hypothesis given below.

**H1:** Promotion regulatory focus is positively related to unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

### **External Work Locus of Control and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors**

Work locus of control describes the work beliefs. Locus of control is defined as a generalized expectation that rewards, extra facilities or outcomes in life are governed either by one's own activities termed *internality* or by other powers termed *externality* (Spector, 1988). In organizational backgrounds, rewards or outcomes comprise up gradations, advantageous conditions, salary raises and overall career progression (Spector, 1988). One study has examined internal and external locus of control in context of work ethics (Siswanto, S., & Darus, 2020). External WLOC designates one's inclination towards fortune and luck (Mulki, 2019). Employees with external locus of control look out to privileges, perks, amenities, supervisory support for job satisfaction whereas employees with internal locus of control believe in their intrinsic rewards for job satisfaction (Mulki, 2019). Scholars have studied external locus of control in association with UPB (Tang *et al.*, 2020). Drawing from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the persons with external WLOC are more likely to engage in UPB. We argue that the employees with external WLOC tend to return the corporations to sustain reciprocally advantageous relationships with organization. The reciprocity is considered essential to gain the trust and recognition of the organization (Tang *et al.*, 2020). We argue that pharmaceutical sales people are under stress to achieve their monthly, quarterly and yearly targets to qualify for rewards (Awal, 2021). They put utmost persuasive efforts on the doctors to influence their support for medicines (Gamil *et al.*, 2021; Sawad, 2021). They would negotiate deals, offer services for the renovation of offices, and offer other luxurious items (Limbu, 2021; Malik *et al.*, 2021). We contend that pharmaceutical people are fully focused on their sales targets discounting ethical standards to give the benefit to the organization at the cost of patient benefit. We argue that greater is the external WLOC, greater is the likelihood of engaging in UPB. Therefore we propose

**H2:** External locus of control is positively related to unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

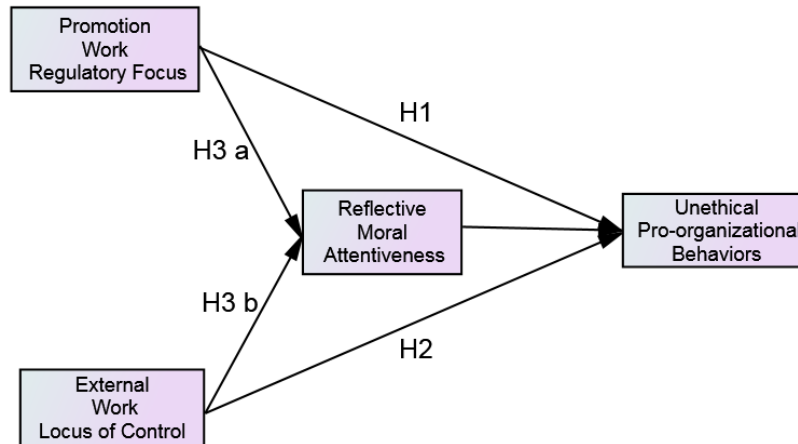
### **The Mediating Role Reflective Moral Attentiveness**

Moral attentiveness is composed of two dimensions (Reynolds, 2008). Perceptual moral attentiveness describes the extent to which one recognizes the moral issue whereas reflective moral attentiveness describes the extent to which one ponders and is cognizant of consequences of moral matters (Reynolds, 2008; Halbasi *et al.*, 2021). Reflective moral attentiveness is believed to be thought provoking and action inciting component of moral attentiveness (Miao *et al.*, 2020). Reflective moral attentiveness is incorporated in context of UPB in very important studies (Miao *et al.*, 2020). People with promotion WRF and external WLOC are more likely to engage in UPB in utter indifference to moral principles (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2020). These employees feel indebted to pay back to the organizations going through a process termed cognitive depreciation in pertinent with social cognitive theory. The employees reason that these acts are justified and desired by the organizations to endure the relationships packed with trust and approval (Bryant, 2020). This neutralization of unethical acts is indispensable to evade self-condemnation and self-disrespect (Dong *et al.*, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2021; Tang *et al.*, 2021). We argue that in pharmaceuticals sales personnel high on promotion WRF and external WLOC employ various tactics to influence the prescription support of doctors transgressing the ethical boundaries merely to benefit the organization and eventually compromising the patient benefit. The pharmaceuticals offer fully sponsored visits to abroad to attend educational conferences, offer expensive items

and refurbish the doctor chamber (Gul *et al.*, 2021; Limbu and Huhmann, 2021a; Malik *et al.*, 2021). The pharmaceutical sales persons habitually hide real information from doctors; often over stress product and tell a lie to benefit the organization (Awal *et al.*, 2021; 2021; Sawad and Andrews, 2021). We contend that high promotion WRF and external WLOC are more probably translated into UPB due to dearth of reflective moral attentiveness. Therefore we propose the following hypothesis

**H3a & 3b:** Reflective moral attentiveness mediates the association between promotion regulator focus, external locus of control and unethical pro-organizational behaviors.

The following figure research framework shows the interrelationships of these variables.



**Figure 1.** Research Framework.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of promotion regulatory focus and external WLOC on UPB through reflective moral attentiveness in pharmaceutical sales sector of Pakistan. The cross sectional data was collected from national & multinational pharmaceutical sales managers through online surveys from all over Pakistan. The respondents comprised of middle and higher level managers in sales management. The data of 308 respondents was then subjected to SEM analysis. Under the hypothesis of "close fit" that RMSEA is no larger than .05 in the population, the likelihood of achieving a sample RMSEA as big as .634 is .000. The detail of measuring instruments used in the study is as under

#### Unethical Pro-Organizational Behaviors

UPB was weighed with a six-item instrument by Umphress, *et al.* (2010). Items assessed respondents' agreement of their readiness to execute UPB on a 5 point scale. According to Umphress, (2010), the UPB scale has excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach alpha factor reported of 0.89. In the existing study, the Cronbach alpha figure was .88. Some sample items include; *if required, I would hide information from the community that might be detrimental to my firm* and *if my firm required me to, I would hold back issuing a reimbursement to a customer or client unintentionally overcharged.*

The 6 items of the UPB scale were also put to principal components analysis (PCA) with SPSS version 23. Before the execution of PCA, the fitness of data for PCA was considered. Examination of the correlation table showed the occurrence of entire numbers above .3. The KMO digit was .89, above the endorsed figure of .6 and Bartlett's Test touched significant value, giving the support to the factoring of the relationship matrix.

PCA exposed the manifestation of solitary constituent with eigenvalues surpassing 1, explaining 62.12 of the variance. A review of the screeplot showed a perfect disruption after the first component. This was also reinforced by the outcomes of Parallel Analysis, which presented one component with eigenvalues above the equivalent standard values for a randomly produced data matrix of the equal size (6 items  $\times$  308 sample size). The explanation of the single component was in accordance with preceding research on the UPB scale (Umphress, *et al.* 2010).

### Promotion Work Regulatory Focus

Promotion focus was assessed by a nine item scale developed by (Neubert *et al.*, 2008) on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Approving to Neubert *et al.*, (2008) the scale has very fine internal consistency, with alpha value of 0.91. In the present study, the alpha factor was 0.91 for this scale. A few sample items are; *I expend a great deal of time visualizing how to achieve my targets and at job, i am encouraged by my hopes and ambitions.*

### Reflective Moral Attentiveness

Reflective moral attentiveness was evaluated by five items validated by (Reynolds, 2008) on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Agreeing to Reynolds, (2008) the scale has very decent internal consistency, with alpha coefficient of 0.85. In the present study, the alpha figure was 0.93 for this scale. A few sample items include; *I frequently reflect on the ethical aspects of my choices and I like to ponder about ethics.*

### External Work Locus of Control

External WLOC was assessed by a four item short scale, established by Spector, (1988) on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree very much) to 6 (agree very much). Sample items include: *The key distinction between persons who generate a lot of money and persons who generate a little money is fortune and It takes a lot of fortune to be an exceptional worker on maximum jobs.* According to Spector, (1988) work locus of control has superb internal consistency, with a reliability coefficient of 0.83. In this study, the reliability factor was 0.94 for external WLOC.

## 4. RESULTS

### Descriptive analysis

The following table presents the number of males and females in each age group. The sample size of 308 consists of 63(20%) females and 245(80%) males. The study finds no significant age and gender differences in performing the UPB.

**Table1. Age \* Gender.**

		Gender		Total
		Male	Female	
age	<= 41	77	16	93
	42 - 48	113	33	146
	49+	55	14	69
Total		245	63	308



The table 2 below gives the minimum, maximum, mean estimates, dispersion estimates, and distribution estimates of entire study variables. All data points of the external locus of control are present between 1 and 6 as this variable is measured on 6 point likert scale. The mean estimates are given in descending order. The variance of external locus of control is estimated to be 2.42. The skewness values suggest that data points are somewhat tilted towards the higher side rightwards. Moreover data are not as such peaked rather flattened with more data points tapering towards the tails.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics.**

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
External WLOC	1	6	3.74	1.56	2.42	-.34	-1.59
UPB	2	5	3.35	.92	.84	-.23	-1.4
RMA	1	5	3.30	1.12	1.26	-.26	-1.61
Promotion WRF	1	5	3.20	.92	.85	-.32	-1.53

### Correlations

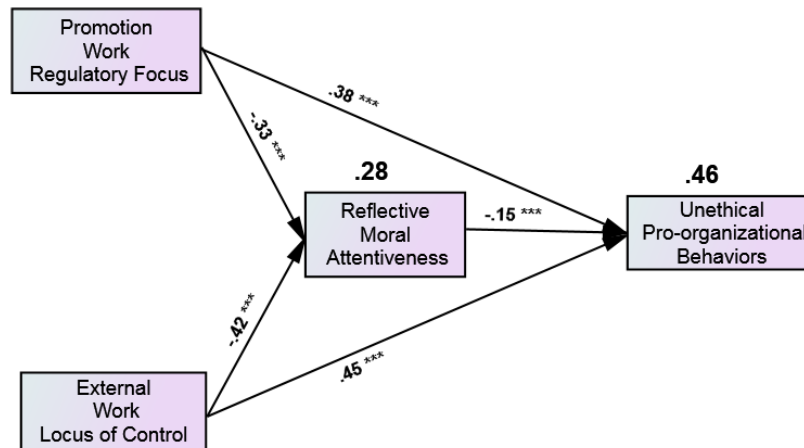
Promotion focus and external WLOC display strong positive relationships with UPB while both these predictors show strong negative relationships with reflective moral attentiveness at significance level of 0.01. The table 3 below presents the direction and strength of interrelationships of these study variables. The reliability alpha coefficients are also presented in parentheses.

**Table 3. Correlations.**

	1	2	3	4
<b>UPB</b>	(.88)			
<b>RMA</b>	-.545**	(.93)		
<b>Promotion WRF</b>	.643**	-.528**	(.91)	
<b>External WLOC</b>	.676**	-.562**	.577**	(.94)

### SEM Analysis

The figure 2 below depicts the statistically significant relationships among the study variables. With the one standard deviation (.92) rise in promotion WRF; there is corresponding increase (.38) in UPB. This supports our first hypothesis that promotion WRF is positively related to UPB. This also supports the social exchange theory perspective (Blau, 1964) as well as previous studies demonstrating promotion focus as an important predictor of unethical behaviors (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Valle *et al.*, 2019; Cornwell and Korenman, 2021).



**Figure 2.** Standardized Estimates.

From the figure 2 above it is evident that external WLOC predicts UPB significantly. With one standard deviation (1.56) increase in external WLOC, there is conforming increase of .45 standard deviation units in UPB thus generating the support our second hypothesis. This also supports Blau's (1964) social exchange theory as well as earlier research on this relationship (Tang *et al.*, 2020).

The figure 2 reveals the reflective moral attentiveness' significant mediation in association of promotion focus and external WLOC with UPB. This demonstrates that promotion focus and external WLOC are transformed into UPB in disregard of moral principles thereby establishing our hypotheses 3. This also generates the support to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2014) as well as earlier work on moral attentiveness as a way to reduce prevalent UPB (Miao *et al.*, 2020; Dong *et al.*, 2021; Tang *et al.*, 2021).

Figure 2 also displays squared multiple correlations. It is estimated that promotion focus and external WLOC both explain 28% variance in UPB signifying the error variance around 72% while 46% variance in UPB is explained by all three predictors suggesting the error variance approximately 54%. The predicted total effect of promotion WRF and external WLOC on UPB including direct and mediated effects is about .43 and .51 respectively whereas it is  $-.15$  for reflective moral attentiveness. In summary promotion WRF and external WLOC positively affect UPB and reflective moral attentiveness significantly mediates in between the relationships.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

UPB are described as pro-social behaviors intended to benefit the organizational members (Bryant, 2020). UPB are beneficial for short period of time but are detrimental in the long run and might incur reputational and financial losses to the organization (Graham *et al.*, 2015; Valle *et al.*, 2019). These behaviors are unacceptable; therefore efforts must be directed to thwart them in view of social repercussions (Tang *et al.*, 2021). Unethical behaviors have challenged the organizations but these are particularly significant in pharmaceuticals and health caring systems meant to serve the patient benefit (Khowaja and Feroz, 2020; Khushi Muhammad *et al.*, 2020). Unethical practices are emergent in manufacturing, drug registration, selection of drugs for public usage, procurement procedures, distribution but this research focused on unethical practices perpetrated in highly susceptible pharmaceutical sales segment (Cohen, 2007). The pharmaceuticals offer kickbacks, bargain incentives, offer sponsored visits to abroad, deal sponsored cars, even offer services for the renovation of clinics (Nishtar, 2007). The research has identified promotion WRF and external WLOC as significant predictors of UPB pharmaceutical sales segment. The individuals with high promotion WRF and external WLOC are likely to engage in UPB in violation of moral standards conforming to the social exchange theory

(Graham *et al.*, 2015; Tang *et al.*, 2020). We have stressed the significant role reflective moral attentiveness in lessening UPB in consistent with social cognitive theory (Miao *et al.*, 2020; Dong *et al.*, 2021; Halbusi *et al.*, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2021). The subsidence of unethical practices in pharmaceutical sales segment would ultimately ensures patient benefit (Arun, 2021; Awal *et al.*, 2021; Gamil, 2021; Gul *et al.*, 2021; Limbu, 2021; Malik, 2021; Malik *et al.*, 2021; Sawad, 2021) The pharmaceutical managers must ensure that sales personnel high on promotion WRF and external WLOC let the doctors prescribe uninfluenced and unbiased.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Our research adds to the theory in many ways. Firstly promotion focused individuals aspire growth, advancement and up gradation (Yanzi, 2021). They are likely to engage in UPB to maintain exchange relationships with their organization (Graham *et al.*, 2015). Likewise individuals with external WLOC seek out to rewards, bonuses, incentives, supervisor support and other extrinsic rewards to gratify their fortune orientation (Mulki, 2019). They would probably implicate in UPB to ascertain exchange relationships (Tang *et al.*, 2020). According to social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) when one part is giving the benefits, the other party feel obliged to reciprocate to endure the mutually beneficial relationships.

Secondly in accordance with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2014), Individuals with promotion WRF and external WLOC are likely to transgress into UPB through cognitive minimization. They neutralize their unethical acts as if these acts are looked for by the organization (Miao *et al.*, 2020; Tang *et al.*, 2021). This neutralization is essential as a conduit to escape self-denigration (Dong *et al.*, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2021). Therefore we establish that organizational managers need to improve the cognitive abilities (reflective moral attentiveness) of their employees to diminish UPB.

### **Practical Implications**

The study has stressed the contribution of reflective moral attentiveness in reducing the prevailing UPB. As a first step to reduce UPB, the managers should recognize that UPB exist and are detrimental to the organizational existence (Dong *et al.*, 2021). The managers should realize to their subordinates that UPB cause reputational harm to the organizations; result in customer loss and finally financial damages (Dong *et al.*, 2021). The managers should themselves be a role model for cultivating a culture of ethics in the organizations. The HR department should frequently organize manager training & development programs so that employees can vicariously learn from their superiors' ethical behaviors (Halbusi *et al.*, 2021). The managers should encourage the performance as well as ethical behaviors simultaneously (Miao *et al.*, 2020). When managers motivate the subordinates to give just the performance disregarding ethical aspects, this will undoubtedly send a wrong message to the employees and is tantamount to promote UPB (Tang *et al.*, 2021). The managers should bring the ethical dilemmas to the attention of subordinates and try to solve ethical problems as a team. The managers should encourage the employees to ponder and reflect on the ethically dubious situations (Khan *et al.*, 2021). The rewards should be announces to those employees displaying high level of ethical adherence and those not observing ethical codes must be rebuked. The HR department should place the employees with high moral attentiveness at strategic positions (Dong *et al.*, 2021). The HR department need to recruit employees who exhibit thoughtfulness and on the basis of analytical abilities. This can be accomplished using psychometric tests and putting ethical questions to the aspirants and through case based scenarios (Miao *et al.*, 2020).

### **Potential Limitations & Future Research**

This research is not without few limitations just like other researches. First the research is focused on pharmaceutical sales sector in Pakistan. There could be the issue of generalizability. We advise future researchers to replicate the research in other segments of pharmaceuticals such as procurement, distribution,

manufacturing, drug registrations, selection of drugs for public consumption apart from prescription generation and dispensing which also confronted with unethical practices (Cohen, 2007). We recommend that future researchers repeat the research in other sectors such as hospitality, education, accounting, construction, tourism, transportation, audit, banking, insurance, automobiles all threatened with unethical practices. We strongly encourage that future researchers investigate highly vulnerable health caring system with lurking unscrupulous practices (Nishtar, 2007). We also recommend the future researchers to repeat the research in other countries where pharmaceuticals use persuasive efforts aggressively to influence the doctors for prescription generation. We advise the future researchers to incorporate other potential antecedents in context of UPB and also investigate other mediators, moderators suggestive of curtailing UPB. We also recommend that future researchers use 7-point likert scale to increase the variability in responses. Finally future researchers could examine the actual decision making within organizations instead of merely relying on the perceptions of respondents.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

We establish that promotion focus and external locus of control are significant predictors of UPB whereas reflective moral attentiveness acts as significant mediator. UPB should not be allowed to lurk due to their social implications in pharmaceutical sales sector. The managers need to ensure that promotion work regulatory focus and external work locus of control do not transform into UPB. Particularly the pharmaceutical sales manager should not encourage the performance at the cost of ethical standards as this would jeopardize patient right to receive impartial, cost effective, quality driven treatment. The HR department needs to continuously improve the cognitive abilities of the employees as a way to diminish UPB.

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