Fit to-organization amplifies unethical pro-organizational behavior

Hany Azza Umama[1,2], Sri Murni Setyawati[2], Siti Zulaikha Wulandari[2]
[1]Department of Entrepreneurship, BINUS Business School Undergraduate Program, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta, Indonesia
[2]Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto, Indonesia

Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The study of unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) has seen a sharp rise in recent years, with research results explaining that a potential cause of UPB is organizational identification (OI). However, there are inconsistencies in the findings regarding the effect of OI on UPB in the workplace. This study seeks to test the direct effect of OI on UPB, and to explore the mediating role of fit to-organization (Fit-O). To evaluate data collected from employees of micro and small enterprises, this study utilized structural equation modeling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS) analysis, along with the variance accounted for (VAF) method to test the mediation between OI and UPB. The findings confirm that the fit or compatibility of an individual with the organization can strengthen the effect of OI on UPB. The intervening role of Fit-O in the OI-UPB relationship is a crucial theoretical contribution. This research also implies that organizations must balance increasing OI with strong ethical standards to mitigate UPB. *This is an open access article under the [CC BY-SA](#) license.*

Corresponding Author:

Hany Azza Umama
Department of Entrepreneurship, BINUS Business School Undergraduate Program
Bina Nusantara University
Jakarta 11480, Indonesia
Email: hany.umama@mhs.unsoed.ac.id

1. INTRODUCTION

Unethical pro-organizational behavior (UPB) can be described as voluntary behavior carried out by personnel to achieve organizational goals by violating generally accepted norms. Concrete examples of UPB include concealing product defects to meet sales targets or hiding corporate mistakes from the public, as seen in the Sanlu Melamine case, the Changsheng pharmaceutical incident, and the recent case involving Qihoo 360 Search involving false drug advertisements [1], as well as other cases that have increased in recent years [1]–[3]. This phenomenon poses a serious threat to global business ethics, damaging corporate reputation, undermining public trust, and jeopardizing long-term organizational sustainability, thereby increasing the urgency of finding systematic solutions to address the root causes of UPB. Umphress *et al*. [4], one of the primary contributors to the UPB study, explained that the desire to reciprocate positive treatment, excessive loyalty, and a sense of responsibility are psychological factors that often drive UPB. However, the exploration of organizational factors remains limited. Their study [4] indicates that while UPB may provide short-term benefits, it has the potential to harm an organization's reputation and long-term sustainability. However, to date, there has been no conceptual model that systematically integrates both psychological and organizational factors in explaining this phenomenon.

Research on UPB remains limited in scope [4], [5], as indicated by bibliometric analysis showing only 142 articles since Umphress *et al*. [4] first introduced the concept, highlighting the need to expand

studies in this field. This gap in previous research underscores the urgency of developing new approaches to explain how organizational factors influence UPB, enabling companies to design more effective mitigation strategies. While existing literature identifies psychological motivation as the primary driver of UPB, aspects directly related to the organization have received little attention. This context becomes even more relevant when considering how organizational pressure can shape employees' perceptions of ethics and their behavior. This study offers a solution by introducing the variable of fit to-organization (Fit-O) as a mediating mechanism to address the research gap. Fit-O presents a new perspective in understanding the dynamics between organizational identification (OI) and UPB. Furthermore, UPB research has been predominantly conducted in countries with secular cultural contexts, such as China, while the influence of religious values on ethical perceptions remains underexplored. By expanding the research focus to a religious cultural context, such as Indonesia, this study provides a cross-cultural perspective relevant to understanding UPB dynamics in global organizations. The role of religious values is crucial, as they shape individuals' perceptions of ethical and unethical behavior [6]. This strengthens the need for broader research within religious countries like Indonesia.

OI refers to the condition in which employees regard the organization's achievements and setbacks as personally meaningful [7]. Several studies have stated that OI is a key driver of UPB [8], [9]. However, although OI is often associated with positive outcomes, evidence suggests that it can also trigger counterproductive behaviors when not properly managed. Recent research, such as by Koçak and Kerse [10] and Ahmad et al. [11], highlights the positive effects of OI, including increased employee commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and work engagement. Unfortunately, the negative consequences of OI remain an important challenge in the literature due to limited attention [5], [12], [13]. This study addresses the gap by proposing Fit-O as a rarely examined mediating mechanism in the OI-UPB relationship. These findings not only expand the scope of the literature but also provide significant practical implications for organizations in managing the adverse effects of excessive OI.

Most previous literature has focused on the benefits of OI while overlooking its negative implications on ethical norms. Studies by Verma and Mohapatra [5], Naseer et al. [13], and Ding and Liu [14] have begun to analyze the effect of OI on UPB, but only within a narrow scope. Furthermore, the urgency of this research is reinforced by inconsistent findings, both in terms of correlation and influence. Some studies have shown contradictory effects [4], [9], [15], while others report conflicting correlations [14], [16], indicating an unclear mechanism underlying the OI-UPB relationship. More specifically, there is a need to explore how mediating variables such as Fit-O can help explain this dynamic, an area that remains underexplored in the literature. Previous studies have attempted to explain the relationship mechanism through neutralization and moral disengagement [9], [17], which predominantly focus on psychological variables. What differentiates this study from previous ones is its focus on the concept of need fulfillment between individuals and the organization. The attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework serves as the theoretical foundation of this unique approach, which has rarely been used in the existing literature. The ASA-based approach provides a more comprehensive perspective than traditional psychological approaches that often neglect the organizational context. Hence, the present research does more than just fill an underexplored area in prior studies and offers an alternative explanation for UPB motivation. By integrating the Fit-O variable and employing the ASA theory, this study makes a unique contribution in explaining the role of individual-organization alignment in either motivating or inhibiting UPB, a dimension that has not been adequately addressed in previous literature.

The ASA-based approach in this study offers a superior and more comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of OI compared to the dominant traditional psychological approaches. Psychological approaches generally focus on individual aspects, often overlooking the influence of individual-Fit-O. In contrast, the ASA theory emphasizes the interaction between individuals and organizations by focusing on the alignment of values, goals, and organizational culture. In this context, Fit-O emerges as a crucial mechanism that explains how this alignment strengthens or weakens the impact of OI on UPB. By considering the alignment of values and goals, Fit-O not only accounts for previous discrepancies in the effects of OI but also provides a new perspective for predicting when OI leads to ethical or unethical behavior. Thereby allows a deeper insight into the complexity of the OI-UPB relationship. Furthermore, this theoretical framework facilitates cross-cultural examinations, including religious contexts, which are highly relevant for addressing ethical challenges in global organizations.

Fit-O is one of the most frequently researched topics. Recently, there has been a notable rise in the number of published papers related to Fit-O [18], [19], which tend to have a positive effect on organizations [20]. However, debates about its negative effects [19] and even doubts about the positive effects of Fit-O on organizations remain [19]. The lack of literature discussing the moderating effect of Fit-O in the OI-UPB relationship and the unresolved debate regarding the negative impact of Fit-O underscore the importance of analyzing this variable. Fit-O refers to employees' perception of the alignment between their personal characteristics, values, and organizational norms [21], [22]. According to ASA theory, individuals are

attracted to organizations when their personal attributes align with the organization, and there is a tendency to leave the organization when such alignment does not exist [20], [23], [24].

This study plays a critical role in identifying literature gaps related to the negative impact of OI on UPB and makes a significant contribution by focusing on the dark side of OI, which differs from prior studies that lean more toward the positive aspects of OI. By introducing Fit-O as a mediating variable, this study not only offers a promising new approach to understanding the OI-UPB relationship mechanism but also provides a novel theoretical framework through the rarely utilized ASA theory. In addition, by proposing more ethical organizational policies that take into account the effects of OI and Fit-O, this research is expected to provide practical contributions. Previous literature has emphasized the importance of OI in enhancing employees' emotional attachment and has highlighted that excessive OI can encourage behaviors that violate ethical norms [5], [12]–[14]. However, exploration of the negative consequences of OI remains limited. This limitation is the main focus of this research by introducing a new perspective through the Fit-O mechanism. This study raises a critical question: how and under what conditions does strong OI contribute to UPB? This complexity further increases when considering Fit-O as a factor that strengthens the OI-UPB relationship. Furthermore, this research underscores the importance of exploring this issue in a religious context, as there is still a lack of studies linking this aspect to the dynamics of OI and UPB.

This study is not only relevant to calls in the literature to investigate the dark side of OI [5], [12]–[14], but also makes a significant contribution by offering Fit-O as a mediating factor in the OI-UPB relationship, which has not been previously analyzed. This study aims to assist organizations in designing more effective ethical policies by considering mediating mechanisms such as Fit-O in managing OI. Additionally, this study provides insights into how religious contexts influence UPB, enriching both theoretical and practical understandings of the negative impact of OI. Therefore, this research offers a solution to the debate regarding the inconsistent relationship between OI and UPB, while also making a valuable contribution to existing academic discourse. The goal of this research is to address the gap in the theoretical debate concerning the role of OI in influencing UPB. It seeks to clarify the inconsistencies in the OI-UPB relationship found in previous studies by integrating Fit-O as a mechanism in this relationship. This integration is anticipated to offer a broader comprehension of the dynamics between OI and UPB. The use of this approach contributes to the advancement of organizational behavior theory globally while also offering practical insights to help organizations design their human resource strategies. Consequently, its findings are relevant to both the academic community and practitioners in organizational management. Several significant contributions of this research to the literature include: first, addressing a rarely explored area-namely, the dark side of OI. Second, by integrating Fit-O as a mechanism in the OI-UPB relationship, it offers a more holistic approach to understanding the dynamics between individuals and organizations. Third, it fills geographic and cultural gaps by exploring the context of religious countries.

The relationship between OI, Fit-O, and UPB can be explained as follows. First, OI occurs when the employee's self-image aligns with the organization's image, perceiving the organization's losses and gains as personal failures and successes [5]. Positive social experiences within the organization, feelings of acceptance, and pride in being part of the organization can shape OI [11]. The impact of OI includes an increased sense of compatibility or fit with the organization, driven by a feeling of connection and commitment to the organization's principles and objectives. This leads to greater involvement in organizational activities and efforts to adapt to its culture and values. OI is believed to enhance job satisfaction through a positive view of person-organization alignment [10], [11]. The person-organization fit theory [25] explains that fit arises when there is a match between individual values, personality, and goals and those within the organization. OI contributes to enhancing the perception of this fit, as individuals with high OI tend to feel a likeness between their personal values and those of the organization, leading to a tendency to align the two [11].

Second, UPB is defined as unethical actions that violate general norms (hypernorms) and are carried out by employees for the benefit of the organization [4]. These unethical actions are not instructed or stated in formal job descriptions and are carried out voluntarily by employees for the sake of organizational benefit, regardless of the final outcomes, focusing instead on the behavior exhibited at the moment [8], [17]. Organizational fit can be defined as the congruence between an individual's values and norms and those endorsed by the organization. This fit contributes to higher satisfaction, engagement, and commitment. The theory of Fit-O posits that when employees perceive alignment, they tend to meet organizational expectations, which will influence their behavior [25]. The tendency to meet organizational expectations may create pressure to achieve organizational goals, leading to unethical behavior to fulfill these expectations, while rationalizing such behavior as being for the benefit of the organization. Research has demonstrated that employees' ethical decision-making is influenced by the alignment between individual and organizational values [8], [26]. When individuals perceive a strong fit with the organization, they are more prone to engage in

actions that benefit the organization, even if those actions violate ethical norms. Fit-O can contribute to unethical behavior, as individuals may view such actions as justifiable when aimed at organizational goals [27].

Third, OI is a self-concept shaped by an individual's membership in an organization. Identifying oneself as part of the organization fosters the integration of personal goals, organizational interests, and self-concept [11], [28]. This tendency promotes involvement in collective interests—namely, the organization's interests [29] and encourages extra-role behaviors or voluntary actions taken to benefit the organization as a way to preserve one's self-concept [29], [30]. This inclination leads to unethical decision-making and the rationalization of unethical actions, justifying them in the name of the organization's interests [31]. Aligned with social identity theory [32], which explains how individuals form their identities through affiliation with organizations, individuals possessing strong OI are prone to participating in unethical behaviors and rationalize such actions as necessary or justified [4], [33].

Furthermore, individuals with strong identification tend to experience a higher degree of perceived fit with their organization, which increases their likelihood of engaging in UPB. Value congruence is considered the strongest motivator for exceeding set targets (voluntarily performing work beyond job responsibilities) [29], [30]. This perceived fit contributes uniquely and significantly to the organization. Value congruence also drives efforts to achieve organizational goals [18], potentially leading individuals to overlook ethical considerations. Moreover, such congruence may foster a sense of entitlement to participate in UPB by rationalizing unethical acts as noble pursuits for a collective good. As a result, OI can influence unethical behavior through the alignment of individual values with the organization's goals—an idea consistent with social identity theory [32], which posits that strong identification promotes actions that align with group norms, including the rationalization of unethical conduct. Ethical justification theory [34] also states that individuals can rationalize their unethical actions when they believe they are performing in the interest of the organization. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework. In light of the preceding discussion, the subsequent hypotheses are put forward:

- Hypothesis 1: there is a significant positive relationship between OI and Fit-O.
- Hypothesis 2: Fit-O significantly influences UPB.
- Hypothesis 3: OI significantly influences UPB.
- Hypothesis 4: Fit-O mediates the relationship between OI and UPB.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework

2. RESEARCH METHOD
2.1. Procedure and sample

Hypotheses were tested using data collected through a questionnaire. Seven students were involved as field team members to assist respondents in completing the questionnaire, ensuring data accuracy and completeness, particularly for respondents with educational backgrounds that might hinder their understanding of the research instrument. These students were selected based on prior training in questionnaire administration and respondent interaction to ensure consistency in data collection. This data collection approach serves as a solution to address logistical and cultural challenges often encountered in research involving respondents from diverse educational backgrounds.

Before the questionnaire was distributed, respondents received a comprehensive explanation of the study's academic purpose, ensuring voluntary participation and data confidentiality. They were told that there was no correct or incorrect response, with the intention of reducing social desirability bias and providing a sense of security. This approach fostered trust, alleviated concerns, and reduced potential common method bias [4], [26], [35]. The procedure was designed as part of a systematic approach to enhance data quality and validity, which was a key priority in this research. To limit social desirability bias, respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously via an online link, avoiding external pressure from supervisors or business owners [36]. Additionally, the questionnaire design allowed respondents to answer at their own pace without time constraints, thus improving response accuracy.

The sample consisted of employees from micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Central Java, Indonesia, selected using simple random sampling. Central Java was chosen due to its significant contribution to Indonesia's MSE sector, which has grown by 210% over the past decade. Exploratory studies

had previously identified a high prevalence of UPB within the region. An aggregate of 153 complete responses was received within one week, exceeding the minimum of 120 responses required for structural equation modeling using partial least squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The sample size is consistent with Hair *et al.* [37] recommendation of using five to ten times the number of indicators in the model. To ensure representativeness, the data were assessed against demographic distributions such as gender, age, and education level.

2.2. Measurement scale

The questionnaire measured three main variables. UPB was measured using a seven-item Likert scale, including statements like, "If necessary, I would conceal information from the public that might negatively affect my workplace" [4]. OI was measured with five items, including "When others criticize my workplace, I take it personally" [38]. Fit-O was measured with nine items, such as "I fit in well with my coworkers at my workplace" [39]. All variables were measured through a five-point Likert scale that spanned from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". This approach was intended to enhance the sensitivity of the data and enable a more in-depth identification of behaviors. The items had been previously validated in prior studies, ensuring construct reliability and validity. As an additional measure, a pilot test was conducted on a small subsample before the main study to ensure that all items were clearly understood by respondents.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

The greater part of the 153 respondents were female (54%), and 41% were aged between 20 and 25 years old. Most respondents had a high school educational background (59%), reflecting the typical profile of SME employees in Central Java. Detailed demographic data are presented in Table 1, which provides a structured distribution of the variables.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Characteristics		Amount	Percentage
Gender	Man	70	46
	Women	83	54
Age	<19 years	4	3
	20-25 years	63	41
	26-35 years	23	15
	>5 years	63	41
Educational background	Elementary School	19	12
	Junior High School	18	12
	Senior High School	91	59
	Bachelor	25	16

3.2. Validity, reliability, and goodness of fit test

Validity and reliability tests confirmed that all instruments met the required thresholds: factor loading exceeded 0.60, Cronbach's alpha surpassed 0.70, composite reliability was above 0.70, and average variance extracted (AVE) above 0.50. These results confirm the construct validity, reliability, and model fit. Detailed indicators are presented in Table 2, providing comprehensive information on statistical parameters.

Table 2. Validity, reliability, and goodness of fit test

	Fit-O		OI		UPB	
Loading factor	FO1	0.883	OI1	0.845	UPB-1	0.828
	FO2	0.896	OI2	0.890	UPB-2	0.874
	FO3	0.903	OI3	0.874	UPB-3	0.880
	FO4	0.918	OI4	0.852	UPB-4	0.861
	FO5	0.902	OI5	0.884	UPB-5	0.851
	FO6	0.879			UPB-6	0.812
	FO7	0.862			UPB-7	0.842
					UPB-8	0.793
Cronbach's-alpha	0.957		0.919		0.942	
Rho-A	0.958		0.920		0.945	
Composite-reliability	0.965		0.939		0.952	
AVE	0.796		0.755		0.711	
R square	0.486				0.451	
R squared adjusted	0.482				0.440	
F square Fit-O					0.114	
OI	0.945				0.068	

3.3. Hypothesis test

The SEM-PLS analysis supports all proposed hypotheses. The relationships between the key variables are statistically significant as follows. First, OI positively impacts organizational fit (β=0.697, p=0.000), implying that greater OI encourages stronger adaptation and affinity toward the organization, supporting hypothesis 1. Second, Fit-O was found to have a significant positive impact on UPB (β=0.350, p=0.001), aligning with hypothesis 2. Third, OI was found to directly influence UPB (β=0.272, p=0.016), providing evidence that greater identification contributes to higher UPB, supporting hypothesis 3.

The intervening role of Fit-O in the association between OI and UPB was tested by applying the variance accounted for (VAF) method, which is considered the most appropriate for mediation analysis in SEM-PLS [40]. The VAF criteria are as follows: VAF >80% suggests full mediation; 20% ≤VAF ≤80% implies partial mediation; and VAF <20% indicates no mediation [41]. The VAF result of 30.5% indicates partial mediation. Therefore, Fit-O acts as a mediator that strengthens the link between OI and UPB. The comprehensive findings are displayed in Table 4.

Table 3. Results of the test of influence between variables

	Path coefficient	St. dev	P value
Fit-O → UPB	0.350	0.109	0.001
OI → Fit-O	0.697	0.053	0.000
OI → UPB	0.272	0.112	0.016

Table 4. VAF test result

Criterion	Coefficient
Direct effect OI → UPB	0.577
Indirect effect OI → Fit-O → UPB (0.697*0.363)	0.253
Total effect	0.83
VAF=indirect effect/total effect	0.305

4. DISCUSSION

This study analyzes the influence of OI on UPB by exploring the contribution of Fit-O as a mediating mechanism. While previous research has primarily focused on individual psychological motivations [9], [13], [17], this research seeks to fill this gap by investigating how the congruence between personal and organizational values influences individuals' propensity to participate in UPB in favor of the organization. This approach adds to a broader theoretical and practical understanding of organizational factors that drive UPB. Consequently, this study not only enhances insights into psychological mechanisms but also highlights structural factors that may either reinforce or mitigate UPB tendencies in the workplace.

SEM-PLS analysis revealed that OI significantly influences Fit-O (β=0.697, p=0.000), confirming the validity of hypothesis 1. This indicates that higher OI encourages individuals to adapt to and accept organizational conditions, thereby enhancing comfort, alignment, and fit within the organization. According to social identity theory [32] posits that individuals inherently align themselves with their organization. While several studies have investigated the link between OI and employee commitment [5], [12], [13], few have examined how OI influences value congruence in the context of unethical behavior. This study extends the literature by demonstrating that identification also strengthens the congruence between individual and organizational values (Fit-O). Employees whose personal identity aligns with the organization exhibit greater emotional and cognitive commitment. This alignment fosters the perception that the organization supports their personal values and goals, thereby enhancing Fit-O [10], [11].

Furthermore, Fit-O significantly affects UPB (β=0.350, p=0.001), reinforcing the idea that a strong fit increases the likelihood of engaging in UPB. Comfort, alignment, and compatibility with the organization may encourage individuals to act in the organization's interest, even if such actions violate societal norms. This study introduces new empirical evidence affirming the crucial role of value fit in motivating unethical pro-organizational behavior. This implies that organizations must consider the potential side effects of excessive value congruence, especially regarding ethical standards. While prior literature has mostly focused on internal motivation, this study demonstrates how organizational context can intensify tendencies toward UPB. These findings align with person-organization fit Theory [25], which posits that greater satisfaction and engagement in UPB occur when individuals perceive alignment with their organization. Employees with strong Fit-O tend to meet organizational expectations, intensifying self-imposed pressure to demonstrate loyalty, which may potentially lead to unethical actions to achieve organizational goals [31]. This behavior is often rationalized as necessary for the overall benefit of the organization [42], [43].

The analysis also identified a direct positive impact of OI on UPB (β=0.272, p=0.016), indicating that OI motivates individuals to engage in UPB. Although previous studies conceptually suggested this

relationship, this research provides empirical evidence and highlights the role of Fit-O as a strengthening mediator. High OI fosters emotional [12] and cognitive attachment to the organization, prompting individuals to prioritize organizational interests over personal moral standards and rationalize unethical behavior [18], [44]. In other words, the stronger the OI, the greater the likelihood of compromising personal ethical values for the sake of organizational goals. High OI reduces psychological distance between individuals and the organization. This blurring of boundaries causes individuals to internalize the organization's achievement or setback as their own, driving them to secure organizational success—even through UPB [7]. OI may compel individuals to disregard ethical standards (e.g., personal values, norms, and cognitive processes) in pursuit of organizational goals [17], [18], [44]. The analysis also identified a direct positive influence of OI on UPB (β=0.272, p=0.016), indicating that OI motivates individuals to engage in UPB. Although previous studies conceptually suggested this relationship, this research provides empirical evidence and highlights the role of Fit-O as a strengthening mediator. High OI fosters emotional [12] and cognitive attachment to the organization, prompting individuals to prioritize organizational interests over personal moral standards and rationalize unethical behavior [18], [44]. In other words, the stronger the OI, the greater the likelihood of compromising personal ethical values for the sake of organizational goals. High OI reduces psychological distance between individuals and the organization. This blurring of boundaries causes individuals to internalize the organization's achievements or setbacks as their own, prompting them to ensure organization's success—even through UPB [7]. OI may compel individuals to set aside moral principles (e.g., personal values, norms, and cognitive processes) for the benefit of organizational objectives [17], [18], [44]. Higher OI increases a person's readiness to take action for the organization's benefit, even if it requires compromising ethical principles [8], [12]–[14], [45]. This is consistent with social identity theory [32], which states that individuals with high OI prioritize the organization's interests over personal morality, potentially leading to unethical behavior perceived as beneficial to the organization. Therefore, organizations that encourage high OI need to be aware of the inherent risks that may arise and design mitigation policies to reduce incentives for unethical behavior.

The VAF method shows that Fit-O partially mediates the relationship between OI and UPB (VAF=0.305), supporting the hypothesized mediation mechanism. These findings underscore how OI fosters personal alignment with the organization, leading to comfort, harmony, and compatibility, which in turn increases the willingness to act for the organization—even unethically. This tendency may arise because employees with high OI often feel compelled to prove their loyalty to the organization; this pressure motivates individuals to perform at higher levels and can tempt them to achieve goals through unethical practices, such as manipulation or shortcuts. This pressure may be exacerbated by high-performance expectations in competitive environments. Such behavior becomes more intense when individuals with strong Fit-O develop high loyalty that motivates them to participate in unethical actions for the advantage of the organization. These implications highlight the importance of leadership in fostering a culture of loyalty while also upholding strong ethical norms. Consistent with Treviño *et al*. [31] and Ding and Liu [14], the alignment between individual and organizational values influences ethical decision-making and can lead to UPB.

These findings align with person-organization fit theory [25], which states that value alignment enhances an individual's emotional bond with the organization. However, this study also highlights the paradox of high alignment with the organization, which, although linked to increased job satisfaction and commitment, can also raise the risk of UPB. This paradox suggests that organizational strategies must consider a balance between enhancing value alignment and preventing the negative effects that may arise from excessive normative pressure. This study adds a new dimension by emphasizing how Fit-O, typically regarded as a positive factor, can also have negative consequences through the increased risk of UPB. Previous studies, such as those by Piercy and Carr [33] and Chhabra and Srivastava [46], argued that high OI drives UPB, but this study adds a new dimension by showing that Fit-O strengthens this effect. Therefore, this study not only confirms previous findings but also deepens the comprehension of the dynamic interaction between organizational and psychological elements in shaping employee behavior. Compared to earlier research that focused on the psychological motivations driving UPB, this study offers a new perspective. Previous studies tended to rely on traditional approaches to understanding UPB. This research provides an alternative by exploring the role of individual and organizational value alignment (Fit-O) in driving UPB, broadening the understanding of the causes of unethical behavior for organizational benefit. This perspective integrates psychological and organizational factors, offering a more holistic insight into the dynamics of ethical behavior within the organizational context.

4.1. Limitation and future direction

This study was conducted in Indonesian MSEs, which are characterized by a collectivist culture, thus limiting the generalizability of the findings to large companies or individualistic countries. Therefore, future research is recommended to test this relationship in individualistic countries and large organizations,

as large companies have different characteristics compared to MSEs, with fewer constraints. Additionally, cultural differences influence societal behavior [47]. In exploring the relationship between OI, Fit-O, and UPB, this research employed a cross-sectional SEM-PLS framework, which may have limitations in generalizability and establishing causal conclusions. Future research should confirm these findings in different industries and cultural contexts, while also exploring other organizational mechanisms that influence the OI-UPB relationship, such as leadership roles, ethical norms, organizational culture, and structure. Future research may also investigate strategies for mitigating the negative impact of excessive value congruence on UPB, such as ethics training or leadership interventions focused on reinforcing ethical standards. Organizational justice interacting with Fit-O in influencing UPB could create a more comprehensive framework for understanding employee behavior in the organizational context. Moreover, longitudinal designs should be considered to capture the temporal dynamics of this relationship. These findings offer a foundation for future studies to explore how organizational elements—such as culture, structure, and leadership—can impact the link between OI and UPB. These outcomes may also be applied in designing training programs that emphasize the importance of ethical behavior.

4.2. Implications for behavioral science
The analysis revealed that the immediate influence of OI on UPB is less than the influence mediated by Fit-O, indicating that a high degree of fit significantly strengthens the impact of OI on UPB. In behavioral science, this highlights that individual alignment with the organization can amplify the impact of OI on UPB. This has implications for developing more comprehensive work behavior models that account for the role of person-organization fit in predicting unethical behaviors that support organizational goals.

These findings have significant implications for human resource management and organizational ethics. If Fit-O can increase tendencies toward UPB, caution must be taken when applying strategies for aligning employees with the organization. The risk of damaging organizational reputation can arise from misapplied strategies. These results also indicate the need for greater attention to managing organizational values and norms, which can help mitigate the negative consequences of OI. Organizations must balance employee engagement strategies with ethical controls.

4.3. Theoretical contribution
Theoretically, this study helps broaden the understanding of the role of OI in driving UPB. While prior literature has linked OI to UPB, this contribution highlights the critical mediating role of Fit-O in strengthening that relationship. The study advances OI theory by offering the perspective that individual-organizational alignment can amplify the effects of OI. Consequently, this study enriches OI theory in the context of UPB, presenting a novel viewpoint that enhanced alignment with the organization could result in heightened unethical behavior to assist the organization, particularly when individuals closely identify themselves as part of the organization.

4.4. Practical contribution
This study recommends that organizations should deliberate on the consequences of strategies aimed at enhancing OI, particularly in terms of individual fit with the organization. While increasing OI and Fit-O can benefit organizations, in certain cases, they may also pose a risk of encouraging UPB. Therefore, organizations can design employee development programs with an emphasis on ethical standards, especially for individuals with high OI. Additionally, organizations should emphasize ethics and accountability in internal activities to ensure that UPB is not perceived as acceptable, even when intended to benefit the organization.

5. CONCLUSION
This research provides strong evidence that OI not only enhances person-organization fit but also contributes to the likelihood of UPB. As previously explained, the main objective of this study was to uncover the dark side of OI, which was ultimately confirmed in the results and discussion, particularly through the mediating role of Fit-O in encouraging UPB. These findings are supported by empirical data and align with existing theories, offering new insights into the dynamics of the OI-UPB relationship. By exploring the mediating role of Fit-O, this research underscores the need to balance the strengthening of identification with the management of ethical norms. The results have significant practical and theoretical implications, particularly in designing organizational policies that promote alignment and emotional affiliation while preventing ethical violations. For future development, researchers are encouraged to explore moderating factors that could reduce UPB, such as organizational culture or ethical leadership. Future studies may also examine how mitigation strategies for UPB can be applied across various industry sectors and cultural settings to broaden the generalizability of these findings.

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Hany Azza Umama	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Sri Murni Setyawati	✓									✓		✓		
Siti Zulaikha Wulandari	✓									✓		✓		

C : **C**onceptualization	I : **I**nvestigation	Vi : **Vi**sualization
M : **M**ethodology	R : **R**esources	Su : **Su**pervision
So : **So**ftware	D : **D**ata Curation	P : **P**roject administration
Va : **Va**lidation	O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft	Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis	E : Writing - Review & **E**diting	

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data use in this study can be accessed on: H. A. Umama, "Data for IJAAS *(in Indonesian: Data untuk IJAAS)*", *Mendeley Data*, V1, 2025, doi: 10.17632/zgtgm3fg48.1

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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

Hany Azza Umama is a doctoral student at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. She is also a lecturer at the Entrepreneurship Department, BINUS Business School Undergraduate Program, Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta 11480, Indonesia. She can be contacted at email: hany.umama@mhs.unsoed.ac.id.

Sri Murni Setyawati is a professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. Her research interests focus on management and business. She can be contacted at email: nunk_pwt@yahoo.co.id.

Siti Zulaikha Wulandari holds a doctorate and teaches at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, Central Java, Indonesia. Her research interests focus on management and business, particularly in the area of human resource management. She can be contacted at email: siti.wulandari@unsoed.ac.id.