

**Critical Review of Unethical Pro-organisational Behavior (UPB): Towards A  
Conceptual Framework**

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**Abstract**

**Purpose** - Literature presents a dichotomy between positive and negative workplace behaviors with a general belief that the former benefits the organization whereas the latter tend to harm organisational goals. Scholarship on positive workplace behaviors include organisational commitment, loyalty, helping behaviors, organisational citizenship behaviors (OCB) to name a few. On the other hand, negative workplace behaviors include counter-productive work behaviors (CWB), deviant behaviors such as aggression, bullying and other such acts of workplace incivility. However, there exists an overlapping 'grey' area, Unethical Pro-Organisational Behavior (UPB), understood as both citizenship or deviant behavior, and has the potential to extend the existing conceptualization of bad behaviors within the organization. The present paper attempts to understand and unravel the triggers/factors leading to UPB, thereby creating a conceptual framework.

**Design/methodology/approach** - The paper provides a critical review of developments in academic as well as in practitioner literature in the field of ethical behavior and thereby, develops a conceptual framework highlighting the factors for promotion and prevention of unethical pro-organisational behavior (UPB).

**Findings** – Considering the rigorous analyses of work in both academic and practitioner literature, the paper develops a conceptual framework highlighting the factors for promotion and prevention of unethical pro-organisational behavior (UPB). The findings of the critical review outlines triggers which promote UPB organization-specific, job-specific, team-specific, leadership-specific, and employee-specific factors and thus, also presents suggestive interventions/approaches for prevention and control of UPB.

**Practical implications** – Human resource (HR) managers help foster measures to promote positive employee behaviors where the employee goes beyond the role expectations to benefit organization. The paper provides implications for both researchers and practitioners to understand where to draw the line between pro-organisational and unethical employee behaviors. A better understanding of UPB and its underlying mechanism can help create awareness that not all pro-organisational behaviors are beneficial for the organizations in the long run, on the contrary, it may be detrimental instead. It may help HR managers to design interventions at individual, job and organisational level to prevent and control UPB.

**Originality/value:** The paper offers insights into the concept of unethical pro-organization behavior and links to the larger concept of organizational wrongdoing. This dimension of employee behavior is largely underscored in literature, however, recently, with the increasing importance of responsible business and ethical code-of-conduct; scholars have highlighted that organizations and managers should start taking cognizance of its existence in subtle forms at unethical workplace behaviors.

**Keywords:** ethics; unethical; pro-organisational behavior; citizenship behaviors; UPB