

The Dark Side of Leadership as a Predictor of Employees Unethical Behavior in the Context of Thailand

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Abstract

There are numerous factors that create unethical work behavior. These unethical work behaviors badly affect the organizations. Organization should make effort to recognize and mitigate the effect of factors that foster the sense of unethical work behavior among employees. For this reason, the purpose of the study is to measure the effect of moral justification and supervisor ostracism on unethical work behavior including the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion and facades of conformity. The sample size was 180 from the service sector of Thailand. For data collection random sampling technique was used. The questionnaire was measured on five-point Likert scale. The findings of the study showed that emotional exhaustion have significant effect on unethical work behavior. The effect of facades of conformity on unethical work behavior is significant. The effect of MJ on unethical work behavior is significant. The effect of supervisor ostracism on emotional exhaustion is significant. The effect of supervisor ostracism on facades of conformity is significant. The full mediating effect of emotional exhaustion between supervisor ostracism and unethical work behavior is significant. The full mediating effect of FOF between SO and unethical work behavior is significant. The current study suggested that in future a moderator such as task-related relations need to be examined in order to get the more significant results in the literature of leadership and employee's behaviors.

Keywords: Supervisor Ostracism, Moral Justification, Emotional Exhaustion, Unethical Work Behavior, Facades of Conformity

Introduction

Human beings, as friendly characters, rely on the relations they have with them, either at home or at work (Brock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005). As human beings, individuals assess how they are treated, especially by those who supervise them, and this assessment largely determines their workplace behavior (Zhang, Sun, Lin, & Ren, 2020). On the same note, human as a social being, have the inherent right to be included and recognized as a group member (Ali & Jaaffar, 2020). As social beings, the breakdown of social relations between people in situations that involve exclusion produces a low sense of belonging and causes real harm, as the feeling of being excluded by others is equal to the perception of severe pain (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Thus, this social isolation type, also called ostracism K. Williams (2001), it further suggests that these processes are pervasive in everyday life and actually happen throughout a wide

variety of social settings at the workplace. Ferris, Brown, Berry, and Lian (2008) experience of ostracism in the workplace is described as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others” (p. 1348). Moreover, Ferris et al. (2008) has examined the adverse impact of exclusion on the workplace and found the negative relation between ostracism and job attitudes such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction and in-role job performance.

Moreover, previously research has also examined the ostracism with the deviant behaviors of employees at work for example abusing, making fun of a coworker or to fail to obey the orders of the supervisor Ferris et al. (2008); previous literature also showed that workers who have been ostracized at work are less inclined to become engaged in group and social behaviors (Balliet & Ferris, 2013). Further, according to Kaptein (2008) unethical behavior is a threat to the reputation of business firms. As a result, Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006) stated that stakeholders, governments and non-governmental organizations are growing pressure on business organizations to better achieve UB of employees at workplace.

Problem Statement

Fraud is a phenomenon that has taken place globally including Thailand. Transparency International placed Thailand at 107 out of 175 countries with Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 34 which is below from Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand (Wicaksono & Urumsah, 2017). The CPI rates countries on the basis of how much there is corruption in the service sector. The scale of CPI values starts from 0 (highly corrupted) to 100 (very clean). The low score of the Thai CPI has been concluded that Thailand is a country with the many cases of fraud among the countries of South East Asia.

In the context of Thailand, according to the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) 2014 report, 42% of employee-level fraud has been observed, administrators committed 36 % of fraud and 19 % of owners / managers committed fraud (Manurung & Hardika, 2015). When it comes to medium loss, the owner / managers had suffered most, although it had the smallest number of fraud cases. Their actual loss is nearly 4 times higher than the average loss caused by managers and almost seven times which is caused by employees.

On the basis of industry, mining industry had fewest cases of corruption with 13 cases, but in spite of the fact that this industry suffered the greatest losses, in 2014; the mining sector suffered an estimated loss of \$900,000 from theft. Moreover, there were 244 incidents of theft causing small damages of \$200,000 in the banking and financial services sectors (Manurung & Hardika, 2015)

Thus, the purpose of the study is to measure the effect of moral justification and supervisor ostracism on unethical work behavior including the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion, facades of conformity in Thai service sector.

Literature Review

Unethical Work Behavior

Unethical work behavior (UWB) is defined as "either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community" (Fehr, Fulmer, & Keng-Highberger, 2020). Studies show that people show deviance from existing social standards while engaging in unethical actions (Paterson & Huang, 2019). Earlier study investigated various forms of unethical and deviant behaviors such as cheating, lie, fraud etc (Treviño et al., 2006). Researchers found that abuse of supervisors' results in divergent behavior (Lu, Lee, Gino, & Galinsky, 2020). Unethical work behavior is popular and a part of the business community. In previous studies the employees are likely to be unethical (e.g. cheating) when they experience unfair treatment from management (Houser, Vetter, & Winter, 2012). Other unethical behaviors cover a broad range of actions, including failure to comply with orders, usage of drug, and show abusive behavior in the place of work. They were categorized as interpersonal and organizational depending on whether they were

directed at individuals or at the organization, and also based on the degree of intensity varying from minor (favoritism) to extreme (abusive behavior and robbery) (Bennett & Robinson, 2000). These unethical actions were further categorized into extra organizational and intra-organizational behavior (Lu et al., 2020). Many scholars Appelbaum, Shapiro, and Molson (2006) refer to a distinction between harmful and unethical work behavior. Unethical work behavior focuses on breaking social norms, while deviant behaviors are all about defiance of organizational norms. Though, difference isn't always obvious. Behaviors stimulated by loyalty and commitment to the organization, like engaging in misleading dumping toxic waste in a river, could be considered unethical but not deviant. Contrarily, disobeying or whistle-blowing such orders could be taken ethical but deviant based on social or organization.

Supervisor Ostracism

According to Ferris et al. (2008) Ostracism is defined as “the extent to which individuals perceive that they are ignored or excluded by others”. Ostracism tells of one's feelings of being shunned, disconnected, neglected and unacknowledged (Sommer, Williams, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2001). Previous research has highlighted ostracism as a universal phenomenon in the place of work (De Clercq, Haq, & Azeem, 2019). Ostracism in the workplace can be supervisor ostracism (SO) as well as ostracism among coworkers which is regard as co-workers ostracism (Williams & Zadro, 2001). The SO affects the working behavior of workers strongly in comparison to the ostracism of subordinates (Zhao, Chen, Glambek, & Einarsen, 2019). On the same note, Jahanzeb, Fatima, and Malik (2018) further explained SO as “the extent to which supervisors ignore employees’ views, avoid eye contact or disregard them in their work activities”. Zhao et al. (2019) found that effect of SO on employee behavior. The influence of SO on knowledge hoarding behavior of employees was examined by some researcher. Further, Jahanzeb et al. (2018), investigated the impact of SO on emotional exhaustion while using the mediating role of threat to efficacy needs and defensive silence Following the same, have studied five leading ostracism categories; generally "ignoring, neglect, exclusion, differential treatment and undermining". Bastian and Haslam (2010) argued that in SO, when workers are at risk of losing vital resources, they seek to preserve those resources by concealing their true selves. This form of supervisor behavior makes workers feel socially isolated, unwelcome and emotionless. As a result, workers lose their meaningful existence and tend to build up facades.

Facades of Conformity

New workers get signs of acceptable organizational values during their socialization process in the organization and, in the event of a conflict between organizational and personal values; they begin to obey the rules regarding corporate values and goals by suppressing their personal values in order to obtain recognition and approval at job (Hewlin, 2003). In addition, a conformity façade is characterized as embracing organizational values. While developing façades of conformity could also be unconscious behavior, the main focus of current research has been on conscious actions in which people are aware of the degree to which they suppress personal values and pretend to accept values of the organization For instance, employees may not disclose differences in policy, and may pretend to have coherent views along with the other employees of the organization (Hewlin, 2009). They may also claim to support the organization's overall strategy regarding the management of diversity, sustainability or the performance requirements of the company (Stormer & Devine, 2008). Further, development of conformity façades as actions associated with the impression management, since individuals who develop façades try to influence the perceptions of others.

The conformity facades concentrate on the general concern of participants trying to fit into an organizational climate in which they feel that their personal beliefs are not congruent with those that are highly acceptable within the firm. FOC is the outcome of leader’s dark behavior (Hewlin, Dumas, & Burnett, 2017). Hewlin (2009) found that perceived non-participatory working climate and minority status motivated workers to create FOC. So, when supervisors

ignore followers and ignore their participation in organizational work, followers are tempted to set up FOCs.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is characterized as a state of depletion of resources, when a people could no longer make a great physical or mental effort (Keller, Chang, Becker, Goetz, & Frenzel, 2014). Therefore, when workers become resourced and emotionally exhausted, they appear to neglect the rules of organization, morals (Thau & Mitchell, 2010). Exhausted workers also decreased their cognitive, social and emotional resources. For example, they may have a conscious attempt to delay their job, destroy resources of businesses, and threaten their credibility which causes economic costs and exchange of confidential details of the employed firm with other organization. The usage of the denial coping strategy by employees has often suggested that there is emotional exhaustion that contributes to interpersonal instability in workplaces such as deviant workplace behaviors at and work and CWB (Van Jaarsveld, Walker, & Skarlicki, 2010) depletion of control resources has been suggested as an important reason for employees to engage in more deviant behavior. Workers are more inclined to participate in unacceptable or unnecessary behaviors if they neglect their energy due to emotional exhaustion then they may lack the ability to control these behaviors. In addition, workers must exercise self-control because they are faced with conflicting demands from their roles, organizations and clients (Lussier & Hartmann, 2017). Such conditions may adversely affect ethical behavior at the macroeconomic (industrial) and microeconomic (individual) levels (Kadic-Maglajlic, Micevski, Lee, Boso, & Vida, 2019). Such various job requirements and difficulties make emotional exhaustion almost an unavoidable challenge for employees in the organization (Jaramillo, Mulki, & Boles, 2011). Since the excessive energy is needed to do "the right thing" when facing the job related tasks which can lead to self-control depletion and since self-control deficiency decreases the ability to reduce temptation, such mechanisms could also lead to unwanted behaviors which covers the range of unethical behavior (Gino, Schweitzer, Mead, & Ariely, 2011).

Moral Justification

Moral justification (MJ) includes the recognizing of the behavior. In other words, people often have no intention of engaging in unethical work behavior once they have justified the moralities of their behavior for oneself (Niven & Healy, 2016). Unethical work behavior is thus personally and culturally acceptable through portrayal of it for valuable or ethical reasons. This definition is a similar concept to the notion by (Kraus, 2006), which says that by enticing for belonging, people mitigate their misdeed or "necessary evils" (Molinsky & Margolis, 2005). On the other hand as regards to being morally aware, employees with access to MJ can interpret the moral strength of a question differently by fixing the damage and/or social consensus involved. In other words, Bonner, Greenbaum, and Mayer (2016) people know that ethical values must be compromised for more important reasons. For example, Enron's decision-makers have been cited as defending their unethical conduct in order to create a privatized and potentially better solar industry (Weissman, 2005). Thus, MJ increase the chances of manipulation and thus moral justifications also serve to strengthen the usefulness of deception and upsurge its chances of occurrence again and again (Reynolds, 2006). MJ, however, can serve the function of moving structures from personal judgment and decision-making to business or economic decision-making (I may indulge in poor financial accounting to sustain the group stock price) could theoretically be more justified. Indeed, Bonner, Greenbaum, and Mayer (2016) showed that the transformation from individual to financial reference had a negative effect on moral judgment and it has been identified as a shift from - anti-work to work, which led to the creation of lower CMD justifications. But even persons at a higher degree of CMD are vulnerable to effects of moral reasoning. Nevertheless, among the most common measures of CMD is the Defining Issues Test (DIT), in which individuals are confronted with scenarios and then they

assess the actors/participants (Bonner et al., 2016)). The ability to legitimize one judgment morally reflects the overall efficiency for moral justifications, which might be against the laws and policies of the firms. The use of MJ has a especially insidious impact specifically in the context of moral judgment. Moral justifications help to reduce perceived costs and increase perceived advantages of deception that eventually make a way towards the unethical behavior of the employees.

Research Hypothesis

- H1:** Emotional exhaustion has positive effect on unethical work behavior
- H2:** Facades of conformity have positive effect on unethical work behavior
- H3:** Moral justification has positive effect on unethical work behavior
- H4:** Supervisor ostracism has positive effect on emotional exhaustion
- H5:** Supervisor ostracism has positive effect on facades of conformity
- H6:** Mediating effect of emotional exhaustion on supervisor ostracism and unethical work behavior
- H7:** Mediating effect of facades of conformity on supervisor ostracism and unethical work behavior.

Research Methodology

Total number of 180 questionnaires were distributed in the service sector of Thailand, 141 questionnaires were able to do further analysis. The unit of analysis was individual employee who is working in service sector of Thailand. Simple random technique was used to collect the response from the respondents. Questionnaire was based on five-point Likert scale. The face validity of the questionnaire was conducted through the experts from different universities. SO has five items, MJ has six items, FOC has five items, EE has six items and UWB has also five items.

Research Findings

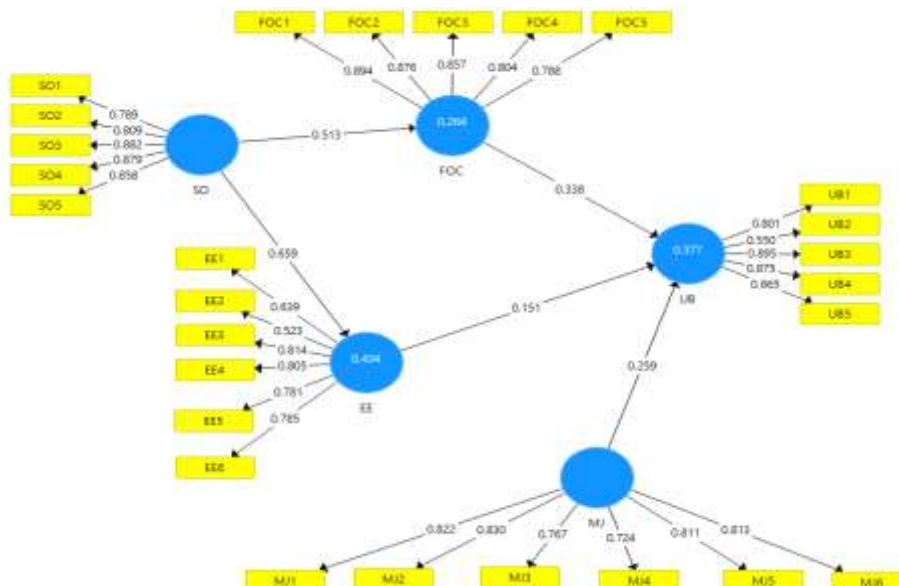


Figure 1 Measurement Model

Factor loading values, alpha values, composite reliability and AVE, are given in table 1. Table below shows the alpha of Cronbach is excellent above 0,7 ($\alpha > 0,9$). This is over 0.9 fantastic in the latest research (George & Mallery, 2003). In addition, composite reliability should really

be 0.7 or even above or equitable to or above 0.5 (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). The current study shows more than expected range respectively AVE and composite reliability. In addition, the discriminant validity is shown in table 2.

Table 1 Internal Consistency

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
EE	0.824	0.849	0.872	0.536
FOC	0.899	0.902	0.926	0.714
MJ	0.883	0.886	0.912	0.633
SO	0.899	0.905	0.925	0.713
UB	0.86	0.893	0.901	0.652

The square root of the average variance (AVE) obtained to achieve discriminatory validity. Following the directions (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) the square root of AVE was tested. Table shows the origin of the AVE in table 2.

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

EE	FOC	MJ	SO	UB
0.732				
0.531	0.845			
0.548	0.429	0.795		
0.659	0.513	0.473	0.844	
0.473	0.53	0.487	0.44	0.807

Hypotheses is the key portion of the second phase of the study. It includes all assumptions of direct and indirect. Secondly, as seen in table 3, direct hypotheses have been checked. The p-value 1.96 was known to support or reject the hypotheses. All t-value relations below 1.96 are rejected and all t-values higher than 1.96 are approved (t-value > 1.96). Table 3 reveals that all t-values of the relationship are above 1.96 and are significant. There are, thus, all direct hypotheses have been significant.

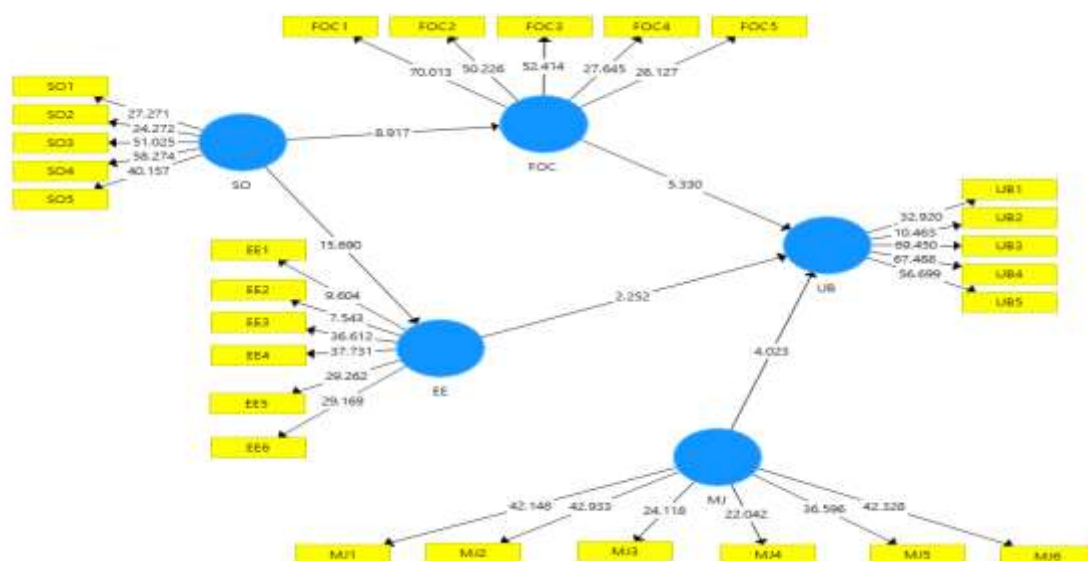


Figure 2 Structural Model

This research involves 7 hypotheses; 5 direct and 2 hypotheses of mediation. Statistical t-values, usually statistically significant, vary considerably from 0, but mainly depend on freedom, confidence interval and the hypothesis framework, and the P and T values were used to determine the path concerned (Hair Jr et al., 2014). Henseler (2012) said the PLS bootstrapping re-sampling was performed by 5000 tests to get both the statistical t value and the normal. The study is deemed satisfactory. They are also rated as 5000 by their bootstrapping samples (Amin, Thurasamy, Aldakhil, & Kaswuri, 2016). For example, 5000 specimens have not even been suggested (Hair et al., 2011), because a system was not able to process, but 5000 cannot even be booted. Also, before, the PLS standard algorithm has been established during the measurement model evaluation so that path coefficients and the directionality of the relationship are reached. The direct hypothesis test results are presented in table 3. This finding shows that emotional exhaustion has effect on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.151$, $t=2.288>1.96$, $p=0.023<0.05$). H1 is thus accepted. The effect of facades of conformity on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.338$, $t= 5.457>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H2 is accepted. The effect of moral justification on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.259$, $t= 3.898>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H3 is accepted. The effect of SO on EE ($\beta=0.659$, $t= 16.504>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H4 is accepted. The effect of supervisor ostracism on facades of conformity ($\beta=0.513$, $t= 8.744>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H5 is accepted in table 3.

Table 3 Direct Relationship

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H1	EE -> UB	0.151	0.066	2.288	0.023
H2	FOC -> UB	0.338	0.062	5.457	0
H3	MJ -> UB	0.259	0.066	3.898	0
H4	SO -> EE	0.659	0.04	16.504	0
H5	SO -> FOC	0.513	0.059	8.744	0

The mediating effect of EE between SO and unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.096$, $t=2.212>1.96$, $p=0.027<0.05$). So, the H6 is accepted. The mediating effect of FOC between SO and UB ($\beta=0.174$, $t=4.343>1.96$, $p=0<0.05$). So, the H7 is accepted shown in table 4.

Table 4 Indirect Relationship

Hypothesis	Relationship	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
H6	SO -> EE -> UB	0.099	0.045	2.212	0.027
H7	SO -> FOC -> UB	0.174	0.04	4.343	0

Ultimately, model quality was tested through the construct cross validity (Q2) of cross-validated reliability constructs. This test would be a goodness-of-fit alternative (GOF). As per Chin (1998) the value of Q2 must be above zero to reach that same quality of the model. The Q2 is still above zero, as shown in table 5.

Table 5 Construct Cross-Validated Redundancy

Constructs	SSO	SSE	Q ² (=1-SSE/SSO)
EE	2,340.00	1,839.97	
FOC	1,950.00	1,612.25	
MJ	2,340.00	2,340.00	0.214
SO	1,950.00	1,950.00	0.173
UB	1,950.00	1,506.02	0.228

Discussion

The purpose of the study is to measure the effect of moral justification and supervisor ostracism on unethical work behavior including the mediating effect of emotional exhaustion, facades of conformity.

The direct hypothesis test results are presented. This finding shows that emotional exhaustion has effect on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.151$, $t=2.288>1.96$, $p=0.023<0.05$). H1 is thus accepted. The effect of facades of conformity on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.338$, $t=5.457>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H2 is accepted. The effect of MJ on unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.259$, $t=3.898>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H3 is accepted. The effect of SO on EE ($\beta=0.659$, $t=16.504>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H4 is accepted. The effect of supervisor ostracism on facades of conformity ($\beta=0.513$, $t=8.744>1.96$, $p=0<0.005$). So, the H5 is accepted. The mediating effect of emotional exhaustion between supervisor ostracism and unethical work behavior ($\beta=0.096$, $t=2.212>1.96$, $p=0.027>0.05$). So, the H6 is accepted. The mediating effect of FOF between SO and UB ($\beta=0.174$, $t=4.343>1.96$, $p=0<0.05$). So, the H7 is accepted.

Managerial Implications

This research demonstrates that if workers become ostracized, their behavior is inclined towards the unethical activities which consequently affect company interest. So, in this context supervisors must need to be cautious with their behavior (Ali & Jaaffar, 2020). Based on findings of the current study leadership in organizations especially in the service industry must identify and try to minimize ostracism in earlier process and also they need to make constant efforts in mitigating its undesirable consequences. Leaders should establish implement effective recruitment strategies to limit the entry of ostracism managers. In previous studies literature reflects that people of high neuroticism along with the introverted characteristics are much more ostracized towards their employees. Therefore top management can develop a community that decreases ostracism and emotional exhaustion at workplace by promoting equal and balanced relationships, growing workers' self-esteem, encouraging healthy and fair competition which makes the employees highly productive and fostering the open communication environment among leadership and followers. Top managers should implement a supportive atmosphere for the betterment of ostracized workers, by doing so there would be a notable decline in the unethical behaviors of employees at work

Limitation and Future Research

The current study has some limitation. First issue is the generalizability of the study findings as this study was limited to the employees of the service sector of Thailand, so study findings cannot be fully generalized in other sectors such as manufacturing etc. Second limitation of the study is the quantitative approach, in future; mixed methodology can be used to analyze the data. Third limitation of the study is the use of supervisor ostracism that foster unethical behavior among employees, in future, other factor such as abusive leadership, negative gossips from supervisors, injustice at work can also be examined as a predictor of employees' unethical behavior.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is noted that few studies in Thai context empirically examined the impact of SO on the unethical actions of employees at the workplace. The present study findings have disclosed the dark side of leadership in terms of SO which negatively affect the employees and become the source of encouragement of their unethical behavior. In addition, workers under SO are tend engage in FOC to secure their invaluable resources, which as a result lead towards the employees unethical activities such as information hiding, stealing, fraud and lying etc. When ostracized workers are obstructed by their companies, they try to hide themselves by covering their true beliefs and living according to the beliefs of others in terms of organizational and supervisor's values. Moreover victims of SO also become emotionally exhaust which in return provoke them to get engaged in unethical behavior. On the same note, moral justification of the employees indulges them in unethical behaviors at the workplace.

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